



Oral History Interview

With

Harold Craig Manson

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Washington D. C.

Interviewed by Susan Lamie

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ABSTRACT

Craig Manson graduated from the Air Force Academy in the mid-1970s. From 1976 until 1978 he was assigned to the 44th Strategic Missile Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base. His initial assignment was as a missileer in the 66th Strategic Missile Squadron. After a year, he became an instructor in the training division of the Operations Directorate. As the Assistant Chief of Unit Proficiency Training he worked with a team of officers that was responsible for training missileers in various aspects of the weapons system. In 1978, Mr. Manson left missile operations to attend law school. He then helped found the Air and Space Law Program at the Air Force Academy. At the time of this interview, Mr. Manson was the Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife and Parks for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

EDITORIAL NOTICE

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INTERVIEWEE: JUDGE CRAIG MANSON
INTERVIEWER: SUE LAMIE
ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: RON COCKRELL
DATE OF INTERVIEW: JUNE 27, 2002

SUE LAMIE: Just for the record, now, can you give us your full name, and your rank, and what your unit assignment was.

CRAIG MANSON: My name is Harold Craig Manson, and I was in the Minuteman Missile program from 1976 to 1978. And I initially started as a Second Lieutenant and I was a First Lieutenant at the time I finished being a missile officer. I am currently a Colonel in an Air National Guard unit. I was initially assigned to the 66th Strategic Missile Squadron, which was then part of the 44th Strategic Missile Wing of Strategic Air Command. I served in the 66th for a little over a year, then I moved to what was called the 44th Wing Headquarters Squadron, because I moved from a line crew assignment to an instructor assignment in the training division, which is part of the Operations Directorate of the 44th Strategic Missile Wing. Known as DOTI, that was the instructor branch, the DO standing for operations, the T standing for training, the I for the instructor branch. Of course there was also a DOV, which was the evaluation branch, or _____ as the line crew members called it. At some point, SAC changed those to DO22 -- that was the instructor branch, and DO9 -- that was the standardization and evaluation branch, although the line crew members continued to call it the DOTI and the DOV. So, those were my assignments. When I was in the instructor branch, I had another title. I was the Assistant Chief of Unit Proficiency Training Section, in the instructor branch, or UPT. And what we did in Unit Proficiency Training was we were responsible for developing programs to train the line crew members in various aspects of their weapons' system competence, and we also put out a training package every month. It was almost like a little pamphlet that went out every month and had articles about different weapons' system problems, what to do if you saw this particular problem out there in the field. And we wrote that every month. We'd solicit articles from other people in the training division, and there was always a quiz at the end of it that they had to do. We also conducted some of the Emergency War Order training and, like all of the instructors at the Instructors' Branch, we ran scenarios in the MPT -- the missile procedures trainer -- sometimes known as "the box" or the simulator. Those sessions, which could last anywhere from an hour to two and a half hours, the line crew members referred to as a "ride -- going for a ride in the trainer." The MPT looked exactly like a launch control center. Of course it wasn't, it was located in what was the large hanger at Ellsworth, which was at that time known as the Pride Hanger, because it had the big words PRIDE written across the front of it. It was located in the hanger, so it was located above ground and so forth, but when you walked in the door -- with the exception of the door, because the door to a real launch control center is this huge, 8-ton blast door with these giant pins that go into the wall -- but even the door on the inside had a pump on it that resembled the pump that is on the actual blast door in the launch control center. So it looked for all purposes like a launch

control center. And what would happen in these training sessions is that there is a control room outside the trainer. And from the control room an instructor could input all sorts of scenarios on the consoles in the training room that the crew that was being trained had to react to, including making phone calls that would simulate phone calls that you would actually get in the field. The instructor – there would be a crew that was being trained, and then there would be an instructor crew in there with them, looking over their shoulder to see how they reacted and what they did and to train them on particular things. Then there would be an MPT operator sitting in the control room who would actually do all the inputting of the various scenarios and so forth. So that was one aspect of the job as an instructor crew member. [79]

LAMIE: And how many chances did they get at it to pass or fail?

