

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Woodstock Concert of 1969

Personal Experience

O.H. 1299

JOHN R. TURK

Interviewed

by

Molly McNamara

on

November 3, 1989

JOHN TURK

Professor John Turk of 3875 Mercedes Place, #2, Canfield, Ohio, is a veteran of the infamous Woodstock concert of 1969. Professor Turk talks about growing up and going to college in the 1960s. He was aware of the social issues in America, as well as Vietnam. In 1967 he was drafted and played in an Army Band in Washington D. C. He served in the Army from 1967 to 1970. Professor Turk recalls some of the music of the late 1960s and remarks about his impressions. He decided to go to Woodstock with his wife and a number of friends, primarily to hear the music. He was anxious to hear Janice Joplin and Jefferson Airplane. His insight on Woodstock is important because he looks at it from a musical perspective.

Professor Turk teaches music at Youngstown State University. He resides in Boardman with his wife, Lori.

--McNamara

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INTERVIEWEE: JOHN R. TURK

INTERVIEWER: Molly McNamara

SUBJECT: background, serving in the Army during Vietnam, Army Band, Tanglewood, college education, Woodstock Concert of 1969

DATE: November 3, 1989

M: This is an interview with Mr. John Turk for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Woodstock Project, by Molly McNamara, at Bliss Hall, Youngstown State University, on November 3, 1989, at approximately 2:00 p.m.

Professor Turk, tell me a little bit about yourself. Give me some background.

T: I was born in Delaware. I grew up in an upper class--around here, they call it a Whitehead neighborhood. I went to a Whitehead high school. It was the kind of high school that everybody wants their kid to go to. There were never any problems. Sports were important, but not over emphasized. People on the football team were reading their French books and geometry books on the way to practice. One hundred and three or 104 graduated. All but about five went to college directly. Nobody got married. I don't remember anybody using a lot of drugs or anything. I certainly didn't. I wasn't even allowed to drink beer at home.

M: What year did you graduate from high school?

T: I graduated from high school in 1963. I remember the pop music at the time was absolutely horrible.

M: It didn't impress you at all?

T: It impressed me as being terrible. Well, we'll talk about that when we talk about the 60's. I went to college just like everybody else did. My major was music, which was not popular with my parents. They thought, they knew musicians were. . . .

M: Sure, "What are you going to do with a music degree?"

T: Well, "What are you going to do to make money?" Not only that but I was even thinking about teaching. That was pretty low on the totem pole, too. I can remember sitting down with my father and him finally saying, "Are you sure you know what you're doing?" I said, "Yes, I know what I am doing." Of course I didn't, but I know what I'm doing [now]. And he said, "I'll finally leave you alone and that is going to be it." He grew up in Cleveland, and there were a lot of good, smaller private type schools in the Ohio area. So we visited Oberlin and Baldwin Wallace and Heidelberg and several other schools. I chose Baldwin-Wallace because it seemed to have a real fine music department at the time. It was a nice looking college. My parents paid for my education. I did teach private lessons while I was there. It wasn't to support the tuition. I couldn't have possibly afforded it. The people that went to Baldwin-Wallace at that time were the same kind of people I went to high school with, practically. Virtually all white, all upper-middle class. You had to have a certain amount of money or you couldn't afford to go there. I had some friends that were on scholarship but most of it was just kind of a courtesy scholarship. I enjoyed school. There is no two ways about that. I saw very little drug activity whatsoever in the four years I was there. I suppose it's kind of like going to Westminster College now. I mean, everybody looked the same; everybody dressed the same. Everybody listened to pretty much the same music, and everybody was more or less serious about their degree and they were working hard. I practiced real hard.

M: What was the outside like, the whole effect of the 1960s? How did that affect you?

T: I was left pretty much unaffected by what was happening. At a school like that, it is just the opposite of YSU where the students go home every night and the local news is on, the evening news is on. Whether they watch it or not, somebody's watching it at home and it's on. I very rarely saw television in four years, and when I would sit down and watch the news, I had no

idea . . . I remember one time, one of my friends bringing in a copy of Life magazine at the time, and there were pictures of--this was very early, this was 1963 when I got there--horrible things that were happening in Vietnam. Dead bodies and stuff and [we were] sitting there talking about, "Gee, we had no idea of what was going on over there. We really don't know." The only political thing that I really remember happening at all, that affected me, was the day they shot John Kennedy. And like everybody else, I remember what class I was in, exactly what happened, the whole bit.

But as far as the music of the 60's, at that time, meant absolutely nothing to me whatsoever. I was actively trying not to listen to it. I actively pursuing classical music. Any time spent listening to pop music was a waste of time as far as I was concerned. The music of . . . I keep going back to music because I teach a rock and roll class. But the music that I listened to when I was in high school was absolute dribble. It was supposed to be absolute dribble. It was cranked out that way by the record companies so that you didn't have anybody . . . you'd listen to Frankie Avalon and Annette, you know. I mean, there is no musical talent there. There is nothing happening there at all. But they were just being pushed on us by Dick Clark, and that is what everybody listened to. And you know, I'd listen to it at a dance, but that was about it. I made fun of anybody that would spend time with it. Now, I did go to the concerts from time to time at Oberlin, and Oberlin was a much more political school, much more into what was happening, and you couldn't help but noticing that the people all looked a little bit different. All the girls wore these black skirts with black socks and black shoes like they were pilgrims or something, and a lot of long hair and a lot of granny glasses and stuff like that. We saw very little of that at Baldwin-Wallace, and I was going to get into music school where everything was supposed to be a little bit stranger, a little more liberal, and you still saw girls come out to play their senior recital and somebody would have brought them a big bouquet of flowers and put it out there on the stand. They'd have a brand new dress that looked just like a prom dress and they are playing their flute or trumpet or whatever. You saw very few people that looked strange at all. The only contact I had with anything outside. . . . By the way, during summers my parents felt very strongly that I should come home and work, they had lots of money but there was no babying. There was no free ride as far as that goes. I mean they wanted me to know what it was like to work. I worked at a Howard Johnson's for two summers and got to meet all the sludge; it was all there working. And I didn't

have any trouble talking to them. They were all pretty friendly and everything. Maybe I just didn't know what they were talking about.

