

Interview with Craig Whited
Session 1 (5/8/2020)
Timed Log

[00:00:00]

Whited is born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1946. Father is a career naval officer, so the family lives in a number of countries and states throughout childhood including Moscow, Russia and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

[00:02:41]

Family has a home in northern Virginia and lives there while his father is working in Washington, D.C. Compared to southern Virginia [which includes Arthur Ashe's hometown of Richmond], northern Virginia and the extended Washington D.C. metro area is like living in a bubble. There are differing values and philosophies, with northern Virginia having a world view.

[00:04:18]

Doesn't encounter segregation in northern Virginia, however large portions of Virginia, Maryland, and other southern states are still coming out from segregation. Only partially aware of segregation elsewhere. Due to world view and national view of the area, living in Washington D.C. is much more similar to experiences living in California.

[00:05:46]

Decision to come to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Parents are preparing to leave Washington for 3-5 years due to a diplomatic assignment. Given the option to either graduate from high school early or complete senior year of high school in South America. Graduates early in 1963 at the age of 16, and goes to UCLA.

[00:06:34]

Experiences a culture shock after moving away from home for the first time. [Comparatively, the Los Angeles] metro area is not locally concentrated in the same way as Washington. The Washington metro area is 20 miles across while the LA metro area is 60-100 miles across. LA has everything Washington doesn't have, including the great weather.

[00:08:11]

Assassination of President John F. Kennedy [on November 22, 1963]. Learns JFK's been shot while in class in the economics building. Walks out of class and hears an announcement over the loudspeaker that the president had been shot, the vice president had been shot, classes are cancelled, and [students can either] return to the dorms or go home. State of shock across students, and they all huddle around television sets for the remainder of the day. Becomes clear

within a few hours that [Lyndon B.] Johnson hasn't been hurt, has been sworn in as president and is returning to Washington.

[00:10:28]

School remains shut down for a couple days. No support services for people still trying to process either at UCLA or elsewhere. Those who are grieving must do so quietly. No one offers help other than fellow students, which is difficult as they are all experiencing it themselves.

[00:11:46]

President Johnson visits UCLA [on February 21, 1964]. The UCLA Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Department provides an honor guard, which is a selection of members from the drill team. During the visit, honor guard wear their drill team uniform, complete with shiny chrome helmets. They stand in two files flanking him on either side, and they eventually realize they're being used as bodyguards. Heightened United States Secret Service presence on campus, but honor guard is the only presence [directly] around Johnson.

[00:13:25]

All ROTC rifles are made inoperative in preparation for visit, and it's made known that they cannot fire. Johnson has additional protection, and ROTC is used as protection similar to Secret Service agents but looks a bit fancier with men in uniform and shiny helmets. Johnson stays on campus half a day, and ROTC accompanies him the whole time he's outside.

[00:15:03]

Interaction between Johnson and ROTC cadets limited, but friendly. Living near [D.C.], Whited has already seen Johnson quite a bit and is familiar with his Texas humor.

[00:16:12]

Considers it a privilege to be on honor guard. Members of the honor guard later realize they were being used to stop a bullet for the president. Kennedy's assassination wakes the country up from the lull it's been in after World War II, and forces people to realize the nation is not invulnerable.

[00:18:09]

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. visits the UCLA campus [on April 27] 1965. King participates in a number of rallies on campus. The country is no longer fearful, and this is in a happier time. King speaks at least three rallies, and Whited attends the largest event. The events take place either in Kerckhoff Hall or outside in the grassy areas of the quads as there's no amphitheater [Pauley Pavilion doesn't open until June 11, 1965].

[00:21:04]

People stand in line to get tickets to King's speech, which is common for most things on campus as people even stand in line to sign up for classes. To register for classes, students must use an 80 column computer punch card. King speaks on Janss Steps, Kerckhoff Hall, and the quad. Small bleachers are set up for those with tickets while others sit on the lawn.

