

Interview with
SPENCER R. ANDERSON

August 22, 2018

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SPENCER R. ANDERSON

Spencer R. Anderson was interviewed by Randall J. Bunn on August 22, 2018 in St. George, Washington County, Utah. He related his experiences with the United States Air Force. Also participating were Carol Anderson, his wife, and Brady Fronk.

RB: — getting involved in the military, your military experience primarily and a little bit of post period which you have given me, but we will record that.

SA: Grady?

RB: Brady.

SA: Brady. [Inaudible]

RB: We are here with Spencer R. Anderson and his wife, Carol, to talk about some of the experiences and stories that Spencer had with the [United States] Air Force. Tell a little bit about your childhood. Were you born in 1943?

SA: I was born in 1943.

RB: What was growing up like for you in Salt Lake City [Salt Lake County, Utah]?

SA: Actually, I was born in Salt Lake [City], but then we moved down to Provo [Utah County, Utah]. If I were to say where I spent most of my childhood, I would have to say the Provo/Orem area.

RB: Why did your parents move down there? For work?

SA: For work.

RB: Was [it] during [World] War [II]?

SA: It was during the war. My dad [Arthur Mead Anderson].

RB: Yes, [then] it was Highway 89 up there.

SA: It was mostly for work. Of course, my mother [Mildred May (Richardson) Anderson], had to work, mostly all of her married life, until I was an adult. She waited tables in diners. She cleaned houses what was then called Nob Hill in Provo. It was up above the [campus of] BYU [Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah County, Utah]. Lots of doctors [lived] up there. She cleaned houses up there. Then she went to work for Sears Roebuck & Company which is now the RC Willey Outlet.

RB: Is that right? Interesting.

SA: [It was at] First West and Second South [Streets in Provo]. She worked as the head cashier and kind of ran the business department at Sears until we moved [back] to Salt Lake City in 1958 again for my dad's work. He took a job with

Associated Sheet Metal Company in the Salt Lake area. But while we were in Provo I centered very heavily in sports. I was a baseball player.

RB: Baseball was your sport.

SA: I developed a reputation for having a breaking fastball as a left-handed pitcher.

RB: I was going to ask you what position. You were a pitcher?

SA: I was a pitcher. During my tenure [of] four years in Little League, I had three no hitters. I received the award for outstanding pitcher in the Utah Valley Region of the Western Boys Baseball Association.

RB: Very good!

SA: [This was] in 1955. Also, a second award for outstanding batting average. Can you imagine that? A pitcher —

RB: Yes, that is unusual.

SA: — having a good batting average?

RB: Did you play in high school as well?

SA: I did. I played a year in high school and then I dropped out of it. I never got to pitch again. My coach had his preferences and I could never break through that. I decided that if I couldn't play what I was best at — I just lost interest in it.

RB: Understandable.

SA: I transferred my interest to forensics.

RB: Yes. Debate and public speaking?

SA: Debate, public speaking and drama. [I] won [the] state [championship] two years in a row. One year [was] in the one act play contest and the monologue the next year. I ended up a Sterling Scholar in forensics.

RB: That is excellent! I know about forensics. I did that in high school as well.

SA: It was a lot of fun. I became personal friends with Ruth and Nathan Hale of the Hale Centre Theatre. Their family still runs the Salt Lake Hale Centre Theatre. They started the original theater on the round in Glendale, California back in the 1950s. It is the oldest running Centre stage theater in the country. They came out to Granger High School [West Valley City, Salt Lake County, Utah] and wrote a special three-act play for their granddaughter, who was one of my classmates. Their brand-new play was our school play for our senior year. I [was] really hooked on drama. Along came time for graduation and I had no idea what I was going to do.

RB: [In] 1962?

SA: June [of] 1962. I had a choice to make either get a job, go to work, try to make a living somehow and, maybe, go to college somehow. Money was not as readily

available for college [students] as it is now. I decided that I was going to [enlist] in the Air Force because I had spent three years, four years actually, in Civil Air Patrol as a cadet officer learning military protocol and procedures. I liked CAP. It was a lot of fun. I went on several search and rescue missions where I flew as a spotter. Actually, I took a job as a stringer reporter for KSL [television station].

RB: No kidding! Is that right? [Laughter]

SA: I actually filmed a search and rescue that flew out of Moab [Grand County, Utah] one winter. We flew down into the Grand Canyon [National Park, Arizona] gorge. I was there with my 16-millimeter hand crank wind up [camera] with the three lenses! [Laughter]

RB: That is great! [Laughter]

SA: It was [very] interesting because if you are going to report, the only way you can do it is [to] send the film back to KSL. It has to be processed and edited. Then you have to call in and do an on the air live interview [by] telephone.

BF: [Laughter]

SA: Which is what I did. I happened to be an eighteen-year old [youngster] sitting in a telephone booth in a bar —

RB: [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

SA: — doing my live interview. While at the same time, in the bar, on the television set is Dick Norris [KSL anchor saying,] “We are hearing from Spencer Anderson [for] KSL news —

RB: [Laughter] That is great!

SA: — who is in Moab.” Nobody in the bar knew who I was or that I was right there.

RB: That is funny!

SA: They found out afterwards.

RB: They were watching television and you were doing the interview right next to them. [Laughter]

SA: Yes. I was not a drinker at the time. At the time. I was offered beers. They were like: “Wow, we have our own celebrity here.” I said no.

RB: [Laughter]

SA: It was a lot of fun. [Laughter] So [the] Air Force became an option to me. I enlisted in June of 1962 [and] went to basic training [at] Lackland Air Force Base [in Texas]. Then I went to communications and crypto training, communication specialist training, at Sheppard Air Force Base [in Texas].

RB: When you enlisted they probably asked you what you wanted to do.

SA: [Laughter] Yes.

RB: What did you put down? What was your dream job?

SA: Air traffic control. Of course, it is the needs of the service.

RB: I know.

