

10-28-1985

Interview with Vernon Artell Anderson (FA 46)

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Interviewer's tape no.: 5.2.1.1-10/28/85 WKU FL, FL & OHA Accession no.:

Interviewer: Rita H. Kelly Address: 213 Warrior Road
Madison, Tenn., 37115
Interviewee: Vernon Artell (Andy) Address: 714 Due West Ave., Apt. L-164
Anderson Madison, Tenn., 37115
Date: October 28, 1985

Place of interview: 714 Due West Ave., Apt. L-164, Madison, Tenn., 37115

Other people present: Gracie Marie Pack Little

Equipment used: General Electric, Model # 3-5247A

Reel-to-reel tape: Brand: Size reel: Tape Mil: Speed:

Cassette: Brand: Scotch/AVX/60/ C-30/C-60/C-90/C-120 (circle size)
Studio Master

Amount of tape used: (Side 1): 30 min. (Side 2): 30 min

Brief description of interview context and tape contents: This interview was conducted in the informant's home, seated at the dining room table. Topics discussed included his remembrance of his mother, her death, loss of the nuclear family, and later contact with his father. Army life, joining the M. P.'s, and life on a base were also discussed. Other jobs while out of the Army, Army and family photos, and furthering his education were also discussed. Throughout this interview, the T. V. set played game shows. Andy also taped the interview, and his mini tape recorder can be heard clicking off.

INDEX	COUNTER	SUMMARY
Permission to tape.	010-019	Oh, yeah. Have full permission.
Father's middle name.	020-058	Otell. O-t-e-l-l. Mine's Artell. Not a junior.
Remembrance of mother	059-115	I remember her whipping me one time. We was unloading wood. She had one hen. My brother dared me to throw a block at it. Her cooking. Her helping Daddy. Making home brew. A beer. Just sketches, all I remember of her. I remember when she was buried. Didn't realize my Mama was gone.
Cause of mama's death.	115-126	Childbirth and pneumonia. Complications of pneumonia during childbirth. Her and

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White family in all black neighborhood	127-168	<p>the baby both died.</p> <p>Me and my sister, grandfather and father. They opened a little store and a wood yard. Sort of like a duplex, there was a colored man had a store on the other side. With a huge lot in the back with a big shed. For his business. We was a white family in that block, in the next block there was a white family. I don't know of any more white families in that area.</p>
Indian ancestry.	169-222	<p>Grandmother about half Cherokee. Some of my uncles, cousins, look at them and tell they're Cherokee. An Uncle never did grow a beard. He'd get out and do war dances, rain dances. Grandmother about half Indian. Could probably check archives in Richmond County, Georgia, and prove it. It's gotta be there.</p>
Name spelling, grandmother.	223-230	<p>Prickett. P-r-i-c-k-e-t-t.</p>
Loss of nuclear family	231-279	<p>Don't remember my age, but I was in the first grade right after that. Around five, six. Don't really know how brother went to live with grandparents. Felt pretty bad about it. First sort of excited about getting out on the farm.</p>

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<p>What became of father and grandfather.</p>	<p>280-295</p>	<p>When I found out what was going to happen I didn't care too much about it. Rather been with Daddy. Continued to run wood yard. Daddy went on to defence work. Closed down little store. Grandfather went to live with one of my aunts. Daddy started travelling the country.</p>
<p>Remembrance of grandfather Anderson</p>	<p>296-328</p>	<p>Quite a gentleman. Tall, stately looking, white handlebar mustache, articulate. Set around and tell us ghost stories. After we got carried to the farm, that old man would walk from Augusta, about twelve miles to see us. Stay two or three days, sleep on the floor, and then walk back. Quite a man.</p>
<p>Remembrance of farm life.</p>	<p>329-378</p>	<p>Lucius Johns. He was Indian so much he was dark, real dark. Aunt was mother's sister, Mamie. Typical farm life. Up real early to do chores. I had more to do than the other kids. All stock fed. After they were milked had to take them out to grass pasture. Tie them out. Move them to a new spot so they could eat all day. Evening, bring them in, carry them back to watering hole, feed them. It was up to me to get in all the</p>

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<p>Other relatives. Cousins</p>	<p>379-396</p>	<p>firewood. And worked in the fields. They just worked me. When you wasn't in the fields you got to go to school. Hard life. They had two girls and two sons older than me. And one son younger than me. I was the outsider. One of the girls, her name was Francis. I talked to her the other day. She's like a sister. She said I was closer than any brother she had. I do call her every now and then, especially around Christmas time.</p>
<p>Relationship with cousins and aunt.</p>	<p>397-419</p>	<p>We very seldom mail cards. Any time I'm in Augusta, that's one of the first places I go. Her and one of my aunts that's still alive. She called me here, heard I was sick. Called to check up on me. Since you were here last. Mother's younger sister. Her and Mother's oldest brother are the only two of Mother's brothers and sisters still alive. I've got cousins by the dozens. Cousins I've never seen, wouldn't know them if I saw them. And every one of them got children.</p>
<p>Contact with father</p>	<p>420-459</p>	<p>Since he travelled on those Defence jobs he'd come to see us about twice a year. Always bring us something. Take us to</p>