MANSON: Well, there are two different aspects to this. One is training. In a training ride, they could do things over and over again as many times as was necessary to get them trained. Then, the second -- and see, the instructors wore white ascots, because we were the good guys -- then there was the evaluation, the standardization and evaluation branch, the DOV. These were the guys that gave the "check rides" as we called them. These guys were the bad guys from the point of view of your average crew member. They wore black ascots with stars on them because they thought that was kind of neat, you know, and they were a highly, highly elite and somewhat secretive group and the secrecy was really in the sense of, you know, it's like giving a test at school. You don't want people to know what the test is going to be, you know, before they get the test. But because of that, that added another element of anxiety to the average crew member who had to take the check ride. And what would happen with the check rides is sometimes they were scheduled, and all the training rides were always scheduled, every crew knew that once or twice a month they were going to be in the trainer. The check rides, with the DOV guys, were sometimes scheduled and sometimes they were no notice. So what would happen, for example, is you might be scheduled for a training ride, and you would show up expecting the guys with the white scarves to be there, and -- surprise -- the guys with the black scarves would be there. Sometimes it would even happen that you went into the trainer with the instructor crew, and the instructor crew didn't even know, and the guys with the black scarves would be knocking on the door, and they would say to the instructor crew, "out, they're ours today." And it was, you know, so there was a lot of anxiety for your average crew. And then, in those check rides what would happen is they'd run the same types of scenarios that we would in a training ride, except you don't know what they're going to be, you don't know what sequence they're going to come in and the evaluators also, because they were so highly skilled, came up with some very esoteric things -- the once in a million malfunction -- and a crew was still expected to respond to that. They graded these evaluations on a five-point scale, depending if you made a major error, you lost one point. If you made a minor error, you'd lose a tenth or two-tenths of a point. Then you were graded, if you got a 4 or above, 4 to 5, you were rated qualified. . . . no, 4 to 4.5, I guess was

qualified, and above 4.5 was highly qualified. And if you made a, what was called a critical error, then you failed. Zero, if you made a critical error. And a critical error would be something that would jeopardize, put in extreme jeopardy, life or national security. They had a definition, and that's roughly what it was. But if you made two major errors, so if you got a 3, because you made two major errors, I guess you were still considered qualified but you had to undergo retraining before you could go back out into the field as well. And if you failed and you got a critical error, then you also had to undergo some fairly intensive retraining before they would let you go back out on alert. [137]

LAMIE: And what was a major error?

MANSON: Well, a major error would be something that would cause or exacerbate some major malfunction of the weapons system, or cause or exacerbate some security situation, but not rising to the level of loss of life or jeopardy to national security or something like that.

LAMIE: And a minor error would be?

MANSON: Yeah, a minor error might be you forgot the proper sequence of something, but it didn't cause any damage to anything, but it's something that you should have gotten in correctly. Or a minor error might be that – everything, of course was done by checklist, and one of the things that is important is so-called "checklist discipline" – and, in the field, crews got very used to doing things off the checklist, you know, because a well-qualified crew knew exactly how to do things, and they also knew the shortcuts to do things. And so sometimes – and the evaluators and the instructors hated that. Because there were crews that were not so well qualified that would follow the example of somebody and tried to do something off the checklist and, you know, really screw it up. So checklist discipline was important. So you might get a minor error for not adhering to strict checklist discipline. And there were a number of other, you know, literally minor errors that you could get. But those were not – what would happen if you got a minor error is that when you had a debriefing after the check ride, the evaluators would, they'd tell you. And they were real sticklers for everything. And they would tell you, "well, that's a minor error because you didn't do this or do that." The thing that grated on people about minor errors is that the really motivated people were always shooting for the 5.0 and then you'd get these evaluators who'd come in with these really nit-picky, minor errors, and there goes your 5.0, just like that. [laughs] That was one of the things that we all had to live with. You know, one of the other things that would happen, and it happened to me, is that an instructor crew, like my crew, we would show up to give a training exercise, the training ride to some crew, and the guys in the black scarves would show up. And we would say, "oh, great, now we've got a couple of hours off." And the evaluators would say, "No you don't, we're here for you." [laughs] OK. And as instructors, we were expected to adhere to, to be, frankly, better than the line crews that we were training, and we were expected to be prepared for a check

ride at any time. And we knew that, but it still was, you grumbled about that, you know. [laughs] [184]

LAMIE: When you were with the 44th, you were a launch control officer?

MANSON: Yes.

LAMIE: That was your official title?

MANSON: Right. Well, actually, the official title for all the crew members was, you were either a deputy missile combat crew commander or you were a missile combat crew commander, those were the official titles. When I was a trainer, you were an instructor deputy missile combat crew commander or an instructor combat crew commander. Same with the evaluators with the title evaluator as part of their official title. [194]

LAMIE: And there was no crossing – if you were a deputy instructor, you didn't instruct a regular crew – did you instruct both?