[00:22:25]

The focus of King's speech is inclusiveness. Emphasizes coming together rather than identifying someone to blame [for challenges].

[00:24:24]

For a couple days people continue to talk about the speech, but then they return to normal student life. UCLA wins national championships three out of four years [1963-1967] **, so there are many things to feel good about as a Bruin. UCLA wins National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) [basketball] championships during his freshman [1964], sophomore [1965], and senior year [1967]. Team goes undefeated [for 75 games] and brings light to campus despite the poor football program. Surprise comes in new football coaching staff [James] Tommy Prothro [Jr.] and quarterback Gary Beban who wins the Heisman Trophy [in 1967].

** Additional note from Whited - UCLA goes on to win the Rose Bowl in the other year.

[00:26:48]

First two years at UCLA [1963-1965], everyone's focusing on basketball. During third year, Lewis Alcindor (Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) is on the freshman basketball team, and his freshman team beats the varsity team.

** Additional note from Whited - The good news is that UCLA goes to the Rose Bowl game and wins for the first time in its history.

[00:28:00]

Unaware of tennis or any sports other than football and basketball. Football games are played at the [Los Angeles Memorial] Coliseum and once Pauley Pavilion is completed, basketball games take place there. Football and basketball arenas allow for plenty of student seating. There is no tennis center or track stadium [UCLA's Drake Stadium is built in 1969 and the Los Angeles Tennis Center opens in 1984]. Many events take place off campus.

[00:29:58]

Free Speech Movement during freshman year from 1963-1964. Movement begins at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) and comes down to UCLA, but doesn't have a big following. It's after the buildup in Vietnam in 1965 that anti-war sentiment becomes a larger issue on campus.

[00:31:08]

Impact of draft while a student. Male students who are 18 years or older and don't carry a full class load (an average of 15 units over the course of eight semesters, 120 units total to graduate) are likely to be drafted. Male students sought ways to avoid being drafted out of college, particularly those with fluctuating schedules. As a member of the marching band, his schedule fluctuates with football season. Some join or continue with ROTC [to avoid the draft], and must complete advanced courses within the program. Others join the National Guard or the Reserves. Many people come to grips with the situation by letting off steam with the anti-war protests.

[00:33:19]

Anti-war protests begin in 1965 and are heavier by 1967. Up until 1966, wears ROTC uniform around campus on drill days. By 1967 only wears uniform when changing prior to drill as students in uniform are likely to be harassed and spit on. Sentiment among some protestors that "Free speech is for me. Free speech only is if you agree with me. You do not have the choice of having free speech if you don't agree with me." Those participating in ROTC perceived to be part of the military industrial complex and by association seen as bad people.

[00:35:41]

Personally experiences harassment while wearing his ROTC uniform. Instead of individuals, now groups engage in harassment. The ROTC department appreciates cadets choosing not to be confrontational by not wearing uniforms on campus. There are those on campus who disagree with Vietnam in 1965, but are not as vocal about it as those who are vocally anti-war. Less than 10% of the campus is in the vocal group, but when they're vocal everything else stops.

[00:38:50]

Motivations for joining ROTC. When he joins in 1963, this is the first year that enrollment in ROTC is voluntary [University of California Regents remove ROTC as a requirement in 1962]. Being on President Johnson's honor guard serves as motivation to stick with it. Choosing to continue into the advanced ROTC courses in 1965 means you raise your right hand at the beginning of junior year, begin receiving a monthly payment (\$40) and join the reserve component of the military, which effectively secures a draft deferment. Initially, there's a commitment to serve for 6 months [after being commissioned], but after the Vietnam War heats up in the fall of 1965 the commitment jumps to 2 years.