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		<p>town, buy us clothes, and he sent money right along. We didn't see any benefit from it, but he sent it anyway. He always came to see us any time he was in town. That's the only time I heard from him. He never wrote. If he did I never saw it. We got just what they wanted us to have, heard just what they wanted us to hear. I remember one time they found out in advance Daddy was coming to see us, we was too little to realize it at the time. I loved to fish, and one day Uncle Luce said to me and Myrtis, ya'll don't have to go to the fields today, why don't you get some worms and fish awhile. That tickled us to death, got to go fishing. We got back to the house, found out Daddy had been there. We was too little to realize that. We was getting an afternoon off. Caught a little fish about three inches long.</p>
Choice of Army over any other sort of job.	460-471	My brother had just been killed in service. I felt like I wanted to go. So that's what I did.
Why Army appealing	472-482	Seeing all those people in uniforms. Hearing all about what they was doing in the news, seeing it in the paper.

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Why M. P.'s appealing.	483-506	<p>It felt like something I wanted to do.</p> <p>Wound up doing it.</p> <p>Don't know what made me decide to go into the M. P.'s. Far as I could tell, they were the most prestigious, glamorous. That was what I wanted to do. You could see them in their special uniforms, the authority they had. I reckon authority appealed to me, and I just went for it. Come from a cotton farm and I thought that an M. P. was really something.</p>
Living on a base-Fort Campbell.	507-553	<p>That was where my oldest daughter was born. I didn't go to Campbell as an M. P. I was at Fort Meade. I applied for a transfer, and the first that came open was Fort Campbell in the Quartermaster Corps. Demolition. They shipped me to Campbell had me tearing down buildings. I'd been there about a week working on a building. A Master Sergeant in the M. P.'s come by. Talked to the Lieutenant. Lieutenant called me down said, "This M. P. Sarge wants to talk to you." He said, "We need M. P.'s, you want back in?" I said, "How about today?" He told the Lieutenant, "He's leaving the job, coming in the 591st today." That's</p>

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Living on a base- birth of daughter.	554-585	<p>the way I got back in the M. P.'s.</p> <p>At that time we was living in a military house trailer. It was about time for my daughter to be born. I started patrolling the post in a jeep.</p> <p>Living on a post you had everything you needed right there. You had your stores, grocery stores, commissaries, theatres. Anything you wanted to do, it was there. You didn't have to go to town for anything unless you wanted to. N. C. O. clubs better than you'd find in town.</p> <p>So I told her, "I'll be on patrol. During the night you feel like you need to go to the hospital just turn the light on." So I'd watch for that light. I come by about two o'clock in the morning, the light was on. So I pulled that jeep in, she was about ready to go to the hospital. We didn't have a phone. Radioed them to send an ambulance, send somebody to pick up the jeep. Spent the rest of the night at the hospital.</p>
Living on a base- Change in living quarters.	586-633	<p>The time she was in the hospital she was in the same room as the wife of a Colonel. The post Surgeon General. He said the oil heat, oil stove was going</p>

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Living on a base- a typical day.	634-691	<p>to be bad on the baby's eyes, "Why don't you live in the housing?" I was number 200 on the waiting list, that's a long time. He said, "Come down to my office in the morning, I'll have a letter ready for you. You take it to the billeting office." Two days later they moved us into an apartment. It cost me three dollars and thirty-five cents a month, rent. We had a telephone, refrigerator, stove, furniture. I had to pay 35 cents a month utilities. We were a block and a half from the main grocery store. Theatre two blocks, American Legion Club about a block from where we lived. Sent my clothes to the post laundry. That cost a dollar and 20 cents a month, no matter how much you sent. It was a good laundry.</p> <p>I'll tell you when I was on day shift. I had two different jobs there. I was in the regular M. P.'s. I'd get up about 5 o'clock in the morning, walk down to M. P. headquarters. It's the same old temporary building that's still the M. P. headquarters. Check in, they'd give me the assignment sheet for the day, cause</p>

