

## Interview with Thomas Boaz

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Interviewer: Cassidy Williams and Kimberlie Kranich

Boaz: My name is Tom Boaz. I am sixty-one years old. I grew up in Decatur and currently live in St. Joseph, Illinois. I was a non-combative conscientious objector.

Williams: For someone who doesn't understand the draft or doesn't know what that means, can you explain to them what it means to be a conscientious objector?

Boaz: When I registered for the draft at 18 which we were required by law to do, I registered as a non-combative conscientious objector. That means that if I was drafted I would enter into the military but I would not carry any weapons or fire any weapons. Chances are I would have been put into medical, or cook, or latrine, or some other non-combative nature.

Williams: What were your feelings on the draft at the time?

Boaz: Didn't like it, didn't think it was fair, but it was the law.

Williams: Why wasn't it fair?

Boaz: I didn't think the draft was fair, I didn't like it. It was the law of the land so I had to do it.

Williams: So why didn't you think it was fair?

Boaz: I thought it primarily took, well the people that were drafted were primarily the high school, non-college educated people, primarily the poorer people economically. Statistically-wise a larger majority of minorities per the general

statistical population. You didn't see the politician's sons being drafted. You didn't see the rich kids being drafted or entering the military.

Williams: How did you develop these feelings about the draft at the time?

Boaz: It came out over time. The primary reason is I was an exchange student. I lived in Germany for a year. By applying to become an exchange student I learned more of the politics of the Vietnam War. I learned more of the politics of the draft. Also being in Germany, I was there in 1971/72, I got to know not only German people my age but also being an exchange student I had the opportunity to become friends with people of other nationalities. And we were all basically the same. Spoke different languages, but we're all basically the same. And I determined at that point that I could never carry a gun.

Williams: Was there a specific moment when you realized you would never carry a gun?

Boaz: We had no guns in our household. My parents were pacifists but never political about it. There was no specific moment when I decided this was what I was going to be. It just kind of came over time, and I was reaching my eighteenth birthday, I knew I had a decision to make.

Williams: What does the word pacifism mean to you?

Boaz: That's a good question. One who finds other ways of dealing with issues other than through physical confrontations. I always believed that one should try to talk it out, converse, get to know each side, and come to compromises.

Williams: Would you consider yourself a pacifist?

Boaz: Yes, very much so.

Williams: Can you say that in a complete sentence?

Boaz: Yes, I would consider myself a pacifist.

Williams: Does that mean you are against war?

Boaz: Well that's interesting. I am against war. No, being a pacifist doesn't mean you are against war, but I am. I think there's other alternatives. One of the issues of being a non-combative conscientious objector was that I realize that not everybody believes in those feelings. We do need a military. I don't think we should have been in Vietnam. There are other places since then I don't think we should have been. But we do need a military, primarily for defense purposes I would wish. Even then I could not have carried a gun.

Williams: You keep saying I could not carry a gun, what do you specifically mean by that? What about a gun?

Boaz: By not carrying a gun, I mean I could not shoot anybody. I could not shoot anything either for that matter. We don't have a gun in the household. We don't want a gun. I have not shot a gun since I was maybe eight or ten years old at a camp. I just couldn't shoot anything. I just couldn't take the life of anything like that.

Williams: Take me back to Germany when you first arrived, how was it different? What was the atmosphere like in Germany in '71?

Boaz: It was very similar, very similar to the United States at that point in time. There was still some construction going on after World War II. I did live in Nuremberg, Germany. The main part of Nuremberg was 90 percent destroyed by U.S. and British bombs. Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced. Thousands of people were killed by bombs, innocent people. Nuremberg was

very high in the Nazi propaganda. That was one of the reasons it was targeted. It was also an industrial town, so that's one of the reasons it was targeted. But they went after the inner city also which made no sense to me. I saw what destruction of the war could be. I just got to meet people very similar to me, and I just slowly came to the conclusion. But Germany at that time was very similar to the United States, really.

Williams: Nuremberg, was that West Germany or East Germany?

Boaz: Nuremberg is in West Germany, in the Bavaria region.

Williams: You said you met people that were just like you. Was there any German specifically that sticks in your mind that had an influence on any of your views?