[00:43:01]

Some students enroll in ROTC to become ineligible for the draft, but they don't complete the program, like William Jefferson Clinton [42nd president of the United States from 1993 to 2001]. Draft allows for political manipulation, as those with influential relatives and friends can make it less likely that one will be drafted. George W. Bush [43rd president of the United States

from 2001 to 2009] also doesn't serve his full reserve commitment. Similar to Bush, Whited becomes an aviator, but is required to continue serving since he has a critical skill. Few drop out of ROTC once they're in the advanced courses, but those who do drop out are eligible to be called up by the military without being drafted because they're technically already in the military. Less leeway is given after 1965 and 1966.

[00:47:34]

In 1963, the four year program is the only way to complete ROTC, unless you've already been in the National Guard or reserves. In 1965, a two-year program is created which attracts a number of students who are trying to avoid the draft. The two-year program includes a basic course camp that substitutes the first two years of ROTC.

[00:48:16]

Benefits of being in the four-year ROTC program. Payment during the advanced courses. Scholarships are developed later and they require you to make a longer commitment of 3-4 years. Total cost per semester during freshman year is \$95, including student health.

[00:49:38]

UCLA switches from semester to quarter system during his senior year, 1966-1967. Given a choice to either complete using the semester system or quarter system, most seniors stay with the semester system. However, a number of students take longer to graduate, which is allowed by UCLA and ROTC. Unable to receive commission until both requirements for degree and ROTC are completed. Completing the ROTC program includes Advanced Camp, which is basic training for soon-to-be officers. So, it differs from the basic training camp that cadets take prior to starting the two-year program, but both prepare cadets for how they'll be treated in active duty.

[00:52:18]

Meeting Ashe [in 1963]. Whited and Ashe are in the same platoon, however Ashe is a year senior and is in a different position. Strike up an acquaintance by asking about hometowns and high schools, as both are from different parts of Virginia. Ashe is familiar with the Annandale area where Whited attended high school. Next year, Ashe is platoon leader and Whited is his sergeant for a time.

[00:53:58]

Playing tennis with "Art" Ashe. After learning that Whited played tennis in high school, Ashe invites him to play, and Whited quickly sees how strong his serve is. Tennis coach J.D. Morgan becomes athletic director [in 1963]. During one session in which Ashe invites Whited over, he

gets to watch Ashe play with Pancho Gonzales. Hadn't thought of UCLA as a tennis school before, but sees it has the potential to become one.

[00:56:46]

JD Morgan's influence on the campus. Any student can identify Morgan as one of the athletic officials who was doing everything he could to bring Bruin athletics to a higher level.

[00:57:39]

Serving as Ashe's cadet platoon sergeant while he's platoon leader. This position makes him the senior cadet enlisted when Ashe is the cadet officer for that platoon. Positions involved training new cadets, including instruction on how to stand at attention and carry a rifle. Rifle is an old Korean War rifle that weighs nearly ten pounds. Must teach cadets how to open a rifle without losing a thumb, and it takes a full year of training before a cadet can march and carry a rifle on his own.

[00:59:14]

Relationship with Ashe in ROTC. First Whited's in a platoon where Ashe is cadet sergeant, then Whited becomes senior sergeant when Ashe becomes platoon leader. In the military, first learn, then teach, then supervise. When ROTC is mandatory, there are several thousand members, but once it becomes voluntary [after 1962] there are only a few hundred.

[01:00:39]

Students respect rank on the drill field, but off the drill field everyone referred to each other by first name. On the drill field, cadets address Ashe as "sir," and off the field everyone knows him as "Art." Ashe is someone you want to be around.

[01:03:01]

Ashe is all business in ROTC, but a fun guy outside. Whited goes to the beach with Ashe and they enjoy playing beach volleyball. Ashe's tall frame and coordination making him a really good player. They both live off campus and use the beaches regularly, and some students even go to beaches for several hours in between classes. Ashe lives in a fraternity house for some period of time. Whited pledges and lives off campus for the bulk of time at UCLA.