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		<p>I had 3 or 4 guys under me. I'd assign the different patrols, get in my vehicle and go out on patrol. Ride around. Just regular police patrol, really. Then about noon I'd stop at home for lunch. About 4 o'clock I'd go back in, assign somebody to take the flag down. We had to put the flag up in the morning, too. Knock off for the day. Eat, go to the movie, whatever you wanted to do.</p> <p>That was when I was on a regular patrol. When they opened a new stockade, I took the job of Assistant Provost Sergeant. Then I didn't do nothing. Worked every other day, there was two of us. My work consisted of getting down there in the morning. They'd assign guards to take the work detail out. I'd check out the prisoners, send them out on a work detail and I'd be through until noon. They'd come in at noon to eat, I'd check them in. I'd go home, come back in an hour and a half, they'd go back out. I'd go home or wherever I wanted to go. Be back in to check them in at 4 o'clock. That was my day. The next day I didn't have to</p>

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Duties of a Provost Sergeant	692-695	do nothing. Didn't even have to go in. He's assistant to the Prison Officer.
Types of prisoners, work details.	696-720	Enlisted personnel, people up to 6 months. A. W. O. L. or minor violations, nobody's going to cause any trouble. They wasn't worried, it was an easy life for them. They'd get out and pick up trash along the street. They'd pick up bottles. I'd let them carry extra bags to put the bottles in, let them go by the American Legion Club. The guy there would give them 3 cents a bottle. They'd make a little money or he'd trade cigarettes for them. It was a good life for them.
Difference between Provost Sergeant and other M. P.'s.	721-728	Regular M. P.'s out on patrol, dealing with the general Army population. Provost Sergeant he'd just deal with the ones that had gotten in trouble.
Relationship with prisoners.	729-739	I'd carry the boys out. Play football. Call the M. P. office tell them to send me 4 patrol cars on Sunday. Play a football game. Put an M. P. here, an M. P. here, an M. P. here, an M. P. here. [Indicating roughly the 4 sides of a rectangle of a football field.] If I got the ball they'd knock me. There was

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	740-743	<p>no danger. They was a bunch of good guys. A lot of them became good friends after they got out, kept in touch.</p> <p>(Gracie asked me if I would like a cup of coffee or Pepsi. I replied, "yes," to the Pepsi, with a cup of ice.)</p>
	744-761	<p>One of the prisoners would cut my hair all the time. He'd been a barber. I'd give him a pack of cigarettes. I liked it there. I didn't have a thing to worry about. Leave my pistol at the gate, go on in, play cards with them. That way kept trouble down. I liked them, do everything I could to help them. We had several who were trustys.</p> <p>(End side one. Begin side two, tape # 5.2.1.2-10/28/85.)</p>
Combat M. P.'s	006-129	<p>A lot of stuff they did in the Army I can't talk about because I was assigned A. S. A. Army Security Agency. We took not a 10 year oath, but a life time oath. There's a whole strip of my career I can't talk about. But a Combat M. P. Somebody had to direct traffic. Who's going to direct traffic except a cop? Some of the general duties were to direct incoming personnel in landings. Once the landings</p>

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Best war movie	130-198	<p>were established, we'd go out, bring them back alive for questioning. That makes a big difference in the duties. When I went in to A. S. A., I was held at Fort Campbell for 6 months while they ran a security check. Some of the stuff we were assigned to do wasn't supposed to be done.</p> <p>None of them were really accurate. They used to have a series on T. V. called <u>Combat</u> that depicted a different area of combat, but from what I see was just about as accurate as any on T. V. Seemed to be more true to life experiences. There was a movie that depicted the Air Force, <u>God is my Co-Pilot</u>, they used a few items from the military, but the writers want to attract viewers.</p>
War correspondence with strangers	199-225	<p>It happened quite often. You'd get an address, and you'd write. I'd correspond with my first wife. That was the only time. For about 6 months.</p>
Discharge from the Army after 8 years	226-263	<p>The first time I got out was because they passed a new pay regulation. I was going to wind up losing about twelve dollars a month. Anybody suffering a loss in pay could get a discharge. I stayed out</p>

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Pastoring churches.	264-272	<p>about ten days that time. Right back in. I was in El Paso. I decided I'd get out. I was out five years then. Went back in. During the time I was out, and after I retired, also.</p>
Other jobs while out of the Army.	273-307	<p>During that 5 years I worked in a steel foundry, inspector in Chattanooga. I went down to get a job as a laborer, and the personnel manager had me meet a man looking for inspectors. I wound up with lots better job than I applied for. I worked there for 3 years.</p>
Pastoring churches	308-384	<p>And on Sundays, church. I was available any time they needed me. They'd call and I'd go. I'd do funerals. I'd get off from work, they understood. Then I started working midnight shift so I'd have days off. I started out in Alabama just an assistant.</p> <p>They had a conference, they made an assignment. Assigned me 7 churches, some of them as high as 20 miles apart. No way. Pay was only going to be five hundred dollars a year. That wouldn't even pay for my gas to go from one church to the other. I can't do it. I wound up just getting one church. I don't know what they did</p>