One summer I worked on the B & O Railroad and with one crew that was all Black. I was liberal enough to the point where I kind of enjoyed the fact that I was spending time with Blacks. It was kind of interesting. I didn't feel threatened. I didn't feel superior. I didn't feel anything. It was kind of interesting. At Baldwin-Wallace, there were virtually no Black students. In the music school, there was one Black student that I remember, and when you are the only Black student at a school, as long as you look like everybody else, as long as you act. . . . Well, everybody just says, "Well, if they were all just like you." And you didn't know it was offensive when you said it.

I went to Tanglewood for two summers after my junior year and after my senior year. Tanglewood is the summer home of the Boston Symphony. It is located in Berkshire, Massachusetts. There were students there from all over the country and I started getting kind of an education about what was happening. I mean, there were people there that were doing drugs. I was flat-out scared of them, and anything that got in the way of playing my instrument and music was just not interesting. I was kind of naive in that way. There were people there that were listening very carefully to the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Jefferson Airplane. Every once in awhile, I would hear something that I thought was moderately interesting. But it was still not the same as going to hear the Boston Symphony play a big piece or getting to play a big piece. I was in a festival orchestra getting to play something with a famous conductor. There was just no comparison as far as I was concerned. I didn't know anybody that was getting pregnant, I didn't . . . I was in some ways very, very sheltered as far as that goes. The second summer I was at Tanglewood, I finished up in undergraduate school and my classification, my draft classification went from a 2A, whatever the student classification was, to a 1A.

M: Yes. I was going to ask you. . . .

T: Right away my classification was changed, and I came from a rather small state and they had whatever the quota was. It was just assumed that I was going to wind up getting drafted. I had even gone and auditioned for one little service band up in the Chicago area, just to see what would happen.

M: How did you feel about being drafted?

T: My draft notice came to my home in Delaware, and my parents immediately forwarded it to my address at Tanglewood. I got it and looked at it. It was like, this is real. Everybody else in my dormitory wanted to see it, especially the people who have already had one themselves. It was explained very carefully in the letter that you had sixty days to enlist. If you did not enlist within the sixty days, then you were officially drafted and you had so many days to show up. If you didn't show up, you went to jail. And there were people telling me that you can go to Canada. It is possible. We had friends that did it all along. "And why don't you try to get yourself declared 4-F." There were ways to do that. So I listened to people say you go to your draft physical and you take enough of this drug before you go in and your urine is going to be brown or green or something for that test. Or look at the sun for 20 minutes before you take the vision test, you won't be able to see anything. Unfortunately the people that were running the draft physical were a little smarter than that, not a whole lot smarter than that, but they were a little smarter than that. All I knew was if I didn't enlist, then I would have been drafted. And when you're drafted, that means unless there is some particular reason why you're not fit for combat, then you would be sent. There was no two ways about it. The only chance I had to enlist that I felt was a good chance was to get in one of the four service bands in the Washington, DC area. Because when you get in one of those bands, then you're stable there. You get a higher rank right away and it's a lot of prestige.

M: That's interesting.

T: So I got in my car and I cut my hair off, because my hair got a little bit longer because I had let my sideburns grow down pretty far. Somebody said if you were going to go audition for the band, then cut your hair a little bit. I had no money whatsoever at the time, just enough money for gas. So I borrowed somebody's Ronson 500 razor or something and cut my sideburns off and the back off. It looked terrible. It looked better long. I put my tuba in the car and drove from Massachusetts to Delaware over night. Then I slept for about two or three hours, and I think I took my parent's car. Yes, my dad had just bought a Mustang. They were in Europe at the time. He just bought a Mustang and left it there. And I thought that might impress somebody if I drove a Mustang down there. That was a real hot car at the time. So I drove to Washington, DC and got there at about 9:00 in the morning and went to the first telephone booth I found. I had been to Washington before, but I didn't really remember much about it. [I went] just to see the Smithsonian. I got

in the telephone booth and looked in the yellow pages, and I called the Army band, the Air Force band, the Marine band. The only band that had an opening anywhere near the time that I would need one was the Army band. So the rumor was if you went to DC and were there, they had to listen to you. So I went and auditioned for the Army Band at Fort Meyer and they were impressed, apparently. So I told him what the deal was. I told them that I had already been drafted. They told me that the opening was not for about seven months. The best thing to do would be to go across the river to Fort Meade, Maryland, and audition for the First Army band--First Army covers the entire New England, Mid-Atlantic states area--audition there, and ask to be placed in one of the post bands that is within their district. Then when this opening came, they would send me new orders and I would go to the Washington band. So I went across the river and auditioned and they said, "Wonderful!" They asked me what fort I wanted to be in. I didn't know any forts. I had no idea. I said, "What I'd like to do is to be near a big city, Philadelphia or New York or something like that. "Well you could be in the Fort Hamilton band." That is in Stanton Island. You could look across the river and see Manhattan. So I said, "That's fine with me." Then I'd have to go back to Cleveland, and I took my draft physical in Cleveland. I took my draft physical in Cleveland, which was exactly how it was depicted in "Alice's Restaurant". If you've ever seen the movie, it's just stupid, stupid, stupid. You'd be there at 4:30 in the morning, and the doctor's wouldn't show up until 9:00. For some reason or other you had to be there, and you are sitting around with no clothes on with all your valuables are in a bag waiting. I saw some real strange people for that physical. People who obviously hadn't bathed for months.