SA: My scores on my test were such that they tagged me for what today is known as Air Force Intelligence. The communications command is no longer a command in and of itself [as] they were absorbed into Air Force Intelligence. They needed me there and so that was what I became. It was not a lot of fun, but it was okay. It had its advantages.

BF: What rank did you graduate out of Civil Air Patrol? Did that ever translate towards your Air Force [service time]?

SA: That is a good question. At the time the Civil Air Patrol had an agreement with the Air Force that anybody who achieved cadet officer rank, that is if they completed the certificate of proficiency, [they were] eligible to receive their first stripe upon enlistment. I was the only Airman Third Class.

RB: With a stripe! [Laughter]

SA: Wearing a stripe in my whole flight during basic training.

RB: You outranked everybody in the class! [Laughter]

SA: I was the top dog, right.

RB: I guess so. Everyone must have wondered how come you had a stripe.

SA: With emphasis on dog!

RB: That was interesting.

SA: Yes, that was fun.

RB: They sent you to Sheppard Air Force Base?

SA: Yes, [in] Wichita Falls, Texas.

RB: How long was that training? Do you recall — approximately?

SA: Let's see. I was ten weeks in basic training — June, July, August, towards the end of August. Then September and October I was at Sheppard.

RB: Now while you were at Sheppard, October 1962 was kind of a busy time in the Cold War.

SA: Yes.

RB: Do you have any memories of the Cuban Missile Crisis?

SA: Not in 1962. I knew of it, but in 1962 we were still in training. My first base assignment was my first indication of the tensions around the world. Because my

first permanent base was the Clark Air Base in the Philippine Islands, in Manila under the command of Thirteenth Air Force. [The] Thirteenth Air Force was the major component of Pacific Air Forces. [It] was responsible for basically protecting the Philippine Islands, all of Japan and Singapore. The South Pacific Theater of operations was under the jurisdiction and protection of the Thirteenth Air Force. With the Cold War heating up we had some concerns about the Chinese. They were rearing their heads, sabre rattling and so were the Cubans. That is where I ended up on my first permanent base. More interesting though was a year later, November 23, 1963.

RB: What was your experience with [the assassination of] President [John F. Kennedy]?

SA: At the time of the shooting, I was on duty in the command center, the communications command center. In a concrete bunker located mostly below ground [at Clark Air Base]. I was working the floor of the telecommunications systems. There is what we call a flash message. At the time communications was not digitized. It came through the perforated tape, a hundred letter perforations per minute. Every flash priority message you are under the gun to receive and distribute it to all of your subsidiary stations within two minutes. The message itself was five minutes long, but you had to at least start it. All of our transmission, which were called TDs [transmission data] were lined up side by side. There was one for Okinawa, one for Subic Bay Naval Station [and so forth]. All of the military communications throughout the pacific area of operations fed out of our major relay station. Which was Romeo, Uniform, Mike, Alpha — RUMA. We had to have the messages set going in route to all of our subsidiary stations within two minutes. So when the tape started coming in, I was there. I was right down there at that end of the room. I heard this bing, bing, bing, bing, bing. Five bells. I said, “Oh, oh, flash message.”

RB: Was that the signal for a flash message?

SA: That was the signal for an incoming flash message. I received it. It was from the receiving unit to the first TD stations about six feet. So all I had to do was turn around. As soon as I had enough tape, I would loop it right into the transmitter, lock it in and send it.

RB: How did that work?

SA: I didn't have a chance to read it before I [sent it]. The first few feet of it I had a chance to read. The first message was that President John F. Kennedy had been shot and taken to Parkland Memorial Hospital [in Dallas, Texas]. That is all it said. I went ahead and fed it through the first one. Another airman took it and just followed it on through. I was supervising at the time. Shortly after that one was done, the second one, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing came in. I read it before I put it in the first transmitter and it said that he had passed. That he had been assassinated.

RB: What was your immediate feeling when you heard that?

SA: My immediate feeling was: oh, my gosh! We are going to war. That was my immediate feeling.

RB: This was a major event that had happened.

SA: I was just a [young] airman at the time. Because I had a certain amount of skill I was tasked with the unpleasant job of waking up at 2:30AM, which is 1:30 Dallas time, in the afternoon, 2:30AM at Clark Air Base in the Philippines, of waking a two-star Major General.

RB: [Laughter] You are a twenty-year-old!

BF: [Laughter]

SA: I am twenty years old. I am a [young] airman, second class. [Laughter] I had to get a Lieutenant General out of bed at 2:30 AM. So I did. I called him. Meanwhile, I made sure all of the messages were going out. I called him and said, "Good morning, General Maddux." It was Sam Maddux he was commander of the Thirteenth Air Force at the time. "This is Airman Spencer Anderson in the Comm [Communications] Center, sir. I am advising you that President John F. Kennedy has been assassinated. We are in the process of transmitting this message to all of our subsidiary stations throughout command," [the] Thirteenth Air Force PACAF [Pacific Air Forces] Command. He said, "Who are you again?"

[Lieutenant General Sam Maddux, Jr., April 1914 – November 28, 1990, Commander, Thirteenth Air Force, August 1963 – July 1968.]

—Added by Randall J. Bunn during editing.]

BF: [Laughter]

SA: "Airman Anderson, Spencer R. AF19739371, sir, this is not a joke." He said, "It better, by God, not be." [Laughter] I said, "It is not, sir." He said, "Very well. Thank you, Airman." He hung up immediately. Within fifteen minutes after that conversation every flyable aircraft at Clark Air Base in the Philippines was off the ground. We had bombers. We had fighters. We had air transport. It depended on which tenant organizations were at the base itself. Some of the fighter aircraft were the F-100 Super Saver, the F-102 Delta Wing Fighter. We even had squadron of A-26 Invaders, the old twin engine. Bombers [that] looked a lot like B-25s. We had a brand new contingent B-57 Canberras. These [pilots] were all gone. Plus we had a unit of air transport. We were flying mostly C-54s throughout the theater. That was like an old DC-6, Douglas DC-6, the old four engine passenger airplanes.