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		<p>with the other 6. It was close to Ida, Alabama, on Sand Mountain.</p> <p>We moved up to Rossville, and one Sunday morning about 6 o'clock, the pastor of the church I was attending called me. Said the pastor of a church in Chicamauga had just had a heart attack. There was 2 churches. I said I'd help out. Wound up staying there 5 years. I kept the one church. They paid me 15 hundred a year.</p>
Increasing the attendance at the Chicamauga church.	385-423	<p>I didn't think I was doing anything special. People in the community liked me. I'd get young people; take them 'possum hunting at night. Build a big fire, hold a big weenie roast, catch 'possums. Turn them loose. They just kept coming. Older people liked me. Somebody'd get sick and they'd call me. Go to the hospital and sit with them. I'd make sure if they were going to surgery to be with them before they went. I was just doing what I enjoyed doing.</p>
Going back into the Army.	424-447	<p>Employment situation. There was no jobs available. I had 2 children, wasn't making enough to support them. I went back in the Army, the pay was good enough</p>

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Retirement--getting off crutches.	448-485	<p>I didn't have to worry about it. I knew they would take me back.</p> <p>Madigan Army Hospital. That was in Tacoma, Washington. I'd lay in that bed, look out and see Mt. Ranier, see that snow all year long. I wore them for several years. Newspaper clipping is a picture of me while I was working in a sheltered workshop. I took over as manager of wood shop.</p>
Being handicapped.	486-509	<p>Not really handicapped. I couldn't do everything I had done in the past, but I was working, making a living. [Gracie found the small album with the newspaper clipping in it among the photographs.]</p>
Discussion of photos—Army, Disabled Enterprises, Inc., and family.	510-658	<p>Here's when I was a raw recruit. Almost 17. Here's right after I first made Buck Sergeant. Three stripes. Next is Staff, next Tech, next Master, at that time. Now there's a lot more in between. Any time I'm at Campbell they'll holler at me, "Sarge." [Looking for article.] Here it is. Here's a picture of us building Rock City bird houses, repairing drink cases. I got rid of the brace, then I got rid of one crutch, then the other.</p>

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		<p>Here's a picture of my father. There's two of my cousins in the service, this one's still alive, [Indicating man on the left,] this one disappeared. Nobody knows what happened to him. You can look at them tell they've got a lot of Indian in them. Here's my cousins, they're twin sisters. One of them's still alive, one of them's dead. Here's my mother's sister. I thought I had a picture of my grandmother, but I gave them to my granddaughter so she could keep them in the family. Wrote everything I could think about on the back of the picture. She's got them. My sister and her children there.</p>
<p>Woodworking business.</p>	<p>659-676</p>	<p>I went from working for them to working for myself because they didn't pay me what they were supposed to pay me. I travelled from Knoxville to Nashville as a supervisor. We had an agreement that at drink companies I would get one cent per case. I came to Nashville and contracted for 50 thousand cases at one time and they would only pay me a hundred dollars for it.</p>
<p>Photos—Army.</p>	<p>677-706</p>	<p>That was taken on the hospital ward at</p>

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Continuation of
education. Com-
pletion of degree.

707-723

Walter Reed. We were doing a show at Red Cross Rec Hall. Supposed to be celebrating. There's somebody propped up on my walking stick. Here's a company picture. Let's see if I can find my picture. It's misprinted, I should have been up here. [The photo is labeled Cpl. Vernon Anderson. Andy indicates it should have been higher on the page, among the Sergeants.] It was Camp Campbell, not Fort Campbell.

Erskine Caldwell's
Tobacco Road.

724-743

To get the degree in Philosophy it wouldn't take nothing to complete the degree except getting all the credits together. Just contact the different schools, get transcripts from them. I finished most of the courses here in Nashville, at U. T. It would just be a nice piece of paper to have. I'll do it one of these days.

I reckon I was in the service first time I read that. I read another one of his books, too. Oh, he was a dirty writer. I reckon it was one of the first books they let them publish all that filthy talk. Anything you can imagine, he wrote. He did another one called God's Little Acre. Just as bad. He just used dirty

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Attitude about pornography and foul language.	744-751	words, dirty situations. I read it because it was written about the area I was raised in. But I don't read that kind of material normally. I don't watch dirty movies. I do very little cussing. I don't do everything else I shouldn't do right, but that's one thing I can't get into.
<u>Tobacco Road.</u>	752-761	I never knew of anything like he writes about happening down there. He made it worse than <u>Peyton Place</u> . It didn't bother me a bit about being from there. (End of tape # 5.2.1.2-10/28/85.)