M: They were probably doing this on purpose.

T: Maybe, but I never really saw guys wearing earrings before. I had never seen guys with hair that had went all the way down to their waist. Maybe I'd seen it in Life magazine, but it just doesn't look the same in the pictures as it does when you actually see it.

I ran into a friend of mine. His name is Ernie Watts. He plays in The Tonight Show Band. He was a saxophone player. I went to high school with him. He was there for his draft physical and he said that he was getting out. He had a stack of letters about this high from doctors on the west coast that all said that he was insane, absolutely insane. And I remember asking him if this was for the war and he said, "Yep, no problem." And sure enough, he did not pass. He flunked his draft physical and he was gone and was back to The Tonight

Show Band in about a week. He still plays with them off and on now. And he has produced a lot of records since, but if there was anybody that wasn't crazy, it was Ernie. I had friends that got declared 4-F because they said they had hearing problems. They played in the Indianapolis Symphony. They have hearing problems, right?

So I went through basic training in Fort Dix, New Jersey and learned how to throw hand grenades and all that kind of stuff. I hated it. I was just amazed at how many people there were that couldn't read. They put us in these barracks and I was in a room with, I think, nine other people. They always picked somebody from each room to sort of be the head cheese and it was your responsibility to teach the other people in the room the chain of command, because they have a written test you had to take. The first day we sat down and I said, "Okay, lets write down--we'll start with the President, then we will go from the President to the Vice President." I would look around, and these people hadn't written anything down. They are holding the pencil like this. There were lots of people who were older than I was, and they couldn't write. They literally could not write. It wasn't unusual when you took the written test, there was a room where the written test was given, and then there was a room going off to the side where all the people went that couldn't read, and they read them the test, you gave your answer, and the person wrote down your answer for you. It was a real eye-opener. I mean coming from a school where everybody was. . . . I mean, we really did read Chaucer, and most of us actually liked it. And here, people literally could not function. Then you think, "Well, but maybe they are good with their hands or something." We had to take our rifles apart and put them back together. It was impossible. I mean it was just unbelievable, and these people. . . . The Army would find some place for them. Being a clerk where you would check in something and somebody is supervising you, so you don't really. . . .

M: But it's scary, though.

T: But it's very scary. Some of these people, of course, went to Vietnam. I can't imagine being next to somebody who literally can't speak the English language. It's not so much that you are in danger. I mean, any kind of subtle conversation or anything is just--there is no such thing as that. They talked about women, cars, that's it. They only knew about four-hundred words and they'd use about twenty of those, and that was it.

M: Culture shock.

T: It was a real culture shock. I spent seven months at Fort Hamilton in New York. There were a lot of people there that were very good musicians, a lot of college graduates. But the Fort Hamilton band was not a stable band. That is, once you were in that band a year, then the Army could reassign you wherever they want. Almost everybody, when they finished their year they were beginning their tour of duty in Vietnam, which is their year in Vietnam. After that, they would come back and spend another year or six months or whatever was left at Fort Hamilton, and they were out. So I got to see people that were getting ready to go to Vietnam and people that were coming back from Vietnam. And it was a real eye-opener, too, because the people that came back from Vietnam you did not talk to. You did not say a word to them. They were like from a different planet. They had extra ribbons on their uniforms because they were in combat and all this, and they were sitting there playing their saxophone along beside you, but they never said anything or very little and the word was, "Don't start asking them about how it was," or anything like that. "Just leave them alone. They have three more months to go and they're out. Better not to talk to them." I saw an awful lot of really good musicians. That was their . . . it was called MO, Military Occupation. Their MO was bassoon, or whatever it was that was their instrument, and that's what they did in the Army when they went to Vietnam. You took your instrument along to be played, but most of the time, you were filling sandbags or out guarding or something. As we learned, there was no such thing as a non-combatant in Vietnam. Anybody could be shot or step on a booby trap at any time. I knew people that had gone to Vietnam and then all of a sudden you heard that they were dead. I just played a job with this person and he was the nicest, kindest person, a fine musician. He had a great career in front of him, and then the next thing you heard was he died. It was amazing. I just assumed that the Army mentality was such that they were probably going to screw up, and I was probably not going to be going to Washington. Because you never know what would happen in the Army. Then all of a sudden, my orders came to go to DC, so my wife and I were married at the time. It was my first wife. [We] packed up, put the stuff in the U-Haul trailer, and went to Washington.

M: What year was this?

