
Alan Rohlfing

KUED interview with Alan Rohlfing

The Crandall Family Cabin, (Vivian Park, Provo Canyon, Utah)

Saturday, September 28, 2013

Tell me your name, spell it, and tell us how you're related to the Crandalls.

Alan Rohlfing: My name is Alan Rohlfing. Spelling is, first name is A-l-a-n. The traditional English spelling. The last name, Rohlfing, R-o-h-l-f-i-n-g. And I am related to the Crandalls. My mother was a Crandall. Ir Crandall is my uncle and Helen is my aunt and Bret was my cousin, so that's how I'm related to them.

Tell us about your relationship with him growing up and what you know about them as individuals and Bret as well.

Alan Rohlfing: Irwin and Helen, Bret's mom and dad, were always fun to be around. They always included you as part of the group. You were never... it wasn't like you were a child at their house. It was always family, and they always included you in all of their activities and just made you feel like that's where you wanted to be. They were fun to be around and they taught me a lot. They were great people. I always considered them as close as my parents. They were great people, so. And growing up with Bret, he was a bit older than me, so I didn't see him a lot when we were young kids, but every time I'd go over there and he was there, he had a beautiful train set in the basement. A great big Lionel train set and he had the little buildings that the men came out of the buildings and moved around and that kind of thing and it was always a treat to see him run his train set, so that was kind of fun, but just always a good time. Ir and Helen would come over to my folks' house quite often and they'd play cards together. They'd come over and they worked the Sandy Confectionary Store, so they would have to go through and close the store, and back in those days that was a package liquor store and you had to fill out the liquor license to buy any liquor, so they had to go through and they had to audit those liquor licenses every night before they could leave, and so it wasn't uncommon for them to come to our house at ten o'clock at night to play cards. And of course I'd be in the bed asleep, but I would hear them arrive and I would always come out to say hi, cause they were just great to be around, so.

They seem like very positive and kind people.

Alan Rohlfing: Always. Always. I never saw them in a bad mood. They were always great to be around. Just fun. Yeah.

Tell me a little bit about Bret.

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Alan Rohlifing: He was, he was a car guy. I guess I am too, so you know, he had a '59 El Camino that he worked on and prior to that he'd take me for a ride in his truck, manual transmission, big long shifter, and it was always fun to go for a ride with Bret. Yeah, he was a boy's boy. He kind of reminded me a little bit of Eddie Haskell, you know. He was active in track and field, very, very active in track and field. I know he played football and a lot of sports, and I am sure that Ir coached him through some of those things, but, and yeah, he got into trouble here and there a little bit. Nothing serious. But you know, he did a little speeding here and there and got a ticket here and there and that kind of thing, so.

Did you live in Sandy?

Alan Rohlifing: We lived in Cottonwood Heights, so we were close enough that I could actually ride my bike over to Ir and Helen's house, and my older sister and I would do that occasionally. We would ride from our house, and in those days going down 70th South, they were country roads. You didn't have that much traffic, so driving from our house over to Sandy on a bicycle wasn't a terrifying event. There wasn't a lot of traffic, so.

Describe Sandy and Salt Lake in the '60s. What was it like? What did kids do? Was it Leave It to Beaver?

Alan Rohlifing: A little bit. Yah. I think so. You know, we all had, of course, there were no video games. We could come home from school and we would play basketball or baseball. We had a baseball park by my house and we played probably more baseball than anything. We'd go over and if we didn't have enough for a team, we'd hit flies to each other and over the wall or some of those other games. So, it was when we moved, when my parents moved into the Cottonwood Heights area, we were the last street in that area that was developed. The house next door to my parents was not yet built and I remember there was a colonel that in the, I guess it would be the National Guard that would occasionally come home for lunch in his helicopter and he would land right next door to our house. So it was pretty rural. And the closest store was on Highland Drive and about probably 60th South and it was a little small market and then you'd have to go quite a ways south to find anything as far as a store or any kind of gas station. It was open and it was, it was not uncommon to leave your doors unlocked and leave your house, all the windows open and everybody knew everybody and so yah it was, it was a rural time. It was more like *Leave it to Beaver*. I remember my dad was an executive type person, so he was always in a suit and tie and it wasn't uncommon to see him out mowing the lawn wearing a tie. So, it kind of reminds me a little bit of *Leave it to Beaver*. When I was very young, my mother was a stay at home mother. She did work at Ir and Helen's Sandy Confectionary occasionally when they needed help, but she started working at JC Penny's when they opened in the Cottonwood Mall. So, that's when she started in the workforce as far as going to work every day, but so when I was young, yeah, she would wear a dress. It was like *Leave it to Beaver*. They...

