



Interviewer: Mitchell Ridenour
Person Being Interviewed: Phil Ridenour
Date: February 1, 2006
Place: Cimarron, Kansas

In what period of time, '50's, '60's, or '70's, were you a teen?

Well, let's see, I was a teenage in the late 1950s and the early 1960s.

Where did you live when you were a teen?

I went to high school in three different cities in three different states. I went to high school my freshman in Peabody, Kansas. And my sophomore I went to a little school north of Houston, Texas. The name of it was Humble. Then I graduated from high school, I went my last two years of high school just west of Kansas City in the little town of Grain Valley, Missouri. I graduated from there in 1961.

What was going on in the world at the time?

When I was a boy growing up, this was the middle of the Cold War with Russia, and I remember Sputnik, going up although I don't remember the exact year. I think it was 1956 maybe. Sputnik went up and it shocked all the United State because it meant we were behind and we thought we would be behind in the arms race and that there was a possibility that Russia and the Communists would take over the whole world and we were told to take all the math and science we could take, and I didn't want to take math and science because I wasn't really good at it and didn't like it. I remember when I was 16 or 17 I was going to become an engineer because that is what we were all supposed to do to fight the Communists. Then I when I was like 19, it was the Cuban Missile Crisis where Cuba had missiles that were coming in from Russia, and they were poised just off Florida to blow up the United States.

What was the politics like? Who was the President or Presidents of the time?

President Eisenhower was the president during the late 1950's. Then John Kennedy came in 1960. John Kennedy was president from 1960 until his death in 1963. I was waiting tables at a fraternity in KU, and the cook came out and said the President had been killed.

What were you doing when you were a teen?

We let's see I like to hunt and it was mainly just walking around in the woods with a rifle shoot at stuff with a 22 rifle. I think I may of hit a rabbit that had been about it. I most of all like to read book so I sit around and read a lot of books. Then for a while a couple of year we played pool some buddy and I we would go to the pool hall a half of dozen Saturday and play pool. In Grain Valley we would go to Kansas City and play in the YMCA. We thought we were pretty good.

Did you play sports or have hobbies?

One of my hobbies was collecting stamp and I still have the stamp collection somewhere I did when I was 12 or 13 years old in Peabody. In terms of athletics, I played

football, basketball, and ran track two year in junior high and all four years of high school.

Did you have any idols like heroes or favorite athletes?

I liked Johnnie Unites, who was a quarterback for the Baltimore Colts. I liked a defense lineman for the Baltimore Colts who was Big Daddy Lipskum. Later in early college I became a fan of Jerry West who was a guard. But I have always been a fan of KU football and basketball.

What were some of your classes?

I hated Algebra II and I wasn't very good at it. I was good in English and I remember in junior high not taking the history book home because I pretty much knew all the stuff from just having read books as a boy. History seemed really easy.

What was the price of gas?

Gasoline was somewhere in the lower thirties cents. I remember once when I was in college when I was 19 filling up with gas in North Kansas City for nineteen cents a gallon. I remember once going up to Colorado and gas was fifty cents a gallon.

What kind of car did you or your parents own?

I didn't own a car until I was a junior in college. I bought a wrecked car and another car and took the motor out of one and placed it in the other. It was a 1946 Ford. Then when I was growing up we had a 1952 Dodge and 1959 Chevy.

What were some of the problem you faced?

I don't remember any problems and didn't like leaving any friends when we move to different towns.

What kind of jobs did you have?

Two summers I spent working for my father as a mechanic on a truck line. Then I spent one summer in junior high helping a farmer in Peabody bail hay. Then when I was 18-19, I spent the summer putting up chain link fence in the Kansas City area. Then one summer I worked two jobs. I worked eight in the morning till four in the afternoon as a mechanic and then four to midnight shift in a steal fabrication shop making radar screens for the Distant Warning System in Alaska. I worked 16 hours that summer.

What were some of the modern clothes fashions?

Button-down shirts came into being in the 1950's. We wore spike leg trousers that tapered down to the ankle. That was called the Ivy League look. In the back there was always a buckle. I always wore penny loafers and white socks.

Did you have a draft number at any time in your life?

Yeah I did. We had to sign up when we were 18 and I signed up at the Lee Summit, Missouri, draft board. I don't remember my number. Maybe it was my social security number.

Besides the Cold War, what were some conflicts going on at the time?

The Cuban Missile Crisis where Castro had gotten together with Russia and had missiles put in Cuba. There were airplanes that flew over and took pictures of the missiles and also took picture of the Russian fleet that was bringing them over. That happened later when I was 19. Before that there was the famous incident with Gary Power's, the U-2 incident where we were flying over Russia and got shot down.

How did the people where you live react in this time of conflict?

Well, the Cuban Missile Crisis I remember, I think I was a sophomore in college at KU, and I remember I was dating your grandma and we were worried that there might be a significant problem. We were worried that Kansas City would be a target and we worried that the Russians might invade. So we decided that Grandma had to stay put in the event of an attack and I would go find her. I remember we were really upset and calling home two or three times and talking to my mother, who was upset with the Cuban Missile thing. It was a big deal.

How did you react to the Missile Crisis or any conflict?

There wasn't much that I was going to do. My main thought was to stay in school and survive. I didn't see there was much I was going to do. I did not think about leaving school and joining the army.

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I agree that persons doing research may use my name and my statements without further approval on my part.

By giving my permission for this, I also understand that I am not giving up any copyright or performance rights that I may hold.

Accepted and agreed:

Signature: Philip R Jensen Date: February 10, 2006
month/day/year

Address: 110 W Kansas

City: Cimarron State Kansas Zip 67835