RB: [Was] the purpose of getting them off [the] ground to prevent them from being destroyed?

SA: Exactly, because we didn't know if we were going to have incoming [missiles] or not.

RB: Were they up in the air, but they were not necessarily performing a mission?

SA: No. They were up in the air and all tasked with — every aircraft commander receives in his flight portfolio orders for geographic locations for his fail-safe area. You fly to your fail-safe area and then you orbit until further orders. You have heard of the famous DEFCON defense condition red, yellow, and green.

RB: Yes.

SA: We never got to DEFCON three, which is red. It was all pre-organized, pre-planned. Everybody knew where they had to go. They were up and ready. After [Vice- President] Lyndon B. Johnson took the oath of office aboard Air Force One, things started to settle down. The airplanes were all recalled, but they were put on standby. Every command throughout the Air Force network was on standby alert, particularly the missile units and Strategic Air Command. The heavy bombers who were flying out of Guam, out of Okinawa and out of Misawa Air Base, Japan, were all on standby alert from then on.

Things eventually de-escalated and calmed back down. Then President Johnson decided things weren't cool enough. I am sorry President Johnson! [Laughter] Through his wisdom Vietnam was escalated. There was a huge troop buildup in Vietnam starting in early 1965 [and] going on into 1966. But by then I had mustered. I left Clark Air Base in the Philippines. I had been signed to a Strategic Air Command Base at Mountain Home, Idaho. I left the Philippines in May of 1964.

RB: So you served in the Philippines from —.

SA: For a year and a half, from December of 1962 until May of 1964.

RB: You were at Clark Air Base just before you moved on to your next assignment. Can you describe a little bit about what it was like living at that time [in] Angeles City [Philippines] and Clark Air Base?

SA: Let me tell you something about how sweet Angeles [City] was. I don't say sweet in any positive sense of the word. It refers to the aroma. The Bob Hope Christmas [Show] program came to our base in 1963. He never missed in 1963, believe it or not, he never did. He came and it was just a matter of a few short weeks after JFK's assassination. Bob Hope paid tribute to the late president, of course. He said, "An interesting thing happened flying into Clark Air Base, it was rather overcast. As a matter of fact the pilot said, 'Gee, I don't know if we are going to be able to land at Clark because the visibility is so low.' I just told the air craft commander not to worry about it and just open a door with this wonderful schnoz of mine [laughter] beautiful isn't it. I can smell Angeles. I said, 'Captain land here.' [Laughter] And he nailed the runway." That was how he found his way to Clark Air Base.

RB: What was he referring to? What do you mean when you say it had a sweet smell to it?

SA: The open sewage that was running through the streets of Angeles [City], Pampanga and the open fish markets where the fish would be laid out on

platforms [that] angled down towards the streets where passersby could look at the produce. Look at the fish. There was no refrigeration at all. Everything had its own unique odor. Then you had open sewage running down the streets right underneath those racks of fish. At the time, there was only one paved street in all of Angeles [City]. The rest of [the roads] were dirt. During [the] rainy season that dirt just [became] muddy and yucky.

RB: What did you think? A boy from Provo living across the world in this, I guess you could call it a Third World country at the time.

SA: It was exactly that. It was exactly a third world country. I never realized what I was getting into. I thought, well Air Force is Air Force. I will be fine wherever I am at. Clark Air Base [was] fifty-one miles around the perimeter. You can live [as] isolated a life as you wanted too. I chose to go to Angeles [City] a few times. We had an on-base American High School there at Clark Air Base. They did a school play [and] were asking for help to build the set. Of course, as an older thespian, I liked that, [and] helped them out. I went down to Angeles [City] to shop for lumber for particularly a fireplace I had to build for them. That was my first foray into Angeles [City], Pangpanga Province. Angeles [City] is a larger town now. They have paved most of the roads. They actually have American restaurants. They have a McDonalds now. They have become even more westernized, until we [were] kicked out.

RB: Right! [Laughter]

SA: The Philippines ended the United States contract at Clark Air Base and also [at] the Naval Station at Subic Bay. We had to leave. That was my first encounter with the Third World. Then on [the] base there was a Fourth World. It was even worse than the Third World!

RB: Really? [Laughter]

SA: It was actually the most honorable little people, a pygmy tribe. They call them Negritos. [The] Negritos during World War II were very, very instrumental in helping harass the Japanese who had invaded and taken over Clark Air Base. The Negritos would sneak onto [the] base at night, sneak into the Japanese soldiers housing and slit their throats. Literally.

RB: Oh my goodness! Yes?

SA: In the middle of the night. These Negritos were very friendly to America and they hated the Japanese soldiers during World War II because they received such poor treatment from them. Because of that and because of their service, the United States agreed to allow them to have a certain part of Clark Air Base. Remember [the] fifty-one miles around? There was plenty of jungle there. The Negritos were able to have their little tribe, their little village, right there on the base. They used to really love to sleep overnight in the dumpsters around the base.

RB: [Laughter]

SA: So every once in awhile, we would just, being youthful [fellows] we were — getting off work after a graveyard shift, start walking back to the barracks [and] we would pass one of these dumpsters. We would pick up a rock and wang it at the dumpster.

RB: Oh no! [Laughter]

SA: About five or six of these little [fellows] would come scrambling out of there. [Laughter]

RB: A little entertainment for you.

SA: They were. They had the blow guns. They were deadly accurate. We were told to never ever, ever, ever go into the jungles alone. Because if you go into their authorized space, you are liable to take a highly toxic dart.

RB: Wow!

SA: I don't know if you have time for this.

RB: Sure.

SA: But I could tell you about a time I did break that protocol.

RB: Tell that story.