T: I went to Washington in 1968, or the very end of 1967. I can't remember. Around about 1968. My rank was right away higher, so I made more money and we lived in a real dump in New York, it was like the furnace was built right in the middle of the kitchen. If you ever

actually looked at the place, you would have probably died. And I remember having my parents visit, and they were real cool. They didn't say anything, but you knew they were thinking, "We sent our boy to Baldwin Wallace College and this is what he's come up with. And they seem to be happy." Strange. I spent a lot of time in New York. We had lots of free time. I worked at the Museum of Modern Art as a tour guide, just to do little tours and something like that. You weren't allowed to get paid for it because you were in the military. The only radical stuff that ever happened in New York, we used to do a parade every Saturday down Fifth Avenue, and the Army Band always played first. Many Saturdays during the summer there was a parade coming the other way, a Peace Parade, and people would come up and throw flowers in my tuba. I would walk around with this tuba, and they would throw flowers in it. They didn't call us war-mongers because we would flash the peace signs and everything. They didn't like the color-guard, because the color guard always looked real straight, and the row of troops behind us with M-14's or whatever, they'd be saying things to them. Mostly comments were directed to the reserve officers. Or they'd lie down in the street and we'd have to stop the parade until some police would move them away.

M: How did that affect you, seeing a peace march like that? Did it bother you?

T: Not really. It didn't bother me so much. I remember going to Central Park and seeing a lot of people. We had these real nice Army jackets, and when the Sergeant Pepper album came out, a lot of who were first starting to be called "hippies" at the time would wear those old Edwardian Military jackets if they could find them. Well, the jackets we had looked just exactly like them. I mean, they were really stupid, and if I needed money--I remember I made \$100 a month at the time, and the place we lived at cost \$120 to rent, so we were always looking for ways to make money. We would go up to Fort Hamilton Dry Cleaners and just lift two or three of these, go down to Greenwich Village or Central Park, and you could sell them for \$40 or \$50, just like that. We got to know a lot of people, and a lot of people in the band knew people in New York City, so it wasn't so much that it was separated here. I mean, there was a lot of interaction, and we spent a lot of time in Greenwich Village. We went to Slug's and we had heard the Velvet Underground and stuff like that. So we knew what was going on. I still wasn't really interested in the music yet, because here I was in New York. I didn't spend all my time at the Metropolitan and stuff like that. It just didn't affect me that much, the peace-march thing. Nobody gave me a really hard time or anything. I didn't know enough yet about

what was going on, news-wise. We didn't have a television set. We couldn't afford a television set, and we didn't get the newspaper. I remember there was a television room at Fort Hamilton and when they had the hearings with McNamara and whoever the Congressman was at the time. You know about the Vietnam War, we all sat around and watched, and when he finally looked at McNamara and said, "What exactly are we doing in Vietnam?" We all went, "Yeah, Yeah, Yeah!" It was like, "What are we doing in Vietnam?" But I don't think I was really clear on exactly what the big problem was. I knew that something wasn't right about what was going on, and I knew that a lot of people were bugged about it. I had studied World War II enough to know that this wasn't the same reaction because we used to go to the USO in Manhattan. If you wore your uniform in, then you got free tickets to stuff. So we used to wear our uniform in, get the free tickets, and then change and go in our street clothes. I remember several times, wearing my uniform in on Stanton Island Ferry and having people look at me and say, "war-monger," or something like that. I can remember some of the older officers and the older Sergeant Major, people like that, saying something like, "During World War II, if you had your uniform on and you wanted to see a movie, you went right to the front of the line." People respected you. Now, you walk around in uniform and people spit at you, they would spit on your shoes. I didn't know exactly why, but I knew that something wasn't . . . it wasn't quite the way good old World War II was. Washington was much more spit and Polish. We played at the White House and at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and we played Nixon's second inaugural parade and all that kind of garbage. I started getting a little more interested in the music because there were a lot of people, I mean 400 people, in the band. There were a lot of excellent musicians, and enough of them had come from slightly hip enough backgrounds that they knew what was going on musically. We really did sit around and listened to the Beatles and the Doors and the Stones and talked about what stuff meant and things like that. I started getting much more interested in music, and I remember lots of people. . . . We all looked the same in the band because we all had the same hair cut. We had to have very short hair cuts. But I would look at pictures of people that were taken of people before we got in the band, at home, and, my God, I've seen pictures like this in Life magazine.

M: With the long hair.

T: And now they all look very straight and everything, but the brain hasn't changed a bit. We used to do things in the band, there were ways to . . . you had to be

really clever, because if you got caught, you were in big trouble. I remember there were two or three token Black guys in the band, and every time we would play a job for the Emperor of Ethiopia, I remember when the Emperor from Chad came, all of a sudden this Black guy was right on the front row. They made sure they saw him. I remember one time he played three entire concerts on plastic clarinet, black plastic clarinet with five keys. We sat there breaking up, and they just didn't know. We played some parades at Arlington Cemetery. We did all the funerals. You could always tell maybe when the Tet Offensive happened all of a sudden, instead of two funerals a day, it was eight funerals a day. But again, it didn't affect me. The first funeral you go to, you'd think, "Oh, this is really sad." They did everything possible to make it a moving experience with all the rifle shots and all the stuff and the tearful widow there and the folding of the flag and all the stuff. The guy played taps, and it was gorgeous.

M: But didn't it scare you to think that you were going to have to go overseas to Vietnam?

T: But I knew I wasn't going to have to go, see.

M: By this time you knew. . . ?