Was Helen a housewife as well?

Alan Rohlfing: She was, other than they had the Sandy Confectionary, and she was actually very mathematically inclined and so she would do all the books, and I remember one of the things that the store used to get robbed occasionally, being a liquor store and so of course liquor sales were always done in cash, so they always had a fair amount of cash in the store. And they got robbed a few times and I remember one of the times they had the front plate glass window and door, somebody had broken in to get into the store and they had replaced that and it was very expensive, so they had a robber come in while they were open and it irritated Helen to the point where she took the Sandy Confectionary cancelled check stamp that you would use to cancel a check and she threw it at the robber and she actually hit him. She was afraid after that it was probably not the wisest thing to do, but it worked out all right. They did catch the people, so.

What did he use to rob them with?

Alan Rohlfing: He came in with a gun, yeah. Yeah, he had a gun and actually pointed the gun at Helen, and Helen wasn't going to take his, you know, she was feisty. So, yeah, she worked at the store and she was very good at running the books and taking care of all of that.

And they both liked their liquor?

Alan Rohlfing: They did. Yeah.

They partied?

Alan Rohlfing: They partied. Yeah.

Mention a little bit about Bret and Jordan High school... description and visualization.

Alan Rohlfing: Bret was a beet digger. He went to Jordan High School, and Jordan High school back in those days, of course was, I understand, the same contractor that built the state prison built Jordan High School, so they had similar brick and architecture. But my older sister went to Jordan High School, and Jordan was a rural area. There was a lot of sugar beet farmers in that area, a lot of fields and Bret had his dog Stubby. They would go out in the fields and you know, he'd work his dog as far as, Bret was an active hunter. I know he would go rabbit hunting quite a bit and he'd go deer hunting and duck hunting. I inherited some of the decoy ducks that they had. So, he was quite active in that. In that era, going out towards what is the West Jordan landfill now, that was all wide open and there, it was not uncommon at all to have

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people out there rabbit hunting in those areas, so he'd take Stubby in the truck and they'd go out and rabbit hunt and you know, he was a good old Utah boy. Absolutely. He was definitely somebody that you could put in the country and he'd be right at home anywhere you'd put him, so.

Which proved to benefit him in Vietnam with his sniper skills.

Alan Rohlfing: And Helen mentioned that. She said that when Bret went to sniper school, that I guess he had a very good eye, a keen eye for picking out game and I've had friends that were good at that as well, and you would go hunting with them and they would point out a critter on the mountain and I couldn't see it, but Bret was one of those people that could. He could spot game very well and Helen credited that to being a real boon for him when he went to sniper school, that he was very good at it.

Talk about his drafting in 1967. Was this difficult for Helen and Ir as Bret was their only child?

Alan Rohlfing: I don't remember them thinking that that was a challenge when he got drafted. I remember Helen was always very in tune to the news and she was always watching about developments in Vietnam and Southeast Asia and the Paris Peace Talks and all of those things, but when Bret got drafted it was just kind of a rite of passage. Everybody got drafted back then and Vietnam of course was just getting going big-time in '66 and '67. So, prior to that, I don't think anybody really was, I don't think they had big concerns. Of course, they're worried that he is going overseas and such, but it wasn't like this was the end of the line. So he was proud to do his patriotic duty and I think everybody was proud of him. And of course after he was drafted and went over there then the war started really getting out of control, I guess you'd say and escalating and then, you know, you started worrying. You started seeing people coming home all the time and you'd see the nightly news every night. It was something about Vietnam on there and they'd have body counts and so it became a concern, but when he initially went I don't think there was that concern. It was, okay he's going to be a soldier and, you know, he'll do his patriotic duty and he'll come home and we'll go on from there, so, yeah.