Boaz: No, not really. I was friends with various German people. They accepted me. One of my better friends was an exchange student who was in the United States in Alaska the year before. One reason we became friends also was because he could speak English better than I could speak German. So that was a way to become a friend.

Williams: Did you know any German veterans?

Boaz: The people I lived with. The father was a prisoner of war in a United States prisoner of war camp. He spoke very good English. He became a translator. He was one of the few people over there who spoke American English and not English English.

Williams: Did he ever tell you about the war or talk about it?

Boaz: Very few people, if any, talked about the war. They didn't want to talk about it was the impression I got. I feel like they were somewhat ashamed of it. And this is World War II of course.

Kranich: Tell me more about this family. How did you know he was a POW in a U.S. camp? What role did this host father play in the war?

Boaz: I don't know what role the host father played in the war. He didn't want to talk about it. He did tell me he was a POW and became a translator during this time period. He spoke very, I won't say proper American English but very good American English. He knew the colloquialisms. He knew slang, what you would expect armed forces people to speak. When I was there, he was the district manager of the Dunlop tire facility in Nuremberg.

Williams: What was your opinion on war before you went to Germany?

Boaz: Before I went to Germany, I was really very nonpolitical. I really didn't think much about it. Yes, I saw the news. Yes, it was terrible. Yes, I wanted no part of it. Yes, I didn't think we should be there. But I was really fairly nonpolitical. I played a lot of sports in high school. You could pretty much call me a jock at that point in time.

Williams: You get to Germany. You are approaching your eighteenth birthday. Walk me through what it was like having to turn eighteen at that time period as a man. Also what was going through your mind?

Boaz: I had to go to the Munich consulate to register for the draft. It was a scary time. It was a time of fairly good thought for me. I didn't know how my family was going to accept my decision. I had not talked to my parents about

it. I didn't really have anyone to lean on to talk about it. So it was all my decision. The people I lived with didn't really understand what I was going through, nor did I try to describe it. So it was pretty much my own decision. I wasn't 100 percent sure of what I was going to do until I got to the consulate and applied that way.

Williams: What was the process of registering to be a CO?

Boaz: Walk into the Munich consulate, say I'm an American citizen, show my passport, say I'm here to register for the draft. They took me into another room, just an office, said here's the paperwork. I didn't do a whole lot. I just sat down and checked the box that said non-combatative conscientious objector. Obviously also name, phone number, address, things like that. I didn't have to explain to anybody, just handed them the paperwork.

Williams: Did you hesitate at all or think about it when you were given the paperwork?

Boaz: No, not at all. It was just let me find the box.

Williams: When did you know you were going to check the conscientious objector box?

Boaz: Not sure, probably a couple weeks to a month before that. I didn't have much time, that was before the internet, so I didn't have much way to research it. I wasn't even sure if that was a possibility when I went in there, but that was my whole intent. I had told them that was my intent before they had given me the paperwork.

Williams: So you had said it was a scary time as you approach 18, what were you scared of?

Boaz: I was scared that I possibly could get drafted. It would be an interruption in life if I was drafted and sent to Vietnam. I wanted nothing to do with Vietnam. I thought we shouldn't have been there to begin with. I don't know what I would have done if I was drafted. When I did come home, I did have a one-way ticket in my pocket for a year back to Germany. It was just kind of the way it happened. I could have gotten on an airplane and gone back to Germany. I had considered that. I had considered going to Canada, but nothing ever came of it.

Williams: What would you say to someone who gets drafted or enlists in the army who maybe doesn't understand your viewpoint?

Boaz: I would talk to anybody who asked me what my viewpoint was. I would explain that it was a personal viewpoint. I would explain it's my personal viewpoint. I would tell them why I made this choice. I would try to convince them that there are other ways. But I wouldn't force my viewpoint on somebody else, it was my personal belief.

Williams: Who did you talk about being a CO with?

Boaz: I didn't really talk to anybody about a CO with. I was in Germany at the time. I didn't have my family with me. My parents didn't know until after I had registered and wrote them a letter.

Williams: When you came home who did you tell? What was that process?

Boaz: I told friends what I had done, people who I went to college with, roommates. But I didn't really push it on anybody. I didn't stand out. I didn't force the issue on anybody at all.

Williams: Is there anyone you didn't tell?

Boaz: I can't think of anybody I purposely did not tell. There were people I didn't tell just because it never came up, but there was nobody I purposefully hid it from.

Williams: Did you have any veterans in your family?

Boaz: Yes, my dad was a veteran of WWII. He was in Europe. My brother was drafted, but the day before he got his draft notice he enlisted in the Navy.

Williams: Walk me through telling them you were a CO.

Boaz: I wrote a letter from Germany back to the United States and explained to my father what I did. I didn't know what their acceptance was going to be. As I just said my brother was in the Navy, my dad was in World War II. He was not in a non-combative unit, but that was not a choice he had made. About three weeks later I got a letter back from my parents, and they told me how proud they were of me. They were happy with my decision. And at that point in time they told me about my uncle who was a non-combative conscientious objector in World War II. I knew nothing about that other than he was in Puerto Rico during World War II and had married and come back to the United States. But that's the reason he was there. He was placed in a hospital in Puerto Rico.

Williams: You're writing that letter home to your parents. Walk me through what was going through your mind when you were writing that letter. What did the letter say?

Boaz: I told them I had made a decision. I decided to be a non-combative conscientious objector. I hope they accept my decision. Here are the reasons for it, and here are my thoughts. My thoughts are I could not ever shoot anybody. I've never even been hunting. I had at that point friends from quite a few places in Europe and South America that I had met while in Germany. We were all like I say somewhat similar. We were all the same age. We wanted all the same things in life. I just couldn't do it. I didn't believe in it. I couldn't do it. Like I said I believe that we did need a military. It was more offensive than defensive than I ever wanted but I understood that.

Williams: What was it like getting that letter back saying that they were proud of you?

Boaz: It was such a relief. I didn't know what. I figured that I would be accepted, but I wasn't sure if I would have a home to come back home to. I figured I would, but there is always that doubt. A two- or three-week time frame plays weird tricks with your mind. It's not like Instagram or insta-chat or Skype or whatever it is nowadays. Like you can do it anywhere in the world. No, that wasn't the case back then. Telephone calls were extremely expensive even.

Williams: So back to some of the technical stuff. What ever happened when you came back with being a CO?

Boaz: Really nothing ever happened with it. My draft year they still did pull the lottery. Every birthday was assigned a number. It was ping pong balls or some way. My number was in the 180s to 190s. I don't remember exactly what it was. I believe my number the year before was drafted. I did go to college. You could get an educational deferment. I was going to go to college whether that

was a factor or not. My birth year, 1953, was the first year that they didn't have a draft. So, really nothing ever came of it. I didn't have to prove to anybody that this was what I wanted to do because I was never drafted.

Williams: What would you have had to do if you had been drafted?

Boaz: I believe I would have had to prove to the military what my beliefs were. I had a couple aces up my sleeve. My uncle being a conscientious objector which I didn't know, but we were all coming from the same family. I had ministers. My minister in the Methodist church was going to back me up. And my own personal strong belief at that time.

Williams: Once you found out he was a CO, did you ever talk to your uncle about it?

Boaz: No, he lived in California. We didn't really have much conversations. I really only saw him two or three times after that.

Williams: Where did you go to college?

Boaz: I went to college at Western Illinois University.

Williams: You seemed to be pretty against the war. Did you participate in any protests or anything?

Boaz: Did not participate in protests. Western Illinois had a very large contingency of military veterans that went to school there. I had little interaction with them. It's not that I tried not to have it, but they were all four or five years older than us. I was an eighteen-year-old kid. Yes, I had been in Europe, but I was an eighteen-year-old kid who didn't know a whole lot. These were 21, 22, 23 year olds who had been in Vietnam possibly or other places. So we didn't

have much interaction. But there was very little protest against the war at Western Illinois. I'm fairly nonpolitical as is.

Williams: Even if there wasn't a lot of interaction, do you think it was just the age or even today do you know veterans? Does this ever come up? Do you have trouble agreeing with them?

Boaz: I've told some veterans. And yes there would be some I would definitely disagree with. There were plenty of conscientious objectors I would have disagreed with also. I was not against the destruction of the United States. I was not against a lot of the protests they were putting up. I say they, a lot of the students at the time. I understood we needed a military. You know peace, love, and war, or peace, love, and dope or whatever. Yeah, but we got to have a military. You have to have defense, otherwise where would we be?

Williams: Do you think that you would have maybe participated in even a peaceful protest or anything?

Boaz: I would have given the opportunity. I would have as long as it was peaceful.

Williams: Can you explain more clearly your opinion on protests and the protests of the war?

Boaz: Like I said we didn't really have protests at Western Illinois University when I was there. There was no major movement there. Most of the major protests that you saw were the 1967, 1968, 1969, and 1970. I was in Germany in '71, '72. I came back late '72. A lot of the protests had been over. We were starting to pull out of Vietnam at the time. So there really wasn't as big a

movement at that point in time. Because we knew we were coming out one way or another.

Williams: But the protests that did happen or that you at least heard about, what was your opinion on those?

Boaz: Some were very good. Some were done totally correct: peaceful, get your point across, sit-ins, things of that nature, get arrested for sitting in for disturbing convoys, things of that nature. I have no problem with that. But there were other protests that got violent, got destructive. Major issues with that. They're still going on today for that matter. Not against the war, but other types of destructive protests. And that's not protests, that's riots.

Williams: Do you know any Vietnamese today?

Boaz: No, don't know any.

Williams: What would you say to a Vietnamese refugee that maybe has the feeling that we abandoned them?

Boaz: I would understand their feelings, but I would also wonder why if they have the feeling the Americans abandoned them why they would be in America too? If there were against America, why would they be here? There are other places in the world to live.

Williams: What are your feelings towards the Vietnamese then?

Boaz: I really don't have any feelings against them at all. The reason I don't think we should have been in Vietnam is that we didn't have the Vietnamese support. We had a regime over there who was corrupted who just wanted to stay in power. The people of Vietnam, in my feelings, just wanted to keep

living. They wanted to keep their life, and this was happening around them. There were things that happened on both sides, but you hear more about the atrocities that happened from the U.S. military that I could see turning the Vietnam population against America.

Williams: You never were drafted. If you had been drafted, how do you think your life would be different?

Boaz: It was highly unlikely that I would have ever been drafted. The reason I'm saying that is I would have stayed in school. I would have kept my educational deferment. I did get married while I was in school and had a kid which would have also been deferments. So it's hard to say. If I had been drafted, if I had gone into the military, my guess is I probably would be more political today. More anti-military today.

Williams: You really didn't want to go to war. Is there any other reason besides the not wanting to carry a gun?

Boaz: I thought the Vietnam War was an unjust war. I thought we shouldn't have been there. There was no reason for us to be there. We were killing innocent people. Yes, we were killing combatants on the other side. Our soldiers were drafted, most of them didn't want to be there. I saw no reason to be there at all.

Williams: Where and how did you formulate these strong political opinions?

Boaz: Basically in my applications to become an exchange student and while I was an exchange student I got the opinions of Europe when I was there. I read European press. I read Newsweek which was a fairly liberal magazine at the

time. I just saw and came to the conclusion that we shouldn't have been there to begin with.

Williams: What were the opinions of the Europeans on Vietnam?

Boaz: The Germans I felt were kind of "yeah why are you there?" That I knew. The other exchange students from other countries wanted to know what was going on. They didn't have the full, I don't know if anybody had the full idea of what all the reasons were. They didn't know, and they wanted me to explain what I knew. I traveled around Europe while I was there. The only place I didn't feel comfortable with being an American was in France. One of the reasons I firmly believe in it was that France had left Vietnam, and we had come in after them.

Williams: You mentioned your wife and your child. Tell me a little about your family.

Boaz: I have a wife. We've been married forty years, going on forty-one years. We met in college and got married. I have two sons, thirty-nine and thirty-six give or take, and three grandkids: 19 and 16, both live in St. Joe close to where we live, and then a 5-year-old granddaughter.

Williams: How do you think your political stance and your status as a CO affected you as a father?

Boaz: We never had guns in the house. We tried hard to keep play guns out of the house. It's amazing what kids can turn into guns though. Tinker toys, legos, whatever, they always become guns for some reason. It's just the nature of it. We always tried to keep guns out of the house. Yes, we did have a few: there

was a Nerf gun, a squirt gun, things like that. My wife agreed that we always tried to keep this out of the house.

Williams: Did your wife have those views before meeting you or do you think you affected her?

Boaz: I feel strongly that I affected her. I feel strongly that I influenced that decision. She never disagreed with me on that issue, so I'm sure she had some feelings also that way. But I feel I was a big, strong part of that.

Williams: Did you ever talk about being a CO in detail with your wife?

Boaz: Never really talked to her much about it because it was a non-factor. I wasn't drafted, so it was a non-factor. I didn't really talk about it. Yes, I had told her what I had done. I had told her about my time in Germany. I had told her about being a CO. I had told my kids about it also but didn't really bring it up into the major discussion. They knew what my beliefs were.

Williams: Did you have any notable reaction from your wife when you told her?

Boaz: Not really because I'm sure it didn't surprise her when I told her. It was just kind of my feelings all along. So I'm sure when I did tell her, it wouldn't have been a major surprise to her.

Williams: You talked about how boys will turn anything into a gun. Were you like that too as a kid?

Boaz: Yes, I was. We had no guns in the house. My dad was a minister's kid, so he had that belief also. But yes we had toy guns. We turned things into guns. Yes, I played army at the time. I played cowboys and Indians. We built forts for army, things of that nature.

Williams: Why do think boys are so fascinated with guns and the military?

Boaz: A lot of it's media, I believe. A whole lot of it is media I believe. I grew up in the fifties, late fifties/sixties. It was deemed as glamorous. Yes, all the fathers had been in World War II or Korea. And it was kind of glamorous. It was kind of, "yeah let's follow our father's ways".

Williams: You said your father was a World War II veteran too, but you also say he was very against guns. Did he develop this view by going to war?

Boaz: Never really discussed it with my dad, but I think he had that belief beforehand. As I said he was a minister's child. His older brother was a conscientious objector during World War II.

Williams: Did he talk much about his service at all?

Boaz: About the only think I knew is he drove trucks. I don't think he was every in combat. I'm almost positive he was never in combat. His primary duty was driving trucks. When I was in Germany, my mother and father came over and visited, and he did want to see some of the places that he had been.

Williams: And then your sons, do they share your feelings about guns now?

Boaz: They have no guns in the house. So yeah I believe they do have that same feeling about guns as my wife and I do.

Williams: It doesn't sound like it, but I'm going to ask anyway. Has your views about war changed at all since 1972?

Boaz: Probably become stronger anti-war. I'm pretty strong anti-war now. I've seen what went on with Iran, Syria, the Middle East, Afghanistan. Yes, we need a military. Yes, we need a defense. But going to war in a country to expel a

regime, and then have the people not be able to govern themselves, it just goes from one extreme to the other extreme. The Middle East now you've got the religious fanatics fighting each other which is becoming more and more prominent. We got out of the Middle East, and there is more destruction going on now than beforehand.

Williams: If at all, was religion a factor at all in your choice to be a CO?

Boaz: Religion was a factor. I grew up in the Methodist church. It was never really preached to us, but we are all God's children I felt. I still do. It was a factor. Now can I say what percentage a factor it was or not? I don't know, but it was always in the back of my mind.

Williams: What would you say to some of the soldiers who enlist or go to war because they see it as exciting or want the adventure?

Boaz: I firmly believe a lot of the soldiers do go to war because they see it as exciting or an adventure or something that. It's glamorized oftentimes in the media. I'm glad there are people who do enlist. I never want to see a draft again. There are people who have much stronger feelings to serve our country, to protect us than I ever would. I'm glad there are people like that. There are fanatics on the outside who just want to go and shoot, shoot, shoot. I wonder about them and their mentality. I am sorry for those who never come back. I'm sorry for those who have been injured physically and mentally.

Williams: How much do you share this story with people?

Boaz: Very little. There are some people. It just doesn't come up in conversation, especially today. I did more in college. I do with friends. I don't hide it. It just doesn't come up.

Williams: Have you ever felt any resistance from anyone about your feelings?