MANSON: Technically, you instructed both crew members, but on a check ride, or on a training ride, there were always both instructors, the crew commander instructor and the deputy instructor were both always in the training room together. But in classroom training, there might be a deputy training a whole group of people who are both commanders and deputies, in a classroom setting. [204]

LAMIE: In July, 1977, when they went from a 40 to a 24-hour alert, were you stationed in the capsule at that time, or were you already an instructor then?

MANSON: Actually, on July 1st, 1977 – and you know, I really regret I forgot you were coming today because I have a journal that I was trying to remember to bring on the day that you came – but on July 1st, 1977, that was my first day as an instructor. And the instructors – the average line crew on the 24-hour alerts would pull about eight alerts in the field a month. The instructor crews pulled, generally, two alerts a month, and the rest of the time we were in the office, or in the classroom, or in the trainer. Sometimes we did three alerts a month, but typically we'd do two. On 40-hour alerts, the instructors pulled -- the average crew pulled probably five alerts a month, the instructors still I think only had to pull two. But on July 1st, 1977, which was the day of the change over from 40-hour alerts to the 24-hour alerts, that was my very first day as an instructor. And I was on a crew – I was a deputy on a crew with a Captain Ron Boatwright and we went out to Lima, to Lima-01, which is a little ways from Belle Fourche, South Dakota. It is said by a lot of people that that site is actually in Montana. It's awfully close to the Montana border, and where the state line was, it was kind of hard to tell. And we changed over with the last crew to pull a 40-hour alert. We were the first crew to change over into a 24-hour alert. So we got there, to that site, as the last 40-hour crew

was finishing their 40-hour alert on the morning of July 1st, 1977, and started the 24-hour alert. [239]

LAMIE: Were people happy to go to the 24-hour alert?

MANSON: Very much so, very much so. The 40-hour alert system was really draining physiologically, just difficult because your schedule was all crazy. You'd go out there, you'd pull eight hours downstairs, during which you were not supposed to sleep, and then you'd go upstairs to sleep, or watch TV or do whatever for eight hours, then you'd change-over downstairs again for another eight hours. You did this until you had a total of 24 hours in the hole and 16 hours upstairs. The last 8 hour shift before change-over was the night shift. And so your body clock was all off and then you'd have to be alert enough to drive home. If you were at some of the sites, you know, some of the sites were as much as 150 miles away, and so then you'd have a three hour drive after *[laughs]* being up all night. So I personally found it horrible, the 40-hour alerts, and I think a lot of people did. They just didn't like it. On the 24-hour alert system, it was great because you would go downstairs and then you would decide between the commander and the deputy who got to sleep when. Different crews had different attitudes about that, and it all goes to what kind of relationship the two crew members had. There were some commanders who said: "Look, I'm the commander here. I get to sleep at night and you're going to be up all night," they'd say to the deputy. And others, you know, kind of switched off back and forth, and so forth. But the 24-hour alert system was much, much easier in terms of your physiology. It just made more sense, and you were home quicker and so forth. [270]

LAMIE: Were you married at that time?

MANSON: No.

LAMIE: So that would have made it easier.

MANSON: I don't know that it made it that much easier. *[laughs]*

LAMIE: I was just wondering if maybe some of your deputies or other people who were married found it even harder to be on a 40-hour shift.

MANSON: I think they probably did. I think they probably did. So, the 24-hour shifts were far superior. And people could not wait until that day came. *[laughs]* Crew members from the beginning of the Minuteman program in 1962, they just prayed for the day that they didn't have to do that anymore. *[laughs]* [282]

LAMIE: And how did you get into the missile business?

MANSON: Well, that's an interesting question. I graduated from the Air Force Academy. I had gone to the Air Force Academy because I wanted to be a pilot. Actually, I