SA: [Laughter] A friend of mine and I were on a three-day break, a seventy-two-hour break. We had been to the airman's club, had been tipping a few back and bending our elbows a bit. We decided we were going to visit the king of the Negritos [laughter] and he was the king. I can't even begin to pronounce his name. King and you can imagine all the letters of the alphabet strung together. That was about the way you pronounced it. We decided to do that. We hopped on our scooters. I had an old Vespa scooter. He had one of his own. That was the way to get around Clark Air Base because you couldn't walk. There was just too much [area]. You would walk two miles to the Base Exchange from your barracks. We both had our scooters. It was during the monsoon season. It was raining, raining, raining, raining, raining. We decided we didn't want to get our uniforms wet, so we will just go in our skivvies.

BF: [Laughter]

SA: We climbed on board our scooters in our skivvies. We didn't want to step on anything sharp, so we had our black combat boots on too.

RB: You were a sight! [Laughter]

SA: Here [we] are — our skivvies with our black combat boots on. We drove in there. We were stopped by the Negritos and escorted, not knowing escorted to what — were they going to invite us to dinner as food or as guests?

RB: [Laughter]

SA: I didn't know. They had [cooked] dog that night. We partook of dog. I don't know, I imagine just some mixed breed. All dog tastes the same. [Laughter]

RB: I can imagine.

SA: They were barbequing dog that night. They just loved us and were patting our backs. I was going on six-foot-four at the time and these [fellows] were lucky to get [to be] three and half feet tall.

RB: Wow! [Laughter]

SA: We were giants to them! This friend of mine, Mark Bozeman, his ancestry were the people [who] settled in Bozeman, Montana. Bozeman was even taller. He was six-foot-six. [A] big lanky [fellow]. We spent some time with them eating dog and finally left with their blessings. We drove back to [the] base and went to bed that night. I guess it must have been three [o'clock] in the morning.

RB: Wow!

SA: We made it back to our barracks. At the time, they were the old World War II type, open bay, double floor, barracks, with open latrines, open showers and all of that. We just sacked out and business as usual the next day. [Laughter]

RB: That is a great story!

SA: Yes.

RB: Could you communicate with them at all? Or [was it] just hand gestures?

SA: Just hand gestures. There were a few of them that knew Pidgin English. "You eat number one dog."

BF: [Laughter]

SA: That and the Bob Hope [event] were probably the most enjoyable, remarkable, parts of my stay there. There was another part [my story] that was not quite so pleasant. It was very dangerous. This took place in April 1964. I was going off base to visit some friends of mine who lived off base in what they called the Barrio. This is married enlisted housing that the base maintained outside the main gate. I was going down the main gate access road. Which, if you can imagine, here is the landing strip [gesturing with his hands]. Here is a lot of jungle. Here is the main road leading down out of the base and over here is a mountain. Up on top of the mountain is a radar approach control tower guiding the aircraft to a landing. They would come over the highway and land. It was raining that night. It was after dark. My driver and I — I was taking a taxicab. I wasn't on my scooter [this] time. I was in a taxicab driven by a Filipino fellow. I noticed off to my right, coming in low over the mountain, was a large aircraft. I thought: first of all it was two jets, two fighters flying side by side because the landing lights were so far apart. But it wasn't, it was a Boeing 707 charter aircraft with eighty-six souls on board.

RB: Wow!

SA: I knew what was on that mountain and I knew that plane was going to hit that radar approach control tower, that radcom tower. I told my Filipino driver, “Drive! Drive fast! Fast! You go fast!” So he did. He put the pedal to the metal [and] hurried on down the road. I kept my eyes behind me. Sure enough the wing of that plane caught the tower. He dropped down behind my car. Behind my car, probably fifty yards back, was another taxicab. He didn’t make it. That airplane crashed, went over the highway, took that taxicab [out]. I think it had a couple of enlisted [fellows] in it. The plane blew up — it exploded —

RB: Wow!

SA: — short of the runway in the marshy grass area between the highway. It blew up. It killed everyone.

RB: No survivors?

SA: No survivors, except one. One survivor.

RB: Really?

SA: The pilot. The control deck, the flight control deck, was blown forward in front [of] the rest of the aircraft. He was found wandering, bleeding, burned and hysterical.

RB: I can imagine.

SA: It was a mess. If I had been five seconds later. In doing what I was going to do I would have been in that taxicab.

RB: Were you interviewed as part of an accident safety report? Or anything [by anybody]?

SA: No.

RB: But that is a memory that you have?

SA: That is a memory that I have.

RB: Wow!

SA: You can still read about that [crash].

RB: That would have been in 1964?

SA: In 1964. I left in May and that was in — [it] might have been March. [May 12, 1964]

BF: Did you ever catch any flack for the incident with the Negritos?

SA: No. They, like I said, they were in awe of us because we were giants to them. No, the king welcomed us. The [fellows who] took us into the village center grabbed onto our arms, more or less out of curiosity than anything else. Then the king came out. You could tell [he was] the king because he had more teeth hanging from his neck [laughter] all kinds of baubles and things. He came out and

welcomed us. We sat in a big circle in [something] like a grass hut. It was round [and] built up on pylons to keep [it] dry. They had a fire going right there. We all gathered around and just ate dog! [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] That is a great story! So you left Clark [Air Base]?

SA: I left Clark [Air Base] and] came back to Utah on leave. Then I went to Mountain Home Air Force Base in 1964. I was there until I left for Vietnam in 1966. While I was at Mountain Home we were with the Strategic Air Command. We were with the last active wing of the B-47 medium bomber. That was a four-engine jet bomber swept wing with only two pilots sitting in tandem, one behind the other. There was an electronic warfare officer and then the command pilot.

RB: Had the B-52's come into —?

SA: Yes, the B-52 first flew before the end of the Korean [Conflict].

RB: In the 1950s?

SA: It was 1952 and they are still flying.

RB: Right, that is a great aircraft.

SA: They have gone through a lot of modifications. The first B-52 flew in 1952.

RB: Yes, that is [a] good [way] to remember.