T: Oh, no, once you get in the band in Washington, there was no way. I mean, the only way you would get shipped out would be if you lost your security clearance, because you had to have security clearance to be in the band. You could lose that fairly easily if you did something irrational. I remember one guy in the band was in a bar and somebody had parked his car right behind this guy, and he wanted to leave. There was this car parked behind, so instead of going back inside, he tried to force the window down to get inside to move the car and broke the window. Well somebody found out about it, they called the cops, and he lost his security clearance because he was irrational. See, after Kennedy was shot, the ability to get a security clearance, you would have to go through an awful lot. You heard horror stories about guys who were in the Army band in Washington that [said,] "We're going to make a career out of it." And they were good player's. That was going to be their life, nice, wonderful people. As soon as Kennedy was shot, everybody's security clearance was checked again. And there was one saxophone player whose last name was Forikini. Well, he was Italian. There might be a chance that he was connected with the Mob. So, he wasn't court martialled or anything, but he was shipped out. The only reason I knew about it was that he was shipped out to the Fort Hamilton band where he was originally. He wasn't going

to be arrested anything, but that's where he was going to be, so he couldn't cause any trouble. Technically, the band walks into the White House. I mean, I could have snuck a bomb in my tuba. They wouldn't have known. The President walks right by, I could have tripped him and there were plenty of times when I felt like tripping him or playing real loud in his ear or something, you know.

I'll tell you what really hit me, what really got me. There was, I think, a vote in 1969, there were large peace marches in Washington. Hundreds of thousands of people, and we were put on guard duty. We all had rifles somewhere or other. Last time I saw a rifle was in basic training. But everybody had a rifle somewhere, so we were . . . it was cold outside, [and] we were put on guard. We were going to guard the Washington Monument, make sure nobody threw paint on it or anything, and we all had to show up in our fatigues with our boots and everything. We went down and checked out our rifles, and sure enough, there was a rifle with my name on it. They gave you three bullets, because they could not send you out unarmed. But you didn't put them in the rifle, you put them in your shirt pocket. They couldn't send you out unarmed just in case a bunch of hippies showed up with automatic weapons and just killed you. I guess if you knew what you were doing, you would put the bullets in and defend yourself the best you would, but they didn't want you shooting anybody by mistake or shooting yourself. So I remember the one morning, a couple friends of mine in the band said that a couple friends who were in the peace march wanted to know if some guys from the band wanted to come down and play some brass music in front of the Washington Monument. You know, just kind of entertaining, all the people that were there played some light stuff. So we made sure we didn't have any part of our uniform on or anything. We dressed up in the old crummy clothes and went down and played, and the people were dancing and everything. It was really nice. Then we had to go back in the afternoon and put on our uniform, get our gun, and go down and stand in front of the same place and guard the thing. I mean that's when people were putting flowers in the end of your rifle and that kind of stuff. This little girl had put a flower in . . . she had this big white thing, real long. She looked like Janice and said something like, "How can you even point that thing at me?" And I said, "God, don't worry or anything, it's not loaded. Are you kidding, none of these rifles are loaded, you've got to be crazy." You couldn't say this unless the officer was way far away. Then that night was the night when they had the big march that went from the Lincoln Memorial across the bridge. I don't know which bridge that is, but it went to Arlington Cemetery. We

all had candles. I think it was in November, so it was cold enough, the wax was sort of dripping on your shoes. There were just thousands and thousands of these people carrying candles across the bridge and it was almost a religious experience. It really brought this whole thing home. The only thing I had ever seen like that before was watching the one in 1963 on TV when Martin Luther King was speaking. That really got to me somehow or other. Just thousands and thousands of people here, and they were all saying things that I believed. And here, all these thousands of people were there and we all made sure that we didn't have a uniform on and got candles and walked across the bridge. You learned a lot from talking to other people about what was so horrible about Vietnam. Guys said, "You know what cluster bombs are, don't you?" He explained to me what cluster bombs were and I understood him at the time.

M: You met a lot of Veterans that had come back?

T: Well, there were a lot of Veterans that were there. I mean, there were lines, rows of Veterans in wheelchairs, that formed a little group. Sometimes, they would put them out front, they'd lead the way across. There were a lot of people that I knew that had come back, and there were a lot of people, of course, that I knew had died. But there was nobody in that band who had ever been to Vietnam or was ever going to go to Vietnam. There weren't even any Veterans there from Korea. These were career positions. I could have stayed in the band forever. I could have retired from playing in that band three years ago. Some people said it was good that I didn't stay in the band. The band itself, it was a really good band and the music we played was everywhere from really good to really stupid. There were too many parades, too much BS. The mission was not culture, it was. . . . It made people feel good about the war or whatever. The thing that really got me was other than that, we did a show called Prelude to Taps, and the Army band had a chorus there. It was an all male chorus at the time. It was kind of a history of the military. We played it every night for about three weeks and it was a glorification of the military. It was so stupid it was unbelievable. They had it in this big auditorium and the band sat down on the pit and they would play these little tunes, and then somebody would get up and say something about the U.S. Army band and when it first started and whatever, at a battle of the Revolution. Then, the lights would come on and they would have this little parade of people on horses standing there in these positions. Inevitably one of the horses would cut loose or something. It was just so stupid and yet all these Generals and Admirals and Congressmen and women all came in