wanted to be an astronaut and the only way you got to be an astronaut in those days, before the space shuttle, was you had to be a pilot. Furthermore, you had to be a fighter pilot. Now, of course, there are scientists and all sorts of other folks who can be astronauts with this mission specialist program that the space shuttle has. But in those days, astronauts were all pilots. So I went to the academy with the idea that I could be a pilot. Within a little while of being at the academy, it occurred to me that there were lots of things that one could do as an Air Force officer that did not necessarily call for one to be a pilot. And it also occurred to me that my interests were such that, while I found flying interesting, I couldn't quite see myself doing it as a full-time job. So I ultimately decided that I was not going to be a pilot. Well, this was in the mid-1970s and at that time there was a great deal of pressure on the services to admit women to all of the service academies. And, the academies....the services....there were actually some bills pending in Congress, and there were some lawsuits, and great social and legal pressure on the services to say women can come to the service academies. The services resisted that and they resisted it with everything they could think of to resist it with. One of the things that they resisted it with was the assertion that every academy graduate leaves here and goes to a combat related field, and Congress has prohibited women from being in combat. And therefore, there's no point in women going to the academy, because what we produce are combat leaders. Well, having made that assertion, they then had to make that true. [chuckles] So, the year before I graduated, they said, "all right, if you're not going to be a pilot, which is clearly a role that's combat related, then with very few exceptions, you'll be limited to one of five other fields." And the most attractive of those five other fields [chuckles] was being a missile launch officer. And so, I had really thought of myself in terms of intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, with an ultimate goal of getting into what the Air Force calls its Political Military Affairs Program. That's what I had my eye on. But that was no longer an option. In 1975 they said, "you've got to be one of these five fields." The only exceptions were certain people who were going to medical school because they had to be career doctors, and one or two other folks who were going onto other graduate programs. Otherwise, those five fields. So, I decided to be a missile launch officer, and that's how I got into the field. [344]

LAMIE: With that in mind, how did you feel when you heard that women had been admitted into the capsule as launch officers?

MANSON: Well you have to....for me personally, you have to kind of go back to 1975 when I was at the Air Force Academy. Congress ultimately – first of all, I was always in favor of women going to the military academies, which was not a popular view among cadets – 1975, the bill passed, and President Ford signed it, allowing women into the military academies. Before they actually had a first class of women at the Air Force Academy, the Air Force kind of scrambled around and tried to decide what they'd got to do, how they were going to accommodate women. And what they decided to do is that they would bring a cadre of female officers, junior officers, first and second lieutenants, to the academy and these

women would become what they referred to as ATOs – Air Training Officers. Which, in fact, emulated the way the Air Force Academy itself began for men in the 1950s. They'd brought in a group of officers in 1955 – first and second lieutenants – to train the first class at the Air Force Academy. They were known as ATOs. So in 1975, twenty years later, they replicated to ATO program for women and brought a cadre of these first and second lieutenants in. But the other part of that story is that I was on the cadet wing staff, so I was one of the higher ranking cadets that had access to the administration. And we were greatly concerned about – not about the women coming, but about these women officers in terms of their ability to transmit what we felt were the core values, heritage and traditions of the Air Force Academy to the women cadets. We thought – I, in particular, thought – that it was important that the women cadets not have a separateness about them in terms of core values, heritage, and traditions. And so we went to the commandant of cadets and said, "we have an idea." It was a radical idea, and the radical idea was this: that these women officers would go through a program of about four months, as if they were cadets themselves so that they would have some sense of the values, traditions, and heritage. And the commandant said, "who's going to run this program?" And we said, "we will. We will." [laughs] It was a totally radical idea. And so they mulled it over for a long time, and finally they said, "OK, you can do it." And so we did. We had a cadre of cadets. We trained these women officers, who of course outranked us all, as if they were cadets, for four months. And made them do everything in a four month period that a cadet would do in four years. It was an unbelievable experience for them and for us. I mention all of that because that was the perspective with which I approached the notion of women being missile launch officers. Soon after women came to the academy, of course, they started talking about women fighter pilots, women as missile launch officers, women in a lot of roles that women had not played before. And the tenor of the times was such that these ideas had a lot of social momentum behind them. They also had a lot of resistance in the military. And to this day they have a lot of resistance in the military. One of the things that the Air Force did about women missile launch officers was they took a survey of wives of missile launch officers who overwhelmingly opposed the idea. And, you know, that capsule is about twelve feet wide and forty-four feet long and is not very big. And obviously one concern was privacy and things like that, and people were, you know, worried about the break up of marriages over these sorts of things. It just seemed to me that there will always be a number of people with marital issues regardless of the proximity with which you work with somebody else. That's just going to happen. There are always going to be people weak of character for whom the proximity will be a precipitating issue. That's always going to happen. There's nothing you can do about any of those things. But the fact of women by itself, to me, was not so startling that we shouldn't have done it. So I had long been in favor of the idea, personally. So it did not bother me at all. There was this case a couple of years ago, I think it was at F.E. Warren, where this fellow announced that because of his religion, he wasn't going to serve with a woman on his crew. And he wasn't of any unusual religion; in fact, he and I were of the same religion. When I read about it in the paper I said, "ah, there's nothing