SA: We had the B-47. It was the last active wing of [the] Strategic Air Command. I decided [I] was going to the very best I could. I worked at the base Com [communications] Center. I applied, and had been accepted upon review, for the AACP Program. Then [it] was called the Airman's Education and Commissioning Program. I had been accepted for that program, but then I stuck my foot in my own mouth. I thought: you know what? I need to serve a year in Vietnam. I mean, I am in the military now. If I don't go over there, it is the old argument that if I don't go then someone else will go in my stead, possibly [be] killed and, boy, would I feel guilty. That was partially true, but I felt like I needed to do my share. I said, "Sir, can we postpone the appointment until I get back?" This was my officer in charge of the education department on the base. He said, "Sure. You want to go to Vietnam? We will process your papers if that is what you want to do." I attended the Noncommissioned Officers Academy at March Air Force Base [Riverside, California] first.

[I] came back [and in] November of 1966, I was assigned to Da Nang Air Base, Vietnam where I served my year. Again, in the Comm [Communication] Center. Part of that involved monitoring flag officer calls on the telephone. If any flag officers were making personal telephone calls it would be up to me and others like me, to monitor their conversation to make sure they were not talking about anything classified and to remind them that they were talking on a non-secure line. General Lew Walt, High Corps Commander of the Marine Corps, First Division, the High Corps Commander there at Da Nang — I caught him.

[Lewis William Walt, February 16, 1913 – March 26, 1989, was a four-star general in the U. S. Marine Corps. In Vietnam, Walt served as the Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force. In May 1967, *Life* magazine did a cover story on Walt noting the success of an innovative program initiated by Walt in August 1965. It was called the Combined Action Program [CAP]. Under CAP squads of Marine and Navy medical corpsman volunteered for the CAP platoons combined with South Vietnamese Popular Force platoons. They went into the South Vietnamese countryside villages and hamlets to deny the Viet Cong access to the people living there. They were to protect the villages, get to know the people, find the local Communist infrastructure and put it “out of business.” Walt stressed the importance of the platoons winning the confidence of average Vietnamese citizens.

— Added by Randall J. Bunn during editing.]

RB: Oh, no!

SA: I was monitoring his call one night. He was talking to of all people, Martha Raye. Now you don’t know who Martha Raye is, I don’t think, unless you have been really schooled. [A] big loud-mouthed comedian.

RB: [An] actress?

SA: Actress.

RB: Singer.

SA: Comedian

RB: I do remember her from the 1960s.

SA: She, Jerry Colonna and Bob Hope. They were all in that era. General Lou Walt was talking to Martha Raye at down country [further to the south in Vietnam]. She had just arrived in Saigon [at the] Tan Son Nhut Air Base. He invited her to come up to “my chalet.” His chalet was a cabin basically built with GI [Government Issue] labor and Marine labor.

RB: [Laughter]

SA: It was a nice place overlooking Da Nang harbor. He invited her to come up and spend a couple of days and visit with the troops. Then they [started] talking about the war. She said, “How is it going up there, Lew?” He said, “Well, as well as can be expected. As well as Washington wants us to be doing. But we are not going to go win this war because Washington won’t let us.” “[And] why?” “Because the United States doesn’t want us to be responsible, for post-war reparations as we were and still are in Japan. It is a money thing. That was in 1967. Segue forward to 1975 and we are still there.”

When he started to talk about the war saying, “Congress [in] Washington does not want us to win this war, I cut in and said, “General Walt, sir, this is Sergeant Spencer Anderson, base communications, reminding you, sir, that your call is being monitored. This is a clear line, sir. This is a non-secure line. We have

instructions to interrupt you with such calls if you are talking about the progress of the war because of listening ears and all of that. Sorry for the interruption, sir, but I am required to remind you.” He was so kind and contrite. He said, “That is right. Thank you. Who did you say [you were], again? Sergeant Anderson? Thank you, Sergeant Anderson and we will not do that anymore.” I said, “I appreciate that, sir.”

RB: Did you have to report that to anyone?

SA: Yes. I had to write it in the log.

RB: Oh, dear!

SA: I had to log it. I wasn’t the only person in there listening. If I hadn’t logged it, I would’ve been —.

RB: Called on the carpet.

SA: Anyway, that was kind of fun. I had a second encounter. I had two incidences in the military where my life could have been [snap fingers] snuffed out. The one was [when] the airplane came down, rolling over the highway. The other one happened when I was in Vietnam.

I had just worked a swing shift. I came back to the barracks, our hooch, we called them in Vietnam. They had [a] cute name for all of these things. I came back to my hooch to sack out at the end of a graveyard shift, or a swing shift, and a staff sergeant friend of mine said, “Oh “Spence,” I am so sick. I don’t know if I am coming down with malaria or what [it is]. Would you take my shift for me tonight?” I said, “Sarge, I was just on for twelve hours.” They weren’t eight hour shifts, they were twelve hour shifts and I just got off. He said, “I know, but I can’t make it. Can’t you please do it?” I said, “Alright, sir. Sure, I will do it. You go to bed and take care of yourself.” I [put] my boots [and] shirt back on and headed to the communication center. By the time the next morning rolled around I was just so tired.

RB: I bet.

SA: I came back in, I took my clothes off and I didn’t shower and brush my teeth. Excuse me, ladies. [Laughter] I am sorry, but I just sacked out. I rolled over with my face toward the wall. You know what military bunks are like. They are about two-feet wide and six-feet long, just a little [space]. I laid down with my head on my pillow, turned my face toward the wall. I noticed some pieces of the wood had been splintered out of the wall. Just very lightly framed wooden with canvas over the top. I picked at it with my fingers. I noticed that some of the wood had come over the surface of my bed, not much, just a splinter or two. I kind of peeled some of it away and there was a perfectly round hole. I thought: what in the world is that? I turned and looked the other way over toward my locker. I got out of bed and walked over there, inspected it and, sure enough, at the base of the locker there was a little dent. There were some little fragments of lead. What had happened was that sometime during the night a stray round had come through and

had entered right where my little head would have been had I been asleep, as I should have been. That night was the second time.

RB: When you realized what had happened, what did you think? Did you put two and two together?