their furs and everything like this was some kind of wonderful thing. Then we'd go to the Civil War and we'd play "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." Then we would see this guy saying goodbye to his girlfriend. He cried off that way and she cried off this way. And there were these people who were crying, absolutely crying. We had to wear, not just regular ear plugs, but these special kind of ear plugs that you kind of knead into shape and put in, because cannon's would go off in the building. That's all part of the excitement. When they went off, you couldn't hear anything for another five minutes. People loved it. And then we'd do the Second World War, and everybody would cheer and cheer, and the First World War, everybody would cheer and cheer. We'd do the Indian war, and they'd cheer and cheer. Then we'd do Korea, and they'd cheer and cheer. Then at the very end there was this taped helicopter sound, real loud, through all these speakers. Then we'd see these guys coming down from this helicopter in contemporary uniforms with battle dress and all this stuff, and they'd come chasing these people who were dressed up like Vietnamese. They'd make them chase them off and then they'd say something about our present conflict in Southeast Asia or some garbage like that. Well the more I started learning about it, the more ludicrous this whole thing became. I remember my brother and his wife came to see the show. She was an historian and they knew a little bit more about what was going on. We went back to the house, and they said, "How can you do this? How can you play this? You are prostituting yourself." Well it was either that or go to Vietnam. What am I going to do? My brother was in the National Guard, so he wasn't worried.

M: By this time, we are in what year?

T: 1968, 1969.

M: So by this time you were. . . .

T: I don't know what else to tell you. We all knew pretty much what was going on. We all couldn't believe it was going on this long.

M: You were becoming more aware, though.

T: Well, when you know people--I would be getting to the point where I had people that I had gone to high school with that I'd call up. "By the way, Steve Putnam died in Vietnam." You can't believe it. And I knew his family, I knew his sister and brother. They were devastated, and in the band we were doing funerals right and left. And after the first funeral, you don't even care anymore. It's like shell shock. All you

worry about is, "Is it raining outside? Is it snowing outside?" We'd play funerals outside . . . I mean miserable. [There were] horrible weather conditions. We played at Eisenhower's funeral. I think it was about 38 degrees. It was just warm enough so that the instruments would still kind of work. [It was] snowing, and we stood in front of the Capitol for what must have been an hour and a half. So I'd been waiting a couple hours and then played the parade and walked up and played this little Bach choral. We must have played it 50 times while they brought the body up to put it in the Capitol. And because he was a big Army guy, it was a big deal, and there were some of the older guys in the band that were starting to waiver like this. Finally one guy said, "Let's move." [We were] just standing there. I remember right next to us was the television camera, and one of the broadcasters--was it Frank Blair? I can't remember which channel, but he must have had five pairs of gloves on just sitting over there, freezing to death, and he'd look over and say, "Nice day." We played the tune 20 times and you still can't even see them. They still haven't got up to the White House yet. It was a mile to the White House. It wasn't like Vietnam, but there were some real hardships. When you played a funeral, all you cared about was if it is cold outside. Is it raining outside? That's all I want to know. Other than that, I don't care if it's a general or some other guy. We didn't care who it was.

M: Yes. You sort of grow immune to it after awhile.

T: Oh, yes. All you want to know is how many do I have to do today. And after awhile, the rule came down that nobody ever had to do more than four in one day, because for awhile there was no such thing as doing four a day. There might be two or three, then all of a sudden, there were eight or nine. Then they had to make the rule, because there were enough people to spread it around.

M: Okay, let's go to the summer of 1969 leading up to Woodstock. Where were you then?

T: Well, we were living in Washington, my first wife and I. We had a townhouse type apartment in Falls Church, which is 20 minutes away from Fort Myers. We had heard something about Woodstock, and I was getting more interested in the music.

M: That's what I was going to ask you.

T: I was getting much more interested in the music, but it was still a secondary thing. I was still learning Brahms' string quartets and stuff that I hadn't. To

tell you the truth, what I was really doing was preparing myself for graduate school, because I wanted to go to graduate school. I wanted to be the best thing that ever hit that place. So I was learning as much as I possibly could so that when I got there, you made the people who had just come out of college look like fools. So it was still kind of a side life, but there was so much interesting stuff happening musically that was kind of hard to avoid. Then I would meet people from Eastman that said, "Yeah, there are professors that actually played some Blood Sweat and Tears in class." We'd go over and listen to it. It was an interesting piece going on. And then we started listening to Bob Dylan a lot. I saw things happening here and there. One of my friends who was a tuba player in a band started talking about Woodstock. We were learning what was happening in Star Trek was all about Vietnam. There was much more happening there than met the eye. There was a lot of hidden meaning to what was happening. As soon as somebody explained it to you, "Oh, I understand what the prime directive is now. Lets get out of Vietnam." He was married. So the four of us, he had the traditional Volkswagen mini bus. It wasn't painted with all kinds of stuff. They were kind of meek people, and he had gotten it so he could carry his tuba around in it. I also had to have a big car to carry my tuba around, but he had it for that reason and not because it was hip. They didn't live in it or anything like that, there were no peace signs on it or anything. We had friends in various places around New York that I had known in the band up there. He had gone to school at Eastman, so he knew people in the area. We were going to stop and see--I can't remember all of the people. Some of them were friends of his. "Let's stop and see this person and stop and see this person," and then the next day we were going to drive to Woodstock. I remember people we were staying with said, "Oh, you're going to Woodstock?" It is supposed to be really neat." Jefferson Airplane was going to be there. And they had talked about the Rolling Stones being there and several other bands that were taking part in it. Jimi Hendrix was going to be there. That was the big thing. Nobody knew when anybody was playing or anything like that, and nobody had any idea.

M: Was there a schedule for the performances?