in that religion that says anything about that that I know of, that says, 'thou shalt not serve on a missile crew with a woman.'" And I thought, frankly, the guy was an idiot. *[laughs]* He put in jeopardy his entire career. And it was just, it's ludicrous. You know, I have monitored these situations fairly closely, because I've . . . after I left being a missile launch officer I continued to serve in the Air Force for a number of years and after I left active duty in the Air Force I stayed in the Air Force Reserve and later in the Air National Guard. And I can't think of a single major incident that's happened in the years that women have been on missile crews – which now is twenty years – I just can't think of a major significant incident. I'm sure there's some minor things that happened because people are people. But the republic still stands. *[laughter]* In those twenty years we succeeded in winning the Cold War with women on the missile crews. So that was my attitude on that. [478]

LAMIE: What was the result of that case of the officer who wouldn't serve with a female?

MANSON: Well, he, they booted him off the missile crew and out of the missile career field. I don't know what ultimately happened to him, but the problem, the risk that he was taking is that when they do something like that, when they decertify you from the missile crew for fitness reasons, essentially, it calls into question one's entire fitness to be an Air Force officer. So he was, I don't know what they, they don't have to pursue that ultimately, but he was putting at jeopardy an entire career as an Air Force officer. And it's not just – because they don't want people to pick and choose which rules they like and then say, "well, if you put me in charge of the Air Fore recreation center in Hawaii, well I'll be OK with that." It's ridiculous. [498]

LAMIE: What are the common misperceptions that you encounter or encountered about being a launch control officer or being involved in the missile business?

MANSON: Well, I think that a lot of people – here's the minor one that irritates launch control officers – everybody talks about a button. It's not a button, it's a key. *[laughs]* But beyond that, because of television and movies and in part because of the image the Strategic Air Command cultivated for itself, people have the idea that missile launch officers were somehow bloodthirsty killers with few morals and no soul and ready to kill millions of people with the turn of that key. And that's just not so. One of the things that's made America great is that we do not have a warrior class in America like some ancient civilizations or even some societies today. Our military is drawn from ordinary people living in ordinary communities, growing up with the same values that they perceive around them and missile launch officers come from that same group of people – ordinary Americans with mainstream values. And the whole military is that way. And in a democracy, that's essential. You can't have – that's why we haven't had a military coup in America, because we don't have this warrior class, we have ordinary people with ordinary values. And so the question frequently is, "well, you know, how could you do that job knowing that you might be called upon to participate in a war of nuclear

devastation?” And I think there’s a couple of things that people have to keep in mind. One, the majority of missile launch officers, even though they’re fairly young officers, the majority are married and many of them have children and families, and that’s crucial to keep in mind. Two, although no one ever said to a missile officer, “we are categorically ruling out a nuclear first strike,” because of their faith in American values, I think we were all convinced that America would act only in the best interests of America and the world and not in an unreasonably aggressive posture for no reason at all. Now some will say, “well, you know, look at Vietnam, we were sold a bill of goods about Vietnam.” Well, the fact of the matter is that when I talk about missile launch officers being ordinary American with mainstream values, I think that mainstream Americans also believe, and want to believe, that America is not a nation that would precipitate an incident for no reason but to kill people. Those are not American values. And to the extent that Vietnam was not in the best interest of the American people, the war ultimately ended because the American people wanted it to. And then there’s kind of a more pedestrian sort of reason, too. I think that most missile launch officers were not necessarily convinced that the ultimate would ever really happen. They’re ready to do it if it did, but I think they weren’t, they probably weren’t really convinced that it would happen. But let me go back to the issue of having families. We also knew that if we were called upon to execute our duty, we would be doing so either in defense of, or in retaliation of a strike that either did or would kill our families and our communities. So that’s, that was of great importance. And I think that that’s, again the misperception is that somehow we were disconnected from ordinary values, and that’s not the case at all. [610]

LAMIE: General LeMay had a fallout shelter or bomb shelter in his house in Omaha. Were you aware of that?

MANSON: I don’t know that I specifically knew that, but I would not have been surprised.

LAMIE: That to me, when I learned that, it suggested when you talk about that you as a field officer believed that it would never come to that, but he built his own. Does that suggest to you that maybe....

MANSON: Well, no...

SL:he just liked to be prepared....

MANSON:because you have to remember, