

Interviewer: Alyson Strauhal

Interviewee: Dr. Stan Miller

Alyson Strauhal: This is an *Argus* [article] about the Hilhi moratorium for the Vietnamese war- for discussion on it.

Stan Miller: (reading article): Open discussion of Vietnam conflict... pros and cons... was held in Hilhi classes Wednesday... date set for nationwide moratorium by college students... discussions were held during both lunches for students interested in attending. Okay.

AS: In your opinion at what point did students really become aware of the war?... Actually I should start- At Hilhi you were vice principal?

SM (now speaking and not reading): When did the war begin... '65? Hilhi opened in '68, so in '65 we were over on 6th and Lincoln and I was assistant vice principal and moved out to the new Hillsboro High school at '68 and became principal in '71, and I think the war ended in the mid seventies. I think the students were aware of the war and we had issues that were war related back at 6th and Lincoln in the mid sixties. I remember like it was yesterday- a student who refused to stand up during the pledge of allegiance... I think it was in '66 probably... '66 or '67, and it was war related. It was a student who had been going to Lewis and Clark and participating with a club or something where they were talking about war related issues. I would consider that a war related issue that took place in our school, and that was in the mid sixties, and I would conclude that students were well aware of the war.

AS: Was there a noticeable student response to the war?

SM: The significant notable student response that I remember was in connection to the peace marches. There were peace marches taking place in Portland that were sponsored by Portland State students. But that was later, in the late sixties, right after we moved out to Hilhi. We had a number of students who wanted to go and participate in these marches, a significant number, and we had a lot of attendance issues. We didn't want them gone for that period of time, and we had to figure out how to deal with the absences. There was a [school] board discussion about it and we got a directive that students would be given an excused absences to go and participate in those peace marches, and that's the first really big issue I remember. Another big issue I remember was probably in about... well I was still vice principal so it was probably 1969, 1970 when we held a military information assembly at the end of the day where all the recruiters, all the branches of the armed forces came out, and it was during an activity period, so those students who wanted to go could go. The presence of those military recruiters on campus was objected to by a group of students. Similar issues as they [students] had in going to Portland, but it was war related and, there were some demonstrations. There were students who threatened to go in and disrupt that assembly. That was quite an issue. The *Argus* came out. I don't think they ever took any pictures, but it was quite a disruptive

issue for us. I think that was in '69- '70. I think some students kind of became politicized around the war in the late sixties. I don't recall that happening prior to that time, prior to the time we went out to the Hilhi campus.

AS: Was there any changes in hairstyles or dress during that time?

SM: Oh absolutely. That was a period of tremendous change with respect to standards and expectations for students. The problem for me is I can't sort out...I mean there was a lot of evolutionary change going on in society. You have the women's movement, and the civil rights movement, that was when drugs first became readily available to students, and all those things were changing student behavior. You see what happened for us was... at Century you have a closed campus situation...but when we were at downtown at 6th and Lincoln, what is now Thomas Junior high...that was an open campus, when the bell would ring for lunch students would leave that place like a bunch of lemmings going into the ocean. They were headed downtown for the stores and the restaurants. When we went out to Hilhi '68 '69, right in the middle of all this turbulence, we moved out there to a closed campus. We took kids who had maybe had two or three years of an open campus and cooped them up out there. You can imagine what the reaction was, particularly during this period of time. What would you like me to tell you about the problems we had with dress codes and right to assemble and free speech, and newspapers and all that kind of thing.

AS: Do think any of that had to do specifically with the Vietnam War?

DM: I think the war triggered a lot of that change, and I think a lot of it would have happened anyway. I think what happened was up to the mid sixties, this is my own perception, students were pretty docile. They were pretty apathetic about rules and standards and expectations, that was the way schools were run then. Adults decided what the expectations were and students conformed to them. I can remember as recently as '66- '67, '67-'68 standing in the hall way at Hilhi and asking kids to tuck their shirts in. We sent kids home because they wore granny dresses because that was in violation of the dress code. Nobody ever questioned it. I mean we had some games being played and that kind of thing, but nobody ever questioned it. Well then the war came along and you had all this assertiveness on the part of young adults. You had the draft defectors, the draft dodgers, and the peace marches going on and sit-ins occurring on college campuses. You have a lot of very disruptive civil disobedience going on that was very visible to high school students. Well, they [students] picked up on that very quickly. Many of them had brothers and sisters or whatever, and you could just feel the influence of that coming back into the high schools, and that's when the issues around things like standing up during the pledge of allegiance or letting hair length grow, wearing t-shirts with what we thought were obscene words on them, and that kind of thing. So it kind of crept down from the colleges. I think a lot of it was emulated. But all that started, and at the same time as the introduction of drugs, particularly as marijuana, and all that started just about the time we moved out to Hillsboro High School, mid to late sixties, '66-'67, '67-'68. I think the war triggered a lot of that. I think what was happening was, as I view it, young adults especially in college settings were learning they had a vested interest in the war. I mean,

if the country went to war, who was going to get killed? They were. They began speaking out and speaking up and high school students picked up on that. You saw some of the same kinds of things. I remember again at 6th and Lincoln that we began having trouble with things like assemblies where kids were giving their campaign speeches. Getting into comments that were critical of the administration or issues that we thought were out of bounds or at least had been up to that time. So all that begin creeping in about that time and I think yes it was war related. The war was the thing that was triggering it. But I think a lot of it would happen anyway later on probably. It was the catalyst so to speak.