T: I think so. When we stayed there, we stayed so far away from where the actual performance was that you had to walk forever to get there. And luckily we had this van to live in. We thought we were going to go up and stay in a motel or something. There was nothing like that there. The weather was so horrible. I can't remember exactly which two days we were there to tell

you the truth. We didn't do a lot of drugs, actually. The Army band was heavily into drinking. We boozed it up all the time. What everybody said was, "If you get through the band without becoming an alcoholic, it was going to be okay," because it was just so boring most of the time, and you'd do these stupid things. We took three or four bottles of Jack Daniels. I was kind of afraid to do any other drug, and my wife was deathly afraid to do it. So we stayed drunk most of the time. Jefferson Airplane was the band I really wanted to hear. And I tell this to my Rock and Roll Class, the thing is that it was just so damn disappointing. I wanted to hear the music and very few other people were there. They'd go the same way you'd go to a Stones concert now. I mean, we went to hear the Stones in Cleveland and that is the last big Rock and Roll concert I will ever go to.

M: It's more the atmosphere.

T: It's the atmosphere, it's having a wonderful time. I really don't care about that. I want to hear the music. Now, when the Jefferson Airplane--they're back together and they're supposed to be doing a tour and everything. If they come to Pittsburgh or Cleveland, I will definitely go. I would just like to see them again. The music that was played was geared to this kind of audience, and the music that was recorded was strictly not geared to that kind of audience. This stuff had to work outside. So you couldn't do anything subtle. When Janice sang, none of the subtleties that came across on the recordings--and they're all over the place in the recordings. She screamed, and screaming is good, you know. Screaming is on the recordings, but it's no good unless there's a lot of other stuff with it. Well to be heard, you just had to scream all the time. There was feedback all the time on the machines. I don't know if it was because it was wet or what, but there was feedback all the time. It wasn't that you couldn't hear it. I mean, we never got real close to the stage, but you could. They had speakers everywhere and you could probably hear it here in Youngstown. But it was all distorted and it was really kind of disappointing. The Jefferson Airplane at that time had done four albums. Albums two, three, and four were just fabulous, musically. All they sang was volunteers, which was after the fourth album. They started getting into nothing but the political stuff, and the words became really important, and what happened musically became--it's better to have a symbol so you could talk about how your volunteers were there and stuff. The music just turned really stupid. Then it breaks up like a year later. I remember some of the music as being really dumb. Country Joe and the Fish, I mean, I have never been able to understand what anybody saw in

that. And then the guy that sang the Beatles tune, Joe Cocker, I got nothing out of that. Now they use it on Wonder Years as the title music. I'd rather hear the Beatles do it anytime. Of course, the other thing is, here's an audience full of people, and no matter what happens on stage, they love it. They just go absolutely nuts. And some things that were happening were kind of interesting and a lot of what was happening was just trite garbage. Everybody went crazy. They were having a great time. There's nothing wrong with having a great time, but why pretend it's a concert. Why not just go and have a great time and say, "Nobody got killed, nobody got stabbed, very few people ODED (overdosed) on anything." We left before things were over. Apparently, then we saw pictures of it on the news because I wanted to see what people were saying, and the trash just went on as far as the eye could see. It was just a disaster. The big thing whenever you're in a crowd like that, what do you do when you have to go to the bathroom? I mean, and they had brought in some of these portable toilets, but they could have used 5,000 more of them and still there would have been line after line after line after line. We were used to living in a nice clean house and everything and I like camping to a point, but not when a person is sleeping in mud all the time. And I wasn't into going down to the river with everybody else and just taking their clothes off and jumping in. Now I think back, boy, that would have been fun to say you did that, but that was not my thing. I didn't want to do that, so it was like thank God when we finally left and got to somebody's house; we could take a shower. It was like, "I'll take this anytime. Jimi Hendrix could play 20 times, I'd rather have the shower," because I could always listen to records, and the records are much better than the live stuff.

M: What was your impression when you first got there and looked around? What did you see?

T: Lines and lines of traffic is what you saw. You know what it was like, it was like when you go to a company picnic, except it just kept going on and on and on. There was a long line of cars waiting to get in and people walking along people carrying all kinds of stuff. It looks like your going to a company picnic, but it just went on forever. Finally, people just started leaving their cars and walking. Then--we didn't see it happen, but from what I understand--there were gates and everything set up, and there were supposed to be tickets.

M: That's what I heard, too.

T: And by the time we got there, everybody just walked in.

M: So you didn't have tickets either?

T: Oh, no, we didn't have tickets. And people were saying, "Did you buy tickets?"

M: What was your lasting impression of this, your greatest impression?

T: How wonderful a shower was. That and the fact that the music was just so lousy. I listened to the album, because I have the Woodstock Album. I listened to it, and they fixed it up considerably. It sounds better than it did live.

M: They probably had to, though.

T: Yes. Recordings of live concerts are usually a real drag. But I was just kind of disappointed that: A). the sound was so bad, and B). they didn't do any of the big tunes. Jimi Hendrix did Purple Haze, and then he played the Star Spangled Banner. That was real neat, because it was all supposed to be feedback anyway, and it was all just a big mess. People were just cheering and cheering and cheering, and we were just sticking our tongue out at people. There were a lot of people there who were wearing flags and doing all kinds of things to flags that you are not supposed to, all that garbage. And I think--I can't remember whether The Who had done their big hit with their outfits made with the British flag or the American flag. I think they had the albums out by then. There were a lot of people wearing flags upside down and backwards and stuff they had made with pants and underwear that had patches of flags and stuff like that.

