

Still Feral (and Hippy) In Meeker Park By Kitty Burton

“Us versus Hippies”. The first time I heard this phrase in the Allenspark area, I was taken back a bit. I responded, “define hippy,” and was met with a blank stare. The word “hippy” means many things to many people of varying backgrounds and generations. My husband and I are geriatric hippies. Did we camp out on, and trash, land that did not belong to us? Of course not.

My husband joined the army in 1967. He comes from a military family and volunteered for the army right after graduating from high school. He was sent to Vietnam with the 101st Airborne in 1968. He was a war photographer and carried a camera and an M-16. After serving, he came home to a very different America. He joined Vietnam Veterans Against The War and grew his hair out long.

I was in eighth grade when my husband was in Vietnam. I sold dill pickles after school to raise money to send Kool Aid to the soldiers in Vietnam. Fletcher said the soldiers kept receiving huge amounts of Kool Aid, when all they really wanted was beer. My eldest brother, who had a draft deferment while working on his PhD, was under constant threat of being drafted. He worked with the army

on a computer project for the military, and ultimately never had to go. I wanted to protest the war by wearing a black armband to school, but my parents forbade me. They were worried word would get back to the local draft board in our small town and irritate them, thus putting my brother more at risk. I hid the armband in my backpack and put it on when I got to the middle school.

I wore bellbottoms and halter tops in college. I protested the Vietnam War and had my first experience with tear gas on the campus main mall. I became environmentally aware in high school. A boy I was dating put a noise maker on his muffler. I refused to ride in his car, protesting noise pollution. I was brutal! Rivers and air were polluted, species were endangered and dwindling, trash blew along American highways where billboards littered scenic byways. So much has improved in my lifetime, but there is so much left to do.

Fletch and I watched the news together in April of 1975 as Saigon fell. Fletch shook his head and mumbled “what a waste.” America lost 58,000 soldiers in Vietnam. If a hippy is one who fought against the Vietnam War and for the environment, count me in.