AS: With all this, how did the administration and the staff deal with it. Did they support it or was it really...

SM: Oh, it was a period of real turmoil for us. Any time you change the rules and move the goal post, so to speak, and you can't come into a setting like that, with student control and safety and maintaining a proper learning atmosphere, is what running school is just about. And when all of a sudden the rules that you used to accomplish those things a year ago or five years ago, don't work any more, or you are continually in conflict over those rules because that was what it was. Student attitudes changed and all of a sudden everything was subject to question: Why do we have to do this? Why do we have to do that? This is not right. That is not right. So it was a period of real soul searching I think for schools. Everybody wanted to be fair, but everybody also wanted to maintain the right atmosphere, and the right kind of control of school. Because that's what we thought teachers wanted and parents wanted, and we thought the community wanted. And then of course you had the introduction of the courts into all of this with these landmark decisions coming down. The *Tinker* case, the armband case, in Des Moines, Iowa. Students had come to school with armbands on, and they were Vietnam War related. The Administration took the position that that was disruptive, that it would distract from the real purpose of school. It was a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court, and it really was this it was within the purview of appreciation for students. The code was that you didn't leave their rights at the door to the school. At that point everyone just threw the guidelines out. The guideline there was that you couldn't impose a dress or grooming restriction unless you could prove that it was potentially disruptive. So right away that was the guideline, that was the acid test. If I was going to tell you that you couldn't wear shorts to school, then in a legal sense I was responsible to prove that allowing you to wear shorts was potentially disruptive to the educational process. At that point a lot of the schools just threw their standards out and said "We don't have any support so everyone is on their own."

AS: As far as war efforts did you see the staff participate in any pro or anti war efforts, that maybe got involved with student'...

SM: We had some staff that were very... Well this tells you that [he picked up article regarding moratorium and discussion of Vietnam War] I don't remember this [article], but it's very obvious that you had some teachers that were inviting students during their lunch period to come and discuss the pros and cons of America's involvement in Vietnam. I can remember a number of teachers, particularly social studies teachers, that

were very engaged in talking with students and engaging students in conversation related to the war. My recollection of those things is Rood Bridge Road [the Hilhi campus]... that would be early seventies. I don't recall anything of that kind prior to that time.

AS: Do you remember any specific events with that, maybe with teachers encouraging or discouraging students?

SM: I don't remember that that was a problem. I know we had a number of teachers on campus, who had very strong convictions that our involvement in the war was wrong. I don't recall that there were parents that there were parent complaints about brain washing. I think you always have that issue of dealing with both sides it, and along both sides making sure that both views are represented.

AS: Was there tension within the staff with such convictions?

SM: Ahh...tension is an interesting word. I think there were arguments and discussions, and differences in opinion. I don't recall that it became something that distracted from working relationships. I don't recall that happening.

AS: The draft...Do you have any specific recollections about the draft? How it affected the community of Hillsboro, or school?

SM: No, I don't. Our kids were several years away from that, so I just don't recall, I'm sure it was an important issue, but I just don't recall it.

AS: Do you have any recollections of reactions to friends and family maybe leaving for the war? Maybe older brothers or sisters leaving for the war?

SM: I don't.

AS: Do have anything else that stands out for school?

SM: I think the issues for us were the whole issue of standards. Particularly in the dressing and grooming area, in the free speech area. We had situations that came up around campaign speeches, newspaper issues, and graduation speeches. All of those things became confrontational kinds of situations. Instead of here's the guidelines do you have any questions, it became here's the guidelines, now let's argue about it and let's resolve it. So dress and grooming, free speech, freedom to assemble, like the recruiters' situation, the right of student groups to meet, and peace marches, all those became things. I would guess that very many high schools in Oregon had clear-cut policies, I mean really definitive, codified policies in any of those areas. Right to assemble on campus, I mean meet for a group for something that's not school related. I doubt that anybody prior to the late 1960s had any policies regarding that. Some schools had policies regarding newspapers, but not very comprehensive policies. After all this ended, after all that stuff, was codified in great detail because it had to be. All based on legal, and court decisions. Those were the big issues that all I recall.

AS: As far as war efforts go, while researching, we found a lot of articles about students sending "ditty" bags over to service men, and things of that nature. Do remember any of that?

SM: I do, and my recollection is that some of that come from off campus agencies like Red Cross. Somebody knew the Red Cross, or somebody. I remember at Hilhi we had clubs that were involved in collecting money, and putting together packages for Vietnam. I don't remember a lot of details.

AS: As far as the community goes here in Hillsboro, do you feel that the community became involved or not so involved?

SM: I don't recall a lot about the community. This community has changed a lot it was a much more blue-collar rural kind of a place back in the mid to late sixties than it is now. Its much more suburban and white collar than it was then. I don't recall much. My guess would be that Hillsboro as a community would have been more pro war, I mean more supportive of the war than say Lake Oswego would have been.

AS: While examining the Argus, it seemed a lot like that...

SM: Very patriotic, right wing conservative. It was much more of that kind of community during that period of time than it is now. I don't remember a lot of anti-war kinds of activities, or dialogues occurring. I don't recall that there was a lot of objection to anything that was going on school wise relative to the war, the community was perfectly happy to have discussion, dialogues, and argumentation going on, as long as it was going done under control, and both sides were represented. Those are the only recollections I have.