

Curtis Hallam: The following interview was conducted on behalf of the oral history program of the Washington County Museum and Century High School. The interviewee is **Judy Berger**. The interviewer is Curtis Hallam. The interview took place at Century High School on May 24th, 3:15.

CH: What was your situation in 1964-73 with family, where you lived and...

Judy Berger: In 1964 I came to Hillsboro for my first teaching job at Hilhi, teaching seniors in a class, American problems. I taught for three years and then quit teaching, did a little bit of substituting and then we traveled for 6 months in Europe in March to September 1968 in a Volkswagen camper from Germany down to Greece, through Yugoslavia, and west of Spain and on up to the Scandinavian country, so we essentially saw most of Western Europe. Came home, had 2 children, one born in 1969 and the other in 1972, so basically was just working at a bookstore in Hillsboro part time and raising 2 daughters during that time.

CH: What was the economic base in Hillsboro at the start of the war?

JB: Let's see. In 1964 Hillsboro was a very small town. My beginning salary was, I believe, \$4800 for a first year teacher. It was a small town; in fact I was applying to go elsewhere because I was the youngest person on staff at Hilhi. Everybody seemed old enough to be my fathers or grandfathers. Then I met my husband who worked in a pharmacy here in Hillsboro and became engaged and here I am 35 plus years later, still in Hillsboro having seen huge changes. My husband was a pharmacist and he was raised on a dairy farm in Hillsboro. A member of an old family and his aunt and uncle were Esther and Malder Stucky. Stucky road is now located in Tanasbourne. All of that area was farmland and Hillsboro was just a small city. There were two apartments to rent. I lived in one the first year I was here and then when we were married, we moved to the other. That was about what it was like. Small town, very nice small town. I still look back on it favorably, but at the time I thought I should go elsewhere to get out in the big world because it was too small time for me.

CH: How did business change during the war?

JB: I don't know too much about the business world. The big plants, we called it the military-industrial complex, was being talked about by Eisenhower as he warned us of the military buildup, but that was nation-wide. I'm not so familiar with how it affected Hillsboro.

CH: What was public opinion at the beginning of the war?

JB: I look back at 1964 and having been a supporter of John Kennedy who died in '63, we knew that he had sent advisors over to Vietnam and most of us kind of believed in the government. We either liked Kennedy or didn't, but kind of went along with the idea that advisors were okay. It was the continual buildup that started to worry some of us, but we still believed strongly I think in what we were told. It was the time of the cold war, and

we were fed the idea of the domino-effect, that if Vietnam went, all of the other nations, Malaysia, Indonesia, down to Australia and all would go. But we also knew about the French and how they had tried to hold on to their colonial empire and could not succeed. So we kind of heard two stories I would say from the beginning, but basically I think that I supported the government and believed in the McNamara approach and all at the beginning.

CH: Did public opinion begin to change? And if so at what point?

JB: I think public opinion [changed] when [Oregon Senator] Wayne Morse started to speak out. I remember hearing him at his birthday speech at Sunset High School, going with my husband. We respected Wayne Morse even though he was more liberal perhaps than we were, but also when [Oregon Senator] Hatfield started speaking out. We respected both of those men very much and still do. I think whatever date they started to speak out we listened to them.

CH: At what point, and how did students become aware of the war?

JB: My students in 1967, I remember having a project where they had to read the paper daily and record the events of the war, where the action was taking place, and I also remember bringing a television into the classroom and playing the Senate hearings in 1967. So at that point, I do know that we were familiar with the critique through the Congress.

CH: We've heard of a one-day moratorium at Hilhi where all the classes were off for students to learn about the Vietnam War. Do you remember anything like this?

JB: No and that may have been after I quit teaching in '67, I don't know the date of that.

CH: I've also heard that the school board passed a resolution to excuse absences if students would go to demonstrate in Portland. Do you remember anything like that?

JB: I do not.

CH: All right. What was the student reaction to the war?

JB: I remember some students in '67 being concerned and starting to question. I do remember that. But, it's getting further in my memory. I do know that some of my students in '67 did go to Vietnam, and my brother-in-law went to Vietnam, out of Oregon State, I'm not sure on the years. My cousins went. So that was as close as it came to me.

CH: Did that change your opinion at all?

JB: Of course we were very worried about my brother-in-law being over there and we were all very glad when he came home safely. I think our opinions started to change, yes, into the '70s. I do want to mention in '68, the Democratic Convention in Chicago

was a big event in my memory and how the demonstrators we treated there, I will never forget that because we saw all of that on television.

CH: Do you remember anything about the draft law?

JB: I'd have to be reminded.

CH: Okay, did students who had a family member or anything be drafted; did they look at the war differently than other students did?

JB: I'm not sure. I do, in speaking of some personal students, I do remember students wanting to avoid the war and some wanting to get married to get out of the war.

CH: Were there any student reactions to the war or the draft...like demonstrations or anything?

