

Student Handout
Oakland Museum of California
What's Going On? California and the Vietnam Era
Lesson Plan #1
From the Quiet Decade to Social Revolution:
How the Vietnam War Transformed California

Oral History
Charles Benninghoff

Charles Benninghoff, a Vietnam veteran, grew up in Upland, California during the late 1950s.

I also remember the, the bomb shelter craze in the late '50s. If this interests you. Everybody, um, was talking about building a bomb shelter in the backyard. And finally we got to meet someone who actually had a father brave enough to build one. And so all the kids would, uh, go up to this guy's house, and try to sneak in this guy's bomb shelter [*Laughs*]. It was really funny. And you know, you, you look back at it now and you think—what real stupidity this was. Because it was just a little dark room with a ... with a, a swinging steel door and, uh, it wouldn't have protected you for, from anything for any period of time. But man, it was the state-of-the-art in Upland, California.