We talked to people. Most of the people, quite honestly, I thought were kind of like me. They weren't the ones you see in the news reels, dancing around nude passing joints back and forth and just lying there, just crazed and everything. That may have been happening down front, but most of the people that we talked to in the back were, "Oh, where are you from? Where did you go to school? What are you doing now?" That kind of stuff as opposed to, "Man, what kind of drug you got?"

M: Some of the interviews I've done, they've told me just the opposite. One man in particular told me, "If people tell you they didn't do drugs when they were there, they're crazy. Everybody did drugs that was there." And I said, "Well, that isn't really what I'm interested in, but. . . ."

T: I'm sure the vast majority did.

M: Yes, from what this man said.

T: Like I said, we were drinking a lot of booze, and booze is certainly a drug. So we weren't completely innocent, and we were smashed. I mean, when I had to sit around in the mud, it was like, "Keep the booze coming." You don't care. It just doesn't bother you. Nobody was worried about who was going to drive or anything like that. And I remember the one night we slept in the van. It wasn't that bad.

M: How many nights were you there?

T: We were there two nights. I remember we got there in the afternoon, we stayed that night, and then we were there that day. We stayed that day, and then we were like, "You want to stay another day? I don't really think so." And when I heard the people play that I really wanted to hear, for the most part, it seemed to me that there was one group that I really wanted to hear that I can't remember. I really wanted to hear Jefferson Airplane, Janice, and Jimi Hendrix. That is who I really wanted to hear. Then, there were the other ones that had--even now, I was right, you know, they were terrible.

M: When you see pictures in magazines and in Time and Life today, and they make this big hype up over Woodstock, what do you think?

T: I think they are looking for something to write about.

M: You didn't get that impression . . . that's not the way it was for you?

T: It wasn't any kind of catharsis or anything. I think walking across the bridge in Washington with candles was much more of an eye-opener for me. When I teach the Rock and Roll Class, I tell them that there are two or three Rock and Roll text books that divide up the history of rock and roll into sections, and one of the sections goes from 1964 to 1969 and it's called "The Sixties". The reason they picked 1969 was because of the combination of Woodstock and especially the Altmont Festival, where things got really out of hand. It was in California. There was no way we were going to go. The idea that, "Here comes the young generation; here's their chance," that we are really going to form this new nation and everything. . . . We got there, we did a lot of drugs, we told a lot of stories, we listened to a lot of music, and we went home. We left the place a mess, we went home, and nothing happened. It wasn't like all of a sudden that Congress sat down and seriously thought about cutting off funds to the Vietnam War, because after all, we gave it our best shot

and nothing happened. I don't really buy that at all. We were the people going there to make a statement. I'm sure there were people that thought they would, but that's not the way I felt. I think people went up there for lots of different reasons and came across with lots of impressions.

M: But now, 20 years, lots of people look through rose colored glasses looking back.

T: Everybody likes when they were young and the women still looked real good and everything. They felt healthy. You could run around the block five hundred times and those were wonderful days, right?

M: Yes.

T: Well, maybe yes, maybe no. So yes, when people look back now, I'm sure. When I look back at the Army band, I think, "Boy, that was kind of fun." It seems kind of interesting. I mean, we played at the Watergate and all this stuff. You forget all the funerals when you played when it was snowing, all the stupid things you did, all the dumb music you played, all the ridiculous retirement parades. You forget all that stuff. So your looking through rose colored glasses, but everybody does that.

M: Right.

T: People look back at the Korean War and World War II as a great time. I mean, they forget. People were getting their fingers blown off all the time.

M: Is there anything else that you would like to add that I haven't covered? Anything you would like to say that I haven't thought of?

T: No, not really.

M: Do a lot of your students ask you about this? I'm sure you mentioned it in class, obviously.

T: They mostly want to know about the music. In the class, there is always this tendency to get away from the main theme we are supposed to be talking about and start talking about something else. There will even be the student that will ask, "Oh yeah, what was Greenwich Village like?" Because if I talk about Greenwich Village for 20 minutes, there will be less things for the test. I have to constantly be coming back to the music. The class is not supposed to be a sociology class. It's not a philosophy class. It's really more a history/music class. Music comes first, because a lot of that stuff they could learn from millions of

books. A lot of them know a lot of the stuff already and they see it on news reels and on TV all the time. So instead, we really concentrate on the music. And some people might actually find it a little bit boring. People that really like the music but, "I never knew that it works that way," and stuff like that. I was extremely disappointed in the music but you know, that's coming from someone who was at least pretending to be a professional musician.

M: Well, that makes a difference.

T: If I didn't know anything about the music at all. . . . I go with friends now to concerts. The worst one I ever went to was when the Beach Boys played out at the Canfield Fair. We went out there, and they were absolutely horrible. Brian Wilson wasn't even with them anymore. They played all the same dumb tunes. They were so out of tune, they were terrible, and the people were jumping and screaming and clapping and stomping their feet for every single tune. You couldn't hear them anyway. They had a wonderful time, but to somebody who is used to going to a concert and sitting there and listening, "Hey, let's go home, were not sitting here. This is a waste of time." Go home and listen to the record and learn something. So that whole concert kind of atmosphere . . . some people were just genuinely moved by what Janice sang. Well, I would have been moved by what Janice sang at home on the record, and then you go and you listen to her and it's great to look through binoculars and see her, but as far as being moved, what happened there, not at all.

M: Okay. Well thank you for letting me interview you.

T: Sure.

END OF INTERVIEW