The reoccurring theme (on the cassettes) that Bret will be back, will return, was so sad. Talk about the family plans.

Alan Rohlfing: They were a very close family and Bret was the apple of Helen's eye and they were very close and they would sit down at the dinner table and they would talk about events and Helen was always, you know, involved in Bret's life, she cut him some slack and let him get in trouble where he did and things, but she was a loving doting mother and she always was concerned and interested in what he was doing. And so they would sit down and have discussions and I remember being involved in a few of those. They were, you know, it was always, Helen was a very intense person and I don't think anything got past her. She was always knew the day's news. She

always knew current events. She, she knew sports. She was just a very interesting lady. And, and her and Bret were very close and Ir was the epitome of a sportsman. He loved football. He loved baseball, anything sports, he would like watch, you know, the Wide World of Sports on TV and that and it didn't matter if it was football or baseball or whatever. He liked it. And I think he carried that with Bret as far as loving athletics, hunting and outdoors, and that kind of thing so.

Bret was an only child. Did Helen have Bret at a later age?

Alan Rohlifing: Well, she probably had Bret at a later age because of World War II with her being involved in the war and getting... Ir went to the South Pacific Theater. He was in the Navy and of course they had Bret when he got back from the Navy after World War II, and it wasn't uncommon. I've got a big gap between my sisters and myself because of the war. But I think that's why they got a late start, and, yeah, they just had Bret as their only child and they were certainly a close family. I know that they would go skiing a lot together. My uncle Ir would drive the ski school bus for Pete Carlston Ski School up in Alta and there was another gentleman, Lavell Edwards, also drove a bus for Pete. So they would drive to school early, the ski bus up Alta and Bret was a very good skier and had nice professional style skis and HEAD skis back then. They were the ones everybody wanted and he had HEAD skis and he was a very good skier and he went a lot and my sister and Jan Carlston, there were a lot of people that would go with him and they said he was a hotdog skier. He, it was hard to keep up with him, so he was very good at that.

It is cool that they skied as a family.

Alan Rohlifing: Yeah.

Did you and Bret write letters back and forth from Vietnam?

Alan Rohlifing: I did. I wrote letters back and forth. I baked him cookies. I was a pretty good cook and I would send him cookies. He liked the chocolate chip cookies and my mother would save tins that I guess like fruitcake or something like that would come in and she would save those tins and we'd wrap the cookies in there and ship them to him. And I know he always complained that the water over there was horrible and that you had to doctor the water to make it palatable and so he asked, "If you send a package over, I really like the Wyler's soft drink." At that time, I'm not sure if it was the only one that was self-sweetened, but at any rate, it was. And so I guess they would put the Wyler's soft drink mix in their canteens and that's how they got the water down over there, so. We would always send a package with cookies and the Wyler's soft drink and, oh he wanted pens and paper. So we'd send stationary supplies and I'd try to write him, oh, probably once a week, maybe once every couple of weeks, but we stayed in

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touch and Bret always would write back and he'd usually write a letter to the family rather than just to an individual, but there would be portions for everybody in there.

I was amazed at how much he wrote to everyone. And the cassette and reel-to-reel recorders, that became the mode of communication back then.