Boaz: No, I don't. I think if the draft was today, I think there would be more resistance. But back then, 1972, 1973, early seventies, very few people wanted to go to Vietnam. Very few people wanted to enter the armed forces. That's why the draft was there. So no, I never really felt any resistance from anybody.

Kranich: When you were in Germany or before you went over, do you remember seeing any media images coming back from Vietnam? Tell us what you saw and how it influenced you.

Boaz: There was a lot in the news, and I've always watched the news: read newspapers, watched the news, the local and the world news. And you saw images. When I was younger, and we had just started in Vietnam, there were images of us being the good guys. Things of that nature, us helping us. Yes, there were some war images. As the sixties progressed they slowly started to move to the other side. We started seeing newscasts of protests. Unfortunately newscasts of protests that turned into riots. You started to see more images of Vietnam, of the bad side of Vietnam: villages being destroyed, the Agent Orange, the mass bombings. Then you started seeing the veterans coming home with injuries and being ignored and being told not to wear their uniforms when they came home. I don't think that was fair for them being told

not to wear their uniforms because they were going to be spat on or yelled at or things like that. I don't think that was fair either. They were over there many of them not because of their choice. But I grew up yes seeing the images. That was one of the reasons too. I just didn't see the reason for destroying a country and the citizens.

Kranich: Is there any image that sticks in your mind that you can remember?

Boaz: A couple of pictures. One was the little girl running down the road naked because her clothes had been burned off by napalm and she was burnt, and she was running scared. Another one was the assassination of a Vietnamese spy by the head of Vietnam. I don't remember the names. A picture of him just shooting right in the head, and that was shown live on TV, probably not live. The mass bombings of the countryside. Yes, there could have been Vietcong there, but there were also villages and people there.

Williams: You talked about the Veterans coming home injured. Did you personally know any veterans who came back injured or maybe didn't come back at all?

Boaz: No, I didn't. I was a jock in high school. All of my friends went to college. I knew on the outskirts some friends who did enlist. But I never talked to them after the fact. We just never met up. It's not that I tried not to, we just never met up.

Williams: You talked about seeing all the destruction in Germany. Can you describe that a little more in detail?

Boaz: One of the major images I saw when I first got there to learn about Nuremburg. Nuremburg is a beautiful, beautiful Renaissance city. It dates

back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century or older. It's a castle, walled-in city. Absolutely beautiful. I saw a film taken during World War II of the city, and the destruction to it, and the bombs that bombed it. The beautiful city was 90 percent destroyed. The churches, beautiful Lutheran churches and beautiful Catholic churches, primarily the Lutheran churches, they had taken the stained-glass windows and most of the altarpieces and had buried them. They knew that they were going to get bombed. This way they could save them. They built their churches, their city back stone by stone. There were still places though that you could see it had not been rebuilt.

Williams: Can you describe one of those places that were still kind of destroyed when you were there?

Boaz: There was a church that still had three walls standing. The steeple was about a quarter there. No roof, still quite a bit of rubble, they had just started to rebuild that one. It was off to the side. It wasn't on a main thoroughfare. That was probably why it was one of the last ones to be rebuilt.

Williams: Had you ever thought about registering to be a CO before you left for Germany?

Boaz: My guess, and I don't remember for sure, my guess is probably not.

Williams: How did you even know what a CO was?

Boaz: I had been watching the news. I had been reading the Newsweek over there. I saw that this was a possibility. I saw that with my beliefs that was what I should do. I knew about them beforehand. Didn't really think much about it until I had gotten over there. Like I say, I was fairly nonpolitical.

Williams: Would you still call yourself nonpolitical?

Boaz: I still call myself fairly nonpolitical.

Williams: What do you mean by that because you have pretty strong feelings about war?  
How are you so nonpolitical with that?

Boaz: I am not a member of any political party. I have never run for any political office. I have no desire to run for any political office. I have no desire to become a member of any political party. I have never been in any protests. I have never gone to any political rallies to see what people are thinking. Most of the political rallies I see on the news or read about are propaganda anyway. I don't trust politicians. Yes, there are some good ones. Well we live in Illinois, what does that tell you about politicians? I've just never felt that my thoughts or feelings should be espoused to others other than on a one-on-one type of relationship. I'm not going to force my feelings on anybody.