SA: Oh absolutely! Right then I said a prayer.

BF: Yes. [Laughter]

SA: Thank you, Lord!

RB: Yes.

SA: Not quite in those blessed terms. I did. I said a prayer of thanks and gratitude. I zonked out and went right to sleep for eight hours.

RB: Wow, incredible!

SA: Yes, amazing!

BF: At Da Nang, one of the things I have seen, at least on other interviews, was the infamous Hooch 15 down at the base where the sewer line was. It was where the common [correspondents] would often hang out and watch artillery go off. Did you ever get to see them?

SA: No, I saw a version of it, I suppose. When I got there, at Da Nang, they were still building up. They were still under the Great Society military buildup of Lyndon Johnson's dream. Consequently, the influx of troops was far in excess of the ability to house them. A huge tent city grew at the south side of the runway. These were like sixteen-man tents with wooden built-up floors, so it wasn't all that bad. We had open latrines and open showers. You would walk from your tent over to the community showers. You have seen *MASH*, right?

RB: Yes.

SA: These little enclosures with little nozzles coming up and hanging up. Everybody's shower water was the same temperature. You would take a shower, but you would always carry your helmet with you. Because to go from the shower back to your hooch there would be mud from [your] knees down. If it was raining, you always filled up your helmet with water. Then when you [were] back to your tent, you would stand there and wash your feet and go on into your tent. The day that I got there, they had just finished putting up the tent [where] I was assigned. I said, "Where is my locker?" They said, "It is in that box right over there. Here is a socket wrench and a pair of plyers for you. Good luck." I had to assemble my own locker. It was a big heavy locker, too. You had to hang a twenty-five-watt light bulb in your locker to keep mildew off your clothes because the humidity was so, so high. We strung lights down and within a matter of days everybody's lockers were squared away. We all had our little lights in there.

BF: [Laughter]

SA: We had our bunkbeds. After I was in Da Nang for about four or five months, I was assigned to the Army Signal Battalion, to work with them as a communications specialist. I was transferred out of the base proper, out of the Air Force, part of it anyway, into the Army Signal Battalion. These [fellows] had all of their rifles. They would stack them up in the middle of the floor. They all lived in —

SA: — [a] Quonset hut kind of setting with concrete floors. Nice metal Quonset huts. They lived so much better than the Air Force did, I will tell you! And their chow, oh, their chow was amazing. It was absolutely amazing! I lived with them for awhile, but this is when the end of my career came. It was one night in 1967. It was probably midway in my tour of duty. I had gone to bed at night. From what the doctors told me, I apparently had an epileptic type of full-blown seizure which had thrown me out of the upper bunk and drove my head into the concrete floor where I fractured my skull and received a brain concussion.

RB: Wow!

SA: They air evacuated me out from Da Nang, Vietnam to the big Air Force hospital there at Clark [Air Force Base]. Welcome home!

RB: You had been there before.

SA: What comes around goes around. They did a preliminary evaluation [and] said, “Yes, you have a hairline fracture. Yes, you have a concussion. We will keep you here for a couple weeks. We will make sure you can count from one to ten. [Laughter] Then we will send you back.” Which [is what] they did. They sent me back to complete my tour of duty in Vietnam at Da Nang. Whereupon, after I finished my year there in December of 1967, I left and was reassigned to [the] RAF [Royal Air Force] Alconbury, in England. From Vietnam to England. Wow! That was a change. We were getting quite a bit of exposure here to different cultures.

RB: Did you recover from that incident?

SA: Yes, I did, I did. One day in the Comm [Communications] center, after I had been in England for almost three months, I was working a shift and I got hit [finger snapped] with another seizure. I went right over on the floor, lost consciousness and flopped about like a silver salmon. We went fishing for silver salmon in Alaska!

RB: Any explanation of the cause of that?

SA: I am getting to that. I was called into the flight surgeon’s office. They said, “Why are you having these seizures, Anderson?” I said, “I don’t know. If it was my choice, it wouldn’t be happening.” He said, “Well, let’s give you some pills.” So they gave me some pills. They put me on Dilantin and Phenobarbital and sent me back to duty. A few months later I was called away from England to Incirlik [Air Base, Turkey, as] the Middle East was starting to heat up. In 1968 the Russians were saber rattling, invading and expanding.

RB: That is right.

SA: Early in 1968 they had invaded Czechoslovakia, which became part of their Communist domain, [or] whatever. I was sent to Incirlik Air Base in Turkey where I diverted a little bit out of my Com [Communications] center career into Armed Forces Television. [This] was not part of my AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code], but it was needed. I had a friend who worked at Armed Forces Television on base at Incirlik. He said, "You have a great voice, "Spence," why don't you come and work for us?" I said, "That is not my AFSC. If you can plow the road for me, I would love it. I would love it." Well, they did. They plowed the road for me and I became part of the broadcast team of specialists anchoring news, weather and sports throughout the Middle East out of [the] Incirlik Air Base in Turkey.

RB: [Was this] kind of reminiscent of your time with KSL?

SA: Yes.

RB: And back to Moab! [Laughter]

SA: Yes, I was in seventh heaven! It is what got me [the] state [championship] in forensics two years in a row.

RB: Right! [Laughter]

SA: There I was at Incirlik. One day I [received] a call while I was at the television station. It was from the flight surgeon's office. They said, "Sergeant Anderson?" I said, "Yes." "We need you to come in and see us. Anderson, are you still having these seizures?" I said, "Yes sir, I am." He said, "The Dilantin and Phenobarbital aren't doing any good for you?" I said, "No sir, they are not." He said, "Then we need to find out what is happening, so we are going to send you to Ruislip." No, not Ruislip, [it was] Weisbaden in Germany. Weisbaden Air Base, in Germany, at the big Air Force hospital there. "We need to find out what is happening." So they did. They did some diagnostics. They located an aneurism. It is called arteriovenous malformation. It is located right at the anterior parietal lobe of the brain. It is where the gross motors system of [the] right side of your body is located. If that part of your body gets damaged then you lose function of the right side of your body.