JB: I don't remember because by the time I quit in 1967, there weren't demonstrations at that time. Of course, we saw the Portland State ones on television, but those were not students that I taught, but they were local demonstrations.

CH: Were there any big changes in immigration during the war that you remember?

JB: Not really, I don't remember. Changes that came afterwards, but I don't remember during the war itself.

CH: Were there any major demonstrations in Hillsboro?

JB: Again, I don't remember demonstrations, but then I was raising two children and so, you know, my emphasis was not so much on the student demonstrations.

CH: Was life in Hillsboro significantly different in any way as a result of the war?

JB: I really can't answer that question

CH: Was there big discussion among the staff, like did their opinions begin to split at any time?

JB: Back in 1965-66, I remember Harvey Zabel, who I taught with, was having trouble with some students that would speak out. I believe he was pretty conservative. And then I also remember fellow teacher Steve Ward who was pretty liberal and I know that Steve was in Chicago on a leave of absence from teaching getting his masters degree and was there during the riots in 1968. As far as into the 70's I really don't recall too much locally with the teachers.

CH: Were there any who openly resisted the draft or fled from it?

JB: I have of course known of some later, but at that time I didn't know anybody in particular at that time.

CH: Were there any home front activities in Hillsboro like blood drives for soldiers or letter-writing campaigns or anything like that?

JB: I could tell you a man named Jack Kirkwood, who was a teacher, I think he was at Brown Junior High. He wrote lots of letters to the *Argus* and to the *Oregonian*, very liberal, anti-war as I recall, but I don't know that a lot of my friends really were in tune with him. I think he was kind of out there a little bit. Farther left than some of my friends.

CH: From reading past *Argus* there's several articles about, like a fear of Communism. Was that a common opinion?

JB: Well, the *Argus* is of course very conservative. I do remember Walter Huss, some names kind of come to mind of real fear of the Communist Party. I real right wing and left wing, a lot of communism fears at that time and a lot of propaganda and the *Argus* would of course have a lot of right wing. The John Birch Society was another one and I was familiar with that because it started in my hometown in southern California, San Marino, and the John Birch Society was ultra conservative and I do remember a lot of propaganda from the far right. The *Argus* would certainly play that up, I'm sure.

CH: In your personal knowledge, how were soldiers treated when they returned?

JB: My brother-in-law, and my other members of the family were respected, that served over there. Nobody, to my knowledge, ever said anything negative to them for serving. I think we all, at least my knowledge, was that we all just thought that it was a big mess, and we all wanted it to get over with. And as it dragged on and on and sympathized with everybody on all sides, except I know that some of my relatives were pretty negative towards Jane Fonda and some of the real far left demonstrations.

CH: What was done to help soldiers re-integrate into society?

JB: I think there was financial assistance for college. I believe that was available to them to get back into society that way. And I do remember some of them being hired locally, the fire department, and also I think as far as I know, they were brought back fairly well.

CH: In what years were you traveling?

JB: We were traveling in 1968, in Europe and that's when I do remember France went on strike, a student strike against DeGaulle, the whole nation was on strike, very liberal from the Sorbonne. We were aware of worldwide liberal movements, critical of the war, critical of the United States, critical of our allies, but I also remember Czechoslovakia being invaded by the Russian tanks, and 'cause we wanted to go into Czechoslovakia and were afraid to go, that we might get stuck in there, so the Cold War was pretty real to us

that way. We also were in Yugoslavia, which was a satellite of Russia and I do remember how people were interested in our Volkswagen camper and police stopped us, basically to see what it looked like on the inside. I don't know if they thought we might be carrying something wrong or what was in it, but they were interested. We were in Belgrade when we saw the newspaper that Martin Luther King had died. We were in Granada, Spain when we saw the newspaper of Bobby Kennedy's assassination. So our concerns, there was so much that happened in 1968, was what was happening in the United States, what was going wrong, and then the Democratic Convention erupted and we really wondered, you know, this whole violence that was going on, all over actually. There was quite a bit in Europe and then in the United States during '68.

CH: How was the war presented to you guys here in Hillsboro?

JB: I think just that we saw it every night on television, watching Walter Cronkite and our information came basically from the three major networks and the visual information that we got that way is mostly what I remember.

CH: Did that help change public opinion?

JB: I think definitely. We saw it upfront and close and every night at dinner you saw more devastation. And that the more we saw, the more frustrated people became with our approach to winning the war, seeing that it wasn't winnable I guess you'd say.

CH: Okay, is there anything else that you would like to add?

JB: Just that...the people that have lived with the war and how sad it is that so many lives were destroyed. Just so many things, the orphans that were left behind, just we're paying for it for a long time, you know, and you just wish that it had not taken place, but it's just part of our history. I don't think there are any good wars, except maybe World War II, when the role for democracy, but nothing since then. I also lived during the Korean War and we're not quite sure what that all was about but Vietnam, it's just too bad that the politicians didn't end it sooner.