Alan Rohlifing: That was the new thing. Absolutely. He, you know, the war was like I say, you'd see it on the TV. There they are fighting and, and the modes of communication were coming through where they could do the little cassette tapes and so I guess some of the other soldiers, I'm sure that's how Bret found out about the cassette tapes, but they were communicating back and forth with cassette tapes and Bret said, "Mom and Dad, you've got to get..." and he was very specific with what brand he told them to get. You know, I want you to get a Panasonic or a Sony or whatever it was, and here's the model number and we can send these tapes back and forth and so Helen, you never threw a gantlet down to her like that. She'd find the exact model and so she, I'm sure, they got the exact one that he wanted and as they communicated back and forth tapes and those were very interesting to listen to, obviously. You'd hear the fire motors in the background. You'd hear the helicopters in the background on Bret's end and then on Irwin and Helen's end you could hear them describing their life and they were trying to include Bret in what they were doing. So if they were having a party and maybe mixing a couple of cocktails, you'd hear the ice in the background and you'd hear, you know, you'd hear them all hooting and hollering and I think they stayed in communication with that mode of communication and it worked out well for them. It was great.

It seemed like an unusual relationship for a teenager to have with his parents. They talked about everything together.

Alan Rohlifing: They did have a very loving relationship and Irwin and Helen were so, you know, at the time, there was a lot of people that didn't care for the hippies and you had the peace movements over here and Irwin and Helen were always very understanding of why those people would choose that lifestyle and, and they communicated that with Bret, you know, that you don't need to be that way, but let those people that are that way, be that way, so they were just great. You know, it was just...

Did you notice any change in his letters from when he entered to before he was wounded and his attitude about the war? He seemed to change some.

Alan Rohlifing: He did. His initial letters seemed very upbeat and he was talking about the beauty of the country of Vietnam and the, you know, he was very, I guess it was a new experience for him and he was describing what it was like over there and it was just matter of fact. And then later on, you could tell that it was grinding on him and that his attitude was getting to where he was frustrated and you could just sense that the tension was in his letters and particularly after he became a sniper that it just seemed

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like it was just nonstop tension, and yeah, I sense that very much in his letters. Absolutely.

He wanted to get home.

Alan Rohlifing: He wanted to get home. Yeah. Absolutely.

Do you remember receiving a letter about his first and only VC kill?

Alan Rohlifing: We did. And Helen talked about that. He felt very bad, obviously.

Can you describe it?

Alan Rohlifing: When Bret, when we got the letter that Bret had killed his first VC, and he was very upset about that in the fact that he had taken another human's life and he said, "I hope God forgives me for what I've done." Obviously in the situation he's in, you're in a war and it's not a choice, but yeah, you could sense that it really drew on him and, you know, it took its toll on him. I'm sure taking somebody else's life was not easy for him, so. Yeah. It was tough and you could sense that in his letter. He was, "Dear God, please forgive me for what I've done" kind of thing, but life goes on and he knew that.

Let's talk about Helen and Irwin and their concern about Bret's service. Were they concerned and quietly anxious?

Alan Rohlifing: Very much so. Helen was, like I'd say, she'd watch the news every day. She'd read the, any kind of a periodical. *Newsweek*, *Time* magazine, anything, *Life* magazine, and she would do clippings and she would, she had maps and she'd put pins in the maps of where the different troops were located and she was very.... She kept meticulous records of that and knew exactly and she was keeping track of the military but also keeping track of the Paris Peace Accords and watching what was going on with the peace talks and how they were stalling and why can't these politicians get their stuff together, and yeah, she was, didn't miss a beat with that. She was very in tune to what was going on over there. And I remember, she would always give the family updates of where the troops were and where they were going and what the troops were saying and so we got what was going on TV, but we also got, kind of a firsthand account through Helen of what Bret was telling her and what she observed from his letters and tapes and I guess from some of the other soldiers that maybe would send tapes as well or would be on the tape, so it tied everything together. And yeah, she didn't miss a beat with that, and they were very concerned. It was, as the war escalated, it just kept getting worse and worse, and there were more people coming

home in body bags and it was out of control. So, yeah, I think, you know, they really developed concerns as the war grew on.

How did they pass their time?

