

**Student Handout**  
**Oakland Museum of California**  
*What's Going On? California and the Vietnam Era*  
**Lesson Plan #2**  
**1968: Year of Social Change and Turning Point in Vietnam and the U.S.**

**Oral History**

**Lionel Chetwynd**

**Lionel Chetwynd is a filmmaker who is best known as the director of *The Hanoi Hilton* (1987).**

And every question I came up with the answer, and then this was the critical point. I said, "You know," I said, "I'm not sure I feel about you," I said, "How do I know that you are not a, they say that you're just being manipulated by a Holmes, Tuttle and, and Justin Dart [?] and those people?" He said, "I don't care what other people think." He said, "I have learned." He said, "In life, if anyone can accomplish anything, if they don't care who gets the credit." And I thought, my god. For someone from Hollywood to have that idea is amazing. It's similar to the experience I had many years later when I met governor, the governor of Texas, then, George Bush. And I had a conversation with him, that blew me away. In terms of, that man's invalid [?]. But anyway, I came away from that, and, and he, he asked me if I was interested in helping, I said I was particularly interested in, in writing, uh, for him, a Yom Kippur message. To the American Jewish Community for the upcoming, uh, High Holy Days. And he said, "Go ahead and try it," and I did, and he gave it, and, uh ... and, uh, uh, I, that was the final stage in my conversation from left to right, and I did become a genuine neoconservative, under his guidance, I started reading Leo Strauss, I had read Milton Friedman, but I'd never read Strauss. Uh ... uh, I began to realize that he was right about other things he had said. He said, "Go back and read Milton Friedman. Find out if any society in the history of humankind ever taxed its way into prosperity." I mean, Ronald Reagan ... uh, diminished by the popular media, the elite media, uh, ridiculed, uh, by many of the second generation colleagues in Hollywood, represented another step, uh, in what became a Goldwater revolution, and I thought Goldwater was the devil incarnate. Uh ... but, as they say in French, translated, "If you live long enough, you ultimately learn everything." Presumably France has not yet lived long enough. Uh, not nearly so. Uh, but, r-Ronald Reagan, uh ... Ronald Reagan represented the first politician I had met, and I hung around politics in Canada, I was going to run for Parliament when I was 26. Uh, hung around Pa-, you know, I'm a briefcase sniffer. In Hollywood we would say, there were jock sniffers, who love athletes, there are holster sniffers, who love cops. I'm a briefcase sniffer. I like politicians. First one I ever met. Who didn't get up every morning and read the polls. Didn't call his poll taker. First thing in the morning and say, "How am I doing?" And I really admired that. It's why I also like to, by the way, about George Bush. Uh, but he d-, he was, did not read the polls. He had his own moral compass, and you could vote for him on that, or not on that. That's what appealed to the people of California.