[01:06:22]

Maintains a relationship with Ashe after graduating. Receive active duty assignments before graduating and Ashe's assignment [to the United States Military Academy at West Point] seen as the "24-karat gold" assignment. Ashe has become a known star by this point in time, as he's one of the highest ranked amateur players. After graduating, Ashe goes to basic officer course then to West Point. Whited completes a basic officer course in Fort Benning, Georgia, and jokes with

Ashe about trading places. Whited switches from infantry officer to aviation, which is a [long term assignment not a] separate branch at the time due to the need for pilots for Vietnam.

[01:08:13]

Active duty for six years. Primarily keeps in touch with Ashe via postcards and some phone calls. In 1968, flies up once to West Point and introduces his flight instructor to Ashe. Takes Ashe up in his airplane and the instructor allows him to sit at the controls in the co-pilot seat.

[01:11:51]

Loses connection with Ashe after going to Vietnam in spring 1969, but easy to follow his career after returning from Vietnam.

[01:14:37]

Many of the commissioned ROTC officers he knows end up serving abroad rather than state side, but less than 50% end up going to Vietnam. As common to serve a tour in Germany as Vietnam, but also depends on specialty. Ashe commissioned in the [adjutant] general corps, so his assignment would be random whereas Whited's commission infantry is almost a guaranteed ticket to Vietnam. Going to flight school grants him an assignment somewhere in Southeast Asia.

** Additional note from Whited - Pilots were shot at almost most everywhere they flew in SE Asia.

[01:16:50]

Political discussions with Ashe. Might have discussed segregation of the South, and the two are of the same mind. Disappointed when learns Ashe had to leave Richmond to get a good shot at tennis. Despite living in Virginia around the same time as Ashe, he doesn't experience the same things. The two talk most about the future, ROTC, and Vietnam heating up. Most people don't think much about Vietnam until 1965. Over three years of having conversations about Vietnam, expectations shift from not expecting to go to Vietnam at all to becoming very certain of going to Vietnam. Feels an obligation as an American to serve the country, and as diplomat's son, he doesn't typically express political views. Realize from the inside perspective within ROTC that [most] people aren't getting the full story about Vietnam in the news media.

[01:20:38]

Thirsty for information about Vietnam. One person from UCLA spent a tour in Vietnam and Ashe becomes interested as he tells him about the tennis courts outside the village where he was stationed. Unpredictability of the military leaves little room for discussion and choice. Learns that the likelihood of survival in combat in Vietnam is not that great.

[01:24:10]

Returns to UCLA in 1973 after completing service. Two main differences between time as an undergraduate and as a graduate at UCLA. As a graduate student in the Graduate School of Management, takes all classes in the same building. Also, the makeup of students in graduate school is different as many students are getting education through the GI Bill. At least a third of graduate class are veterans. Also, antiwar sentiment. During undergrad with Ashe, all of the cadre wear uniforms all the time. Today, when he visits UCLA and ROTC offices, no one is wearing uniform other than a UCLA ROTC polo shirt

[01:26:18]

Completes graduate degree in 1975. Follows what Ashe is doing via the sports section [in the media]. Considers contacting him, but determines Ashe may be too busy.

[01:27:13]

Becoming aware of Ashe's health issues. Reads about Ashe's transfusion which gives him Human immunodeficiency virus infection (HIV). HIV is considered a death sentence, and the only athlete he knows beating it is [Earvin] Magic Johnson [Jr.]. Considers reaching out to him again. HIV/AIDS [Human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome] was distant at the time, and Ashe becomes the first person he's known with the condition.

[01:30:34]

Closing remarks about Ashe. Ashe was a genuine person, even when he started to become a star. Without Vietnam, two might not have become lost friends. Two progress in different directions after ROTC and active military duty, Ashe in tennis and White in management consulting. Leaves military life behind, as many others from UCLA ROTC. Of friendships from UCLA, none revolve around the military, but around bonds formed at UCLA [many through ROTC].

[01:32:55]

Thanks.