Alan Rohlifing: Helen was, like I say, she was very meticulous with, she loved mathematics and she was an active... loved to knit. She would find a sweater that she liked, and she would design it on paper. Then she would mathematically figure how many stitches she needed to do, a particular cable and she would make these sweaters. She was always knitting sweaters and she knitted a lot of sweaters. She knitted them for other family members and for friends, and she also was very active with puzzles, always had huge puzzles with you know, 2000 pieces or 1500 pieces and the harder the better. I remember a couple of them. One of them was a big giant crossword, not crossword, a jigsaw puzzle of pins. And you can imagine a picture with a couple of hundred thousand pins. There's really no reference to find the pieces, and so they would find these puzzles that just, the harder the better. They had a whole rack of, in their house, a stack of jigsaw puzzles. And Ir would come in and he'd walk past and he'd put a piece in and then he'd walk in the other room and then he'd come back in the room and he'd put a couple more pieces in and they would work on puzzles a lot. So, Helen also did crossword puzzles and anything, any kind of brainteaser. She was always active with those, so. Yah.

What did the cabin mean to the Crandall family?

Alan Rohlifing: Oh, they loved this cabin. They had Stubby, and Stubby would run free, free roam here. He was, he was over in the pond swimming or he was running up and down the creek out in front. So, as a family they would come up here and we would come up, they would be here pretty much every weekend during the summer from Memorial Day through Labor Day, just about every weekend they were up here and they'd even come up now and then during the weeknights and stay for a night. But for sure on the weekends and we would come up as a family and join them and barbeque and we, the creek out front was just a natural creek, so we would put our watermelons and our pop out in the creek to cool it and we'd wade out and bring it in and it was always a fun time up here and they had a badminton net out here. We'd play badminton or when it would get dark, we'd hike up in the woods and play hide and seek and it was just always a good time. And Ir was a great barbeque-er. Helen was a wonderful cook. She used to cook some. I'd like to recreate her roasts, cause she used to put a roast in the oven and I don't know how she did it, but I've never had one as good as what she used to cook and she'd do the vegetables around it and so-on. But, yeah, it was always just a good time up here. And I caught my first fish up here and Bret helped me take the fish off the hook. I was very young then. Probably about five, six years old when I caught my first fish up here, but yeah, we used, we used to catch them over here in the creek and so it was just a great place to come. Great place to..

Was the cabin a refuge for Helen? Is this where she mourned after Bret's death?

Alan Rohlifing: There was a time after Bret passed away that Helen didn't want to be here, and I think it was because of the memories that the place brought. So, there was a bit of a time there where she didn't want to be here, and Ir still wanted to come up here. He loved it up here and so we would come up occasionally without Helen and I would come up and Ir and I would sit and chat and have a good time, but eventually Helen came back and they stayed here. They would come up and stay in the summer. They lived in St. George in the winter and they would come up here in the summer and they would stay for a couple three months and I was always hopeful that they would come back for the summer, 'cause I could come up here and see them and it was a long drive to go down to St. George, so it was a lot easier to come see them up here. And they pretty much kept coming back, but there was a period there when Helen was, the memories were too hard for her, and she didn't want to come up here for a while, so.

Could you see Helen had changed quite a bit? Did it take a while for her to become a happy person again?

Alan Rohlifing: Yeah, she still was a happy person, but there was a flame that died in her. You could tell that a big part of her was missing. Eventually I think she got her life back to where she could, I don't know if *function* is the right word, but she got over it eventually, but there was a period there when, yes, you could tell that it definitely took a big toll on her. But, she was still a happy person. You could just tell that it was a big part of her life that was missing, and she never got that back obviously, but.

Tell us what you know about Bret being wounded and ending up in the hospital in El Paso.

Alan Rohlifing: Well, of course we got word through Helen and Ir that Bret had been wounded and that it was serious wounds. It was life-threatening wounds. Initially, he was sent to a hospital ship, is what we were told, and that the hospital ship was -- Helen marveled at the technology that they had and that he couldn't be under better hands. That the people that were on these ships were topnotch surgeons and that the materials and equipment that they had was nothing but the best and they were doing everything they could for Bret. And so they were very hopeful that he was going to pull through this and recover. And when he got to the hospital in Texas, I know there was a period there when Bret was getting a lot better. Helen and Ir went from Phoenix over to Texas, and Helen spent all the time in Bret's room. I'm sure she slept in the room. I don't know that she left there, but Bret was recovering nicely at one point before there was a relapse. And we would get reports back from Helen and Ir where, you know, that, "Oh, today was a good day, Bret was able to sit up and talk," and then of course you'd have the other days where "Today was not a good day and you know it didn't look well." And so it was

back and forth for a while there, but they were obviously very hopeful that he was going to pull through and it seemed for a while that he would, but I guess it didn't happen, so.

