

Reed Stevenson
Honors: US History 2
October 16, 2016

Reedy, Tiffany. Telephone interview with the author. Pottsville, PA.
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Overview by Reed Stevenson:

Tiffany Reedy is the current principal at the Pottsville Area High School. She served as assistant principal for one year. She then began to teach American history for nine years. After that she took a job as a middle school principal, and three years later she took up a job as the high school principal for 5 years. As a former history teacher she was able to recount some details and emotions experienced during the time surrounding the launch of Sputnik. While she did not live through the launch and the events preceding it she was able to provide an intriguing insight into life and specifically pop culture after the Sputnik Crisis.

Question (Stevenson): Were you alive for the launching of Sputnik?

Answer (Reedy): No, I was not

Question (Stevenson): So as you know, after Sputnik 1 was launched the nation went into a “Sputnik Crisis”, what were some of the biggest effects of this sudden event?

Answer (Reedy): I would say it was a challenge for superiority, the United States thought they were a predominant world power and they had a lot of technology that was superior to other nations so I think it was a challenge to us because we felt sort of a superiority complex, so I think it was humbling for the United States because here was Russia with some challenge to us and we never really thought of them as having technology that would be superior, so I think it caused us first of all to panic a little bit because we were worried about the implications of that, and also caused us to have a renewed focus and as an educator it makes me think of the emphasis on science and math. I feel like the schools nationwide took a directive from the government that we should be emphasizing science and math and technology so that we would prepare our future scientists to take on the challenge of a nation like the Soviet Union having the capability even better than we did so I feel like it caused us first to panic then focus and emphasize science and technology and math in our schools.

Question (Stevenson): So it kind of jump started the STEM field in a lot of schools.

Answer (Reedy): Right, yeah it did. It caused people with the whole arms race and some of the side reactions were to worry about the capabilities, as the Cold War started right around that time so it kind of pitted us against the Soviet Union and caused people to get a little bit scared that's when you moved into the drills in your school, the duck and cover and the bomb shelters and it was just a different time in our country and Sputnik contributed to that.

Question (Stevenson): During the Sputnik crisis what kind of emotions would you say were experienced during this event especially in a time such as the Cold War.

Answer (Reedy): Well I would say fear and definitely competition. Mostly those two things fear and competition because we're a very proud country and we kind of like to be on top of things so when somebody challenges us we kind of rise to the competition. And fear that they will become the predominant world power, fear that they may develop things ahead of us, you had the Cuban missile crisis, you had a lot of other events in history that kind of followed and since the Spanish-American war we kind of gradually asserted ourselves as a world power and felt like we were number one. And fear that major forms of weapons would be developed and used against us in conflicts.

Question (Stevenson): Do you remember any of the events that preceded the launching of Sputnik?

Answer (Reedy): Ever since the end of World War 2 and you had the Soviet block the Eastern European countries kind of aligning with the Soviet Union it was kind of East versus West you had the Berlin blockade. You had a couple things that happened post World War 2. Everything around post World War 2 right around that time you had the Cuban missile crisis and prior to this you had this aligning that it was East-West and you had the beginning of the Cold war, so you had George Orwell writing a book in 1984 about big brother that kind of added to people's fear and disillusion with the East.

Question (Stevenson): So you could say the mood was already pretty tense in a world perspective.

Answer (Reedy): Exactly. Up until the 80s it was pretty much that way for the fall of the Berlin wall. So up through there it was pretty much two armed camps literally and figuratively us versus them, and even the Rocky movies that showed they were the enemy and throughout pop culture, songs, books, movies, and it was very obvious of our feelings about the Russians at that time.

Question (Stevenson): **Ok, going back to what you were saying a second ago about pop culture contributing to our image of the Russians.**

Answer (Reedy): Even Doctor Seuss. There was a Doctor Seuss book about guns and butter and things like that. There were songs and movies like that. I always think of Rocky as one of my favorite examples when you have the Soviet flag unfurling it was the United States versus them , Rocky vs Ivan Drago. It was pretty pervasive it wasn't just on the news or the history books. People lived that out through pop culture through the 80s.

Question (Stevenson): **Do you know any major people or any major government people involved with the launching of Sputnik?**

Answer (Reedy): You had Khrushchev and you had Castro. Anytime there was a country that was sympathetic towards socialism or in our opinion were too closely aligned to the Soviets they were considered an enemy. We tried to remove Castro from being in power. The Bay of Pigs invasion failed very drastically and we had the Cuban missile crisis where everybody held their breath to see was there going to be a showdown would it involve nuclear power, what was going to go on. I think of Castro, Communist China, North Korea South Korea, and the conference we had in Vietnam. Some of those personalities. Khrushchev at the end of the cold war Gorbachev and Reagan's famous line Mr.Gorbachev tear down your wall. That's who I think of.

Question (Stevenson): **I know you weren't alive for Sputnik, but what is your opinion on the launching of Sputnik and how it played out in history?**

Answer (Reedy): We were a little bit complacent as a predominant world power and caused us to pause and think that there may be a time where we aren't first and foremost in the world arena as far as knowledge, having the monopoly on knowledge, technology, warfare, and we should have a leading role, like I said I always think of the Spanish american war as a turning point

where we started to, right at the turn of that century have our place in the world and for the first time in a long time because we entered late in World War 1 and we were one of the deciding factors in World War 2 absolutely we had the knowledge that helped defeat the Germans and the Japanese so we were complacent and it caused us to have renewed sense that we need to focus on those aspects like science, engineering, and math. It was just a big cultural shift from that fact that we would always have that place to now we have to contend for it.

Question (Stevenson): Do you remember any key events or details you didn't already mention?

Answer (Reedy): It was basically the start of the space race and it caused a lot of investment into space technology and obviously we had so many missions and the focus to be the first to the moon and to have a man and on the moon. I think of all the investments, space shuttles, space stations and it kind of created a new market for technology.

Question (Stevenson): So Sputnik really just kicked of the yearning for space and space travel.

Answer (Reedy): Exactly. And there are so many things that benefited from that that aren't space related there were some many new inventions that came about as a result of the race for space and that kind of technology and science really changed because of that.

Question (Stevenson): You said earlier some emotions felt were fear and a huge sense of competition, even though Sputnik's life span was short lived what long lasting effect do you think it had on the American people just having the Russians do something that set the bar to the skies.

Answer (Reedy): So I think that even though it was small it was a domino effect, it caused so many different changes and so many developments even though it was just a small action it bred a lot of anger and fear and resentment and just the unknown and people didn't know what would happen and they needed to prepare for the unknown and sometime people respect those who challenge them and others dislike them I think it caused us to dislike the Russians and some events reinforced that idea. It wasn't just sputnik it was some other things like the Cuban missile crisis but it kept reinforcing that distrust and dislike. Even though it was small and brief it was like a domino effect with other areas.

Question (Stevenson): So it just added onto the rivalry between the US and Russia for the race to superiority.

Answer (Reedy): Yep, that's a good way to put it. Throughout history there have been times where we haven't gotten along with other countries they have been our adversaries but this was decades long and I think there is still that underlying mistrust because of the different ideals that they have and the different culture. I feel like when you say Vladimir Putin people don't think of the Russians as an ally or as a Western country that is similar to us. We have gotten over Germany fighting with us but I feel like we don't feel that way about the Russians. It's still long lasting.

Question (Stevenson): Do you have any other interesting facts about Sputnik?

Answer (Reedy): I know it means traveler in Russian but it really is just a small part of history. I taught world history and American history so as far as topics that are covered in history it's a small part that had so many lasting effects because it was the right time to foster that feeling, but I think it's just mushroom from there.