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

Which is what happened. They did preliminary surgery and decided that [they couldn't] go any further because this aneurism was dish down into active brain tissue so much that [they] just didn't have the technique for it there. "We are medical evacuating you back to the [Untied] States aboard a C-17." Welcome home again! I was in San Antonio [Texas at the] Wilford Hall Memorial Hospital. In San Antonio they went in and, actually, tied off the ends of the aneurism, extracted it, reconnected the major bleeders [or] feeders. Nine and a half hours on the operating table. I was out. Six months later I had rehabbed. I had regained my

speech. I was completely aphasic after that. I could take in information, but I had no means of expressing it.

RB: Is that right?

SA: I couldn't write. I couldn't speak. It was [very] weird. After six months, all of that, as much as I could get back, I got back. I was sent to the US Space and Missiles Systems Organization or SAMSO in El Segundo, California. It is in a little lone Air Force station where we oversee that function of the Air Force's Missile Program. Again, in a secure communications area. I was a staff Sergeant E-5 at the time. I was allowed to go there. I was there from May of 1969 until February of 1970 where I mustered out. I married my first wife. I was in Colorado [and] started attending college. You know the rest of the story.

RB: That was part of your decision to leave? Or did the Air Force ask you to leave?

SA: No. The Air Force was kind enough to let me finish my current tour of duty. They also gave me an extra stripe from the hospital because while I was there in the hospital I got so tired of laying around. I said, "Colonel" that was my surgeon. I said, "Can't you find something for me to do?"

SA: I am not brain dead. I need to work. I am going on six months here at this hospital.

RB: That is a long time.

SA: He said, "Yes, let's put you down in the pharmacy." I went to work for a great pharmacist. I spent, for probably the last two months that I was there filling prescriptions, filling pill bottles and taking trays around to the different floors. Distributing all [these items and] I [received] an extra stripe [for] that.

RB: [Laughter]

SA: I was promoted to a Staff Sergeant E-5 by the hospital.

RB: [Laughter]

SA: I finished my tour duty. I was credited with eight years of active duty service and retired.

RB: They just weren't going to allow you to reenlist?

SA: No, no, no, no. If you can't march in formation without limping, you know? No!

RB: That is the be [to] all end all.

SA: I could have. As it turned out, I am glad I didn't because my life took another direction.

RB: Of course, that is the way things work. Did you receive a disability discharge?

SA: Yes, service connected disability rated currently at eighty percent. I still receive Air Force medical retirement.

RB: Very good. Okay. You got out at El Segundo. Was it LA [Los Angeles] Air Force Base at the time?

SA: No, it was just El Segundo, Space and Missiles Systems Organization. There were far more civilians than there were Air Force people there. It was pretty good duty.

RB: So it was 1970. Then you went back to Salt Lake [City]?

SA: No, actually —

RB: [To] Colorado?

SA: — from there I went straight to Colorado.

RB: [Did] you [go] to college at that point?

SA: I went to college, met and married my first wife. We had two girls.

RB: You mentioned a little bit [about] your post military experience, as we talked about your background. You went to college and [went] into education.

SA: Yes.

RB: Why did you decide to do that?

SA: It was because of two people, my fifth grade teacher, Mr. Whatcott. He had a nervous twitch in the cheek of his butt.

RB: [Laughter] It was from the war. It was what we call now, shell shock.

RB: PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]?

SA: PTSD, yes. He had this nervous twitch. He always had this joke about it. He said, “Do you know why I do that? When I was a [youngster], we used to sneak over into the pumpkin patch and smash pumpkins. While I was climbing over this barbed-wire fence, I [was] caught. Right there on this barbed-wire fence and somebody said, “What caught?” I said, “That is my name, Whatcott. [Laughter] That is why I twitch because I kind of cut myself right there.” He was always cracking a joke. He was a great teacher. [And] I had a fourth-grade teacher that I absolutely fell in love with. She married a [fellow] named Anderson. Was I in seventh heaven?

RB: [Laughter]

SA: I had a few teachers along the way that mentored me and became friends. I thought: it is an honorable calling. I want to be a teacher. I really do. I want to be a teacher. You don’t go into that business because you want to make money, you go into it because of more altruistic reasons.

RB: Sure. What grades did you teach?

SA: I taught primarily fifth and sixth grade. I started out teaching third grade. Somewhere along the line, I taught fourth [grade]. Then I taught a fifth-sixth split.

[Later] I taught sixth grade. That was a perfect grade to teach because then after that, I transferred over into middle school counseling.

RB: Was that was all in Colorado? Is that correct?

SA: My college [time] was, yes. I graduated from college in the spring of 1975 [and] moved back to Salt Lake [City] alone for reasons that don't need to be explained.

RB: [I] understand.

SA: [I] got a job [and] started my career in the fall of 1975. The school year of 1975-1976 was my first school year. [I] taught in Western Hills Elementary school out in Kearns [Salt Lake County, Utah]. [Do] you know where that is?

RB: I do. Now let me ask you this. You spent, what was it? Eleven years teaching?

SA: [It was] twelve years and then seventeen years.

RB: So almost a thirty-year career.

SA: They gave me credit for thirty years.

RB: After eight years in the military, then you [started] writing?

SA: I did.

RB: I am curious to know how you got into that. What did you do to prepare yourself for that?

SA: I have been a constant reader all my life. I enjoy the genre of commercial fiction and science fiction. I am kind of a nerd that way. I have always had a story to tell. When I retired in 2004 from education, from teaching school, I set a three-item bucket list. The number one on that bucket list was to get my pilots license. Which I did. Now I can say I am a retired Air Force and former pilot, but I am not a retired Air Force pilot. [Laughter]

RB: Very good. That is true.