It was a quick decline.

Alan Rohlifing: It was a quick decline.

It must have surprised Helen greatly.

Alan Rohlifing: I remember, and I don't remember which holiday it was. It could have been Father's Day. It could have been Christmas, but it was a time when Bret was in the Texas Hospital when Ir said, "I just got the best present. Bret was able to sit up and talk and he's coming around. He looks great." You know, so it was like, wow, this is, it's coming back, he's going to make it. And then shortly after that it went downhill, so.

The death certificate said encephalitis.

Alan Rohlifing: I saw that. I didn't know that until, Helen didn't talk about that after Bret's death.

Helen didn't talk about what?

Alan Rohlifing: Helen didn't talk about specifics of Bret's death. We knew that he had been injured by a landmine, or booby trap, a landmine, whatever it was. But we knew that it affected his legs and we knew that he had shrapnel in his head. We knew that the wounds were very serious. But when Bret finally passed away, Helen didn't give us specifics as to, he died from this or this or exactly what it was, at least not to myself or to my family that I'm aware of. We just assumed it was due to war injuries, wounds that he received. But I wasn't aware of the encephalitis until after, and so I read that myself and it was, I know the conditions over there were horrible and for bacteria and for infection and everything. Yeah, they talked about always maintaining their feet because they did so much humping when they were running through the jungles and their feet would get sores and blisters, and I know that was always a big concern for him. So, the conditions over there had to be horrible for, especially after getting wounded that infection would develop or whatever.

If it was bad blood, that transfusion would have happened either in the Naval Hospital or the hospital in Japan or El Paso.

Alan Rohlifing: Yes, I don't know where it came from. I wouldn't know. That was news to me as far as the bad blood and it's again, I'm sure they weren't as careful in those days prior to the AIDS epidemic. AIDS wasn't a concern. It hadn't occurred yet, and so I know they'd screen blood but not nearly as carefully as they do now and of course with the war going on and there were people that I'm sure would sell their blood to make a few bucks cause they were always in need of a blood supplies and they were begging

people to donate and those kind of things. So, I could see where a tainted blood supply could happen. Didn't know that that was a concern at the time, but looking back on it now, it's like, yeah, I could see that.

You wonder how many other...

Alan Rohlfig: Exactly. Yeah, there could have been a lot of them. And even though I heard from Jan Carlston that perhaps the hepatitis was the cause and Bret could have probably pulled through that had he been not in his weakened condition. But he had already gone through everything that he'd gone through and he was hanging on to life and then he had this happen. It was the straw that broke the camel's back is what I heard there, but I guess I don't know.

Ultimately... he's gone.

Alan Rohlfig: He's gone.

And that is the result of his wounds.

Alan Rohlfig: Yes. Bret was killed in Vietnam. There's no other way to say it. Whether it was a booby trap or a landmine or what happened, but he was wounded and he died as a result of those wounds. Will never know how that happened. Don't know what triggered it. What happened. Don't know, but he's not with us any longer and it was a cause of the war.

Vietnam veterans did not have a warm homecoming as you know.

Alan Rohlfig: I do know.

Did Ir and Helen notice this while Bret was serving? Did they notice this whole movement changing in the country and especially after he died?