Williams: Just wondering, are you registered to vote? Do you vote?

Boaz: Yes, I am registered to vote. I vote just about in every election.

Williams: Why don't you trust politicians? When did that start?

Boaz: Probably Nixon. Watergate, things of that nature. Then the more I educated myself about politicians they say one thing and it happens some way else. The corruption, the constant campaigning, the constant desire to have money. I feel that they're making decisions to remain in office versus making the right decisions. Examples: Look at the state economically that Illinois is in now. It was easy to dole out all this money everywhere, yet we have no money. So we've got these major deficits.

Williams: Nixon and Watergate were after you registered to be a CO in the Vietnam War. So were you more trusting of the government when you registered as a CO?

Boaz: I was young and naïve, so I was probably more trusting.

Williams: We want to get a clearer context of your family. So could you tell us a little bit about like your parents?

Boaz: My father was the younger son of a minister. They lived in California. My mom and him met at a college that no longer exists up in Downers Grove. I forget the name of the college. He went to work out of college at a YMCA, ran a YMCA, assistant director in Davenport, then a director of a branch of the YMCA in Dallas, Texas. Then he became the executive director of the YMCA in Decatur.

Williams: When did he go to World War II in that timeline?

Boaz: He went to World War II, must have been after college. I'm not entirely sure.

Williams: Was he married to your mom?

Boaz: No, he was not married at that point in time.

Williams: What did your mother do?

Boaz: My mother was a housewife, a home keeper, whatever the correct term is today. I have three brothers, so she ran us around quite a bit also. My dad worked some long hours at the YMCA because it's open, so she ran us around a lot.

Williams: Tell me a little bit about the three brothers. Older? Younger? Did they serve?

Boaz: My oldest brother was the one who was in the Navy. I have another older brother. We are basically two years apart the three of us. Then my youngest brother is six years younger than me.

Williams: So the brother who is still older than you, but not the Navy one, did he serve or anything?

Boaz: No, he didn't serve. His draft number at that time was high enough that he didn't have to worry about it. It was never an issue.

Williams: Tell me a little bit about your family now.

Boaz: I have a wife. We are going to be married forty-one years soon. Two sons, and three grandkids.

Williams: Alright. Way back you mentioned that you were against the draft because it was mostly uneducated or disproportionately African Americans.

Boaz: Yes. I don't want to use the term uneducated. Non-college educated would probably be a better term to use.

Williams: Ok, so non-college educated or African Americans disproportionately. Did you know that at the time or is that something you learned later?

Boaz: Oh definitely knew that at the time. I knew that a long time before I even decided to be a conscientious objector. I knew it was unfair. The media at that time was pointing these issues out. You'd see stories back from Vietnam and half the pictures would be African Americans and half would be white. We weren't fifty-fifty at that point in time of population.

Williams: Was it just the media that taught you these things or did you notice it?

Boaz: I noticed it in school. The people that wanted to enter the military were entering it right out of high school. People were getting drafted right out of high school. They knew they were going to be drafted, but they had no desire to go to college.

Williams: Is there anything else that we haven't covered or haven't asked that you want to share?

Boaz: I do want to say thank you to our veterans. Thank you to the people in the armed forces now. I respect them. I respect most of them for their feelings and their beliefs. There are some on either side I have no respect for at all. I understand we need a military. I wish it wasn't so offensive, more defensive in nature. The vast majority of wars have been worthless in my opinion: religious or ethnic fights. I just don't understand why the need for it so often. I don't understand why the politicians think it's glamorous, but I still fear for the world and what's going on today: the Middle East, the issues in Ukraine, the religious fanatics, things of that nature.

Williams: You mentioned that there were some on either side you don't have respect for. Who is it that you don't have respect for?

Boaz: I don't have any names, but you do have the gung-ho 'let's shoot anybody who walks' in the military. You also have the other side that anybody in the military is evil and should be gotten rid of also. You have far-right, far-left that I just don't understand. I can't respect them.

Williams: Alright, I don't think I have any more questions unless Kim has anything, unless you have anything else you want to say.

Boaz: No, I think I've basically said it. Like I said, I've said more now and the last couple weeks probably than I've said in my entire life about this.