SA: It is not false. I wanted to get my pilot's license, which I did. I want to write stories. I want to become an author and just write stories. If I can publish fine and if I don't, then that is okay too. It takes a life of its own. You want to get published once you start that process. Third, I wanted to paint pictures and so I do. I am not doing the pilot thing anymore because the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] grounded me because of this [gesturing to his body about his health condition]. But I am writing stories and I have a great collaborator and my muse. She designs my book covers for me. I tell her what is in my mind and she puts it down. She does a fantastic job. She manages our business, so I just get to write and create.

RB: Did you [receive] training in writing at all?

SA: No.

RB: So you just started putting these stories down?

SA: Yes.

RB: [And] making them into a full-length book?

SA: Yes, I have a couple of favorite authors. I won't say that I like to copy their style, but their books are working their way around [in] the back of my mind as I am writing. I get kind of a feel for hooking an audience, you know? Having parallel plot lines and bringing everything together at the end. So far we [have done well. We have sold, going on 7,000 books, just on our own [by] touring the western states and going to air shows. We will do twelve, thirteen or fourteen events every year. Now I am wanting to move onto a name publisher and see if I can reach out to a global market, now that I have a proven commodity.

RB: Do you have any books in the offing now? Are you working on anything?

SA: I am working on one right now. I have published four. They are already out there. I am working on another one that is pure "sci-fi" having to do with, again somewhat with flying, but having to do with a wormhole and a family getting taken back 5,000 years in time. A whole family.

RB: Interesting!

SA: A dad, mom, two grown children and then a younger boy [are] taken back 5,000 years to receive an orb. These people [who] are inhabiting the earth at this time, in this particular area, are actually aliens. They come from a binary star system. There is this orb that kind of leads them the way. It is kind of like the *Liahona*, if you are LDS [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], but more than that.

RB: Yes, [I] understand.

SA: Anyway, this family gets taken back, they [are] trapped in an artificial wormhole that gets carried away. It gets out of its containment area and expands out to above ground. It is in Idaho. There is a LHC, a large hadron [collider].

RB: [A] collider?

SA: [A] collider in Idaho that is much larger than the one in Bern, Switzerland. The government is developing a means of creating artificial wormholes for the purpose of transferring military personnel and equipment instantaneously across the globe, or most anywhere they want to, for the use of their wormholes. This wormhole escapes its containment area and actually comes above the ground. It is in Idaho just as this family crash lands their private airplane. They were going for a vacation up in Canada, up to Kootenay Bay [in Kootenay National Park].

SA: They have engine trouble. The dad is an airline pilot and has his own private little airplane. They have to crash land at this old deserted air strip that they found. It happens to be at the entrance to the underground facility. They don't know what is down there. They figure they have to get help [from] somewhere because they are out in the middle of the Cascade Mountains. They are hurt [and] scared. They see this fenced-in compound and nobody is there. It is because the experiment

was about to take place, so the whole place was put on lock-down and on automatic control from NORAD [North American Aerospace Defense Command] in Colorado. There is not a soul there. It is all being monitored and conducted remotely. They said, “Oh gee, there are these big doors. Let’s see if we can get in there, see if we can find someone and get some help.” Just then, boom! The experiment starts. The wormhole escapes and it comes up above ground and this whole family is lifted up off the ground. It takes their breath away and smacks them back onto the ground. They wake up and they are dazed, but the airplane is no longer there.

RB: [Laughter]

SA: The fence is no longer there. The big doors are no longer there. They are laying [thinking], it looks like where we are, but we are not here. Well, where are we? They find out through their experiences. As they meet these ancient, ancient tribes, they find out where they are.

RB: Fascinating!

SA: The idea is he [the dad] comes back with this orb. The doctors, the scientists [who] created this wormhole are able to actually locate the point in time where they were taken. They create another wormhole just as the family makes it back [and] they are able to return to normal time through a series of events to be explained in the book. Then he comes back with this orb. That is the first half of the book. The second half of the book is what happens. I told you about a collision of a binary star system. That collision of that binary star system created, generated, a huge ribbon of dark energy. It is just like black velvet because of its density. It is literally headed into our galaxy. If it gets into our galaxy and gets into the ring around in which our solar system is, inside our galaxy, then it is going to disrupt all gravitationally bound objects.

RB: [Laughter]

SA: It is going to rip apart our solar system if it reaches us. The United States and all of the Allies, any other country with a brain in their head, are getting together to launch a space mission to disrupt this field of black energy. They know how they are going to do it. My protagonist, of course, becomes the commanding force of it [laughter] because he has the orb. It has to be through the orb that they are able to develop a warp drive on their spaceship, because the orb basically creates its own wormhole. There is a Mexican scientist by the name of [Miguel] Alcubierre who actually worked out a plausible warp drive based on the *Star Trek* series using modern science of wormholes and bending space time. That is where I draw this from.

RB: Very good.

SA: To make a long story short, he uses the orb and he is supposed to disrupt this ribbon of energy, which he is able to do and brings the world back safely.

RB: [Laughter] That is great!

SA: Everybody is safe now.

RB: When do you anticipate publishing that?

SA: The book is done. It was actually the first one I wrote about six years ago, but now that I know how to write, I am going back and rewriting it. I want to have it out this time, no, maybe by May or June of next year [2019].

RB: I will look for that. Thank you.

SA: [The title of the book is] *World Lines*. Theoretically, in space and time in a wormhole, that time loops around on itself. Not just in one dimension, there are endless dimensions of these world lines with parallel worlds that fold back on themselves. You know in nature the most natural shape is an orb and there is a reason for that. Each of these dimensional loops is called a world line, hence the name of the book.

RB: That is fascinating! Thank you, I will look forward to that.

SA: You are welcome.

RB: [This] concludes our interview with Spencer Anderson. I want to thank you very much for sharing your story.

SA: Thank you, I appreciate that.

RB: You said that you were not all that significant, but actually you have given us some [very] interesting thoughts from back in the 1960s and your experience in several places around the world. Thank you.

SA: Yes. You are welcome. It has been a pleasure. There is so much to be told. I think about that era, about the men and women [who] served, and we don't want to forget them.

RB: Thank you.

SA: Thank you.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]