Alan Rohlfig: They did notice that. Ir and Helen were very cognizant of the fact that the Vietnam Veterans coming home were not treated well. You know, it was on the news where they were getting spit on, being called baby killers, and a lot of that was the -- I'm not going to say the hippy movement, but there were crowds of people that were always protesting the war. And you know, every night on the news you'd see protests of the war and a lot of them were the way they treated the veterans was not right. I recall one of the soldiers taking his medals off on a bus coming back and throwing them at the bus. That one sticks in my mind from the news. My neighbor, I know my neighbor across the street from where I live is a Vietnam Vet, and he said when he came home from Vietnam, he flew into Oakland and they recommended that they change their

clothes into civilian clothes before they land because they didn't want them to get spit on, and what a way to treat our soldiers.

I can imagine Ir and Helen's reaction to watching this happening.

Alan Rohlifing: I remember Helen having a lot of compassion for the people that were escaping to Canada to avoid the draft that she says, after seeing what's going on with the war and the people that are the way they are treated. She says, "Frankly, I don't blame some of those people for leaving and going to Canada and trying to avoid the draft." Yah, I think they were very cognizant of the fact that the veterans were not being treated well, and it's too bad that today's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, at least we appreciate what our veterans are doing for us and back then, I don't think that was the case and that's too bad.

Dale Hansen said he got very close to Irwin and Helen, and especially Helen, and that he was a little concerned that he was a surrogate son. Were you aware of that dynamic?

Alan Rohlifing: I wasn't aware of that. Helen spoke highly of the people that had come to see them in Phoenix, Dale being one of them, and she was so thankful that they thought enough to come and see them. And I wasn't aware, I can picture that happening. I can picture Helen being the mother hen and saying, "I just want to hear everything you have to say and be concerned about you." And yeah, I can picture that happening, but I had not heard that before, no.

He was very taken by them as well. He loved their graciousness. So why do you think this story is important for others to hear?

Alan Rohlifing: I suppose it's important to know that as a country if we send our people to fight a war in a foreign land that we support them and it's too bad politics got involved in that war, but people are affected by war obviously. Everybody knows that, but a lot of people were hurt bad during that war and I don't think a lot of people realize or I don't know what I'm trying to say here with that. But I think a lot of people just thought, "Oh, it's just something that's happening. Don't worry about it. It doesn't affect us." But it affected a lot of people, and I know when I see our servicemen now, I work at the airport, so when I see our servicemen now that are dressed in their uniforms, are going to serve our country, I don't always, but I thank quite a few of them for their service. That didn't happen in Vietnam and it should have.

Can you talk about how what the families are going through when they have loved ones serving?

Alan Rohlifing: Yeah, I suppose now we understand the scope of, there's been so many wars, Afghanistan, Iraq, but we understand, I think, as a country that families are involved, but back then, I am not certain that if you weren't involved that you'd even

gave it much thought. I think there were people that actually got annoyed with it being on the news every night. It's like, "Uh, do we have to listen to this again?" And there were others that had people involved in Vietnam that couldn't get enough of it. Let's see where they're at, what are they doing, what's going on with the Paris Peace Talks. So, I guess it depended on if you had somebody that was involved in the war or not. But, of course, with the mandatory draft, there were a lot of people that were drafted and they didn't have a choice. They went over there to serve their country and did the best they could and then they got treated poorly for it. So, it was a dark time for our country for sure.

Can you imagine being Helen and Ir in this situation? As parents, knowing that there is this underlying quiet and worry.

Alan Rohlifing: Well looking at the way Irwin and Helen handled that war, if I were, if I were a parent of a child that was in Vietnam, I would want to be just like them. They kept him in their thoughts every minute. They kept track of every step of where he was at, when he was there, where he was going next, what he was doing. They were cognizant of the fact that he was out there with a Bic lighter trying to see his cassette at night. And here they are in their kitchen with the lights on, so they tried to put themselves in his position. And I think as a parent you would hopefully try to do that. If I was, if I had a son or daughter serving in the military, I would try to think, I would hope I would try to think like they did. That here is the situation they are in. I understand it. I get it, and be aware of what they're going through, so.

Parents responded very differently to their sons and daughters' service. Some were supportive, others were not.

