

My Viet Nam Story : Oral History Project at UC Irvine

ABSTRACT

OH#2407

Narrator: Steven C Topik

Interviewer: Susana Gonzalez Ochoa

Date: February 23, 2024

Location: Irvine, California

Sub-collection: My Viet Nam Story Oral History Project at UC Irvine

Length of interview: 01:04:28

ABSTRACT

An oral history with Mr. Steven Topik, born in 1949, having involvement in a number of anti-war marches. The interview focuses on his recollection of his coming of age in the Vietnam War era and a trip to Vietnam in his later life. He was born in Montebello, California, and attended his K-12 years in Fullerton, California. Upon graduation, Mr. Topik moved to La Jolla, California and completed his Bachelor's of Arts degree in History in 1971 at the University of California, San Diego . Throughout his undergraduate years, Mr. Topik attended a few anti-war marches, displaying his strong opposing views of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the deceiving narrative told to the American public. He was drafted in 1971 as he finished his B.A. but did not have to serve after failing the physical exam. The interview provides insight into the draft and the demographic of men who typically served. He received his PhD in History in 1978 from the University of Texas Austin. Mr. Topik continued his attendance to anti-war marches until 1975, yet continued anti-imperialist sentiments through a group discussing U.S. foreign involvement on a radio program. The interview also gives the climates of both campuses during his attendance. In 2018, Mr. Topik and his wife went on a tour of Vietnam, visiting major cities.

After receiving his PhD, Mr. Topik taught at the Universidade Federal Fluminense in Brazil from 1978 to 1981. He then taught at Colgate University in New York from 1981 until 1984. In 1984, he began teaching at UC Irvine until retirement in 2019. Mr. Topik has various publications on topics of Latin America and the history of coffee. Steven Topik currently resides in Irvine, California with his wife, dog named Willie, and cat.

Keywords: anti-Viet Nam War, anti-Viet Nam War marches, coming of age, higher education, university climate, historian, San Diego, Texas, draft, avoiding draft, trip to Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, War Remnants Museum, coffee, U.S. climate, professor