Alan Rohlifing: Absolutely. My neighbor that I spoke of that lives across the street from me, when he got back from Vietnam his father said, "Well, you were the first Americans to lose a war," and so here he had come home, been told to change out of his military uniform so he didn't get spit on, gets home, and his father tells him that, "Well, you're the first Americans to lose a war for us." And I'm thinking, "Wow, that's not the way to treat your children. That's not the way to treat a patriot, somebody that's gone to war for your country."

How can people provide support to troops today or to families at home?

Alan Rohlifing: I think people are doing a lot better at it. People are aware today that our country is sending people into harm's way. Our country is more supportive today. You see rallies for people that are going to war, that are going to serve the country and you hear stories of the feel-good-stories. You see, like on the news, on HLN or HNN news every morning, they have a clip for somebody that's in the service and

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somebody's talking about a family member that's over there and it gets, it gets noticed. People are aware of that. I think people appreciate now that, especially being I guess a voluntary military, people are enlisting and people are supporting them more. So, I think we've come a long way in treating our soldiers with respect.

I do too. Is there anything else you want to talk about?

Alan Rohlifing: Oh probably, but I can't think of any. I didn't have to serve in Vietnam. I am glad I didn't. Again, when I was, I survived the lottery, the draft lottery. I drew a 364 number, didn't have to go. Right shortly after I would have been drafted. When Nixon was elected, they stopped the fighting in Vietnam and brought people home. But I was glad I didn't have to go through what Bret did and what my neighbor did and what some of those veterans did, so.

If Bret were here today, what would he be doing?

Alan Rohlifing: If Bret were here today, I'm sure he would have children. I'm sure he'd be a great father. I'm sure he'd be out there playing baseball or football or he'd be kind of like Ir. He'd be passing that fatherhood gene on to his kids. He would have been fun to be around. He would have been active. He probably would have been hunting and fishing and he would have been, I picture him, he worked at Kennecott before he left, probably doing some kind of construction job like Kennecott or something similar to that. But I think he would have been a successful person and he would have been a successful parent and probably just fun to be around. So, it's too bad we lost him. He was a great guy.

Anything else?

Alan Rohlifing: I can't think of anything. They were great people. I'm proud to be part of them. I am proud to be family to them.

Can you explain how you stumbled across his story or his cassettes?

Alan Rohlifing: Yeah, when Irwin and Helen passed away, I was the executor of their estate and so we had to go to St. George and we had to go through their storage facility and we boxed everything up and we put it on a trailer and we brought it up here and we put it in our storage. And we went through pots and pans and things that we could donate and that we didn't need, that other family members didn't need. We kept a lot of family history things that we ran across. But, we probably didn't do as good of an inventory job going through box to boxes as we could have. Kathy went through some of the boxes later on when we were at our storage shed and found this box of cassette tapes. I think they were in a Sees Chocolate Candy box or something similar to that and opened it up and here's the cassettes and it was marked that they were from Vietnam. So we put them actually in the car coming back from the storage shed, I believe it was. We put the tape in the car and we were listening to it and it was like, "Wow, this is

incredible." So we sat one weekend, I believe it was Saturday and Sunday, we sat one weekend and just listened to those tapes from early morning to when we went to call it a day and it was interesting to say the least. And so Kathy was the big ramrod in putting that, getting all that history together and putting it together. I'm glad she did.

How did she come to bring it to KUED?

Alan Rohlifing: She said, her father was in the veteran's nursing home. He passed away at the veteran's nursing home and at the veteran's nursing home window there were some medals. There were some flags. There were some military memorabilia there and she told me, "Alan, we've got to get this stuff out of our house. It has value. It should be seen by somebody. Maybe we should donate it to the veterans." And I was like, "Well there's, every veteran has medals and pins and things. They don't probably want any of that stuff. I don't know." But she says, "Well, I'm going to find out. I'm going to pursue this. There's a story to be told here." So she did. She pursued it and I'm not sure exactly where she was able to get this information to you, but I know she pursued it and she put forth the effort to get it to you and I'm glad she did.

She would say, "It's meant to be."

Alan Rohlifing: Yes, she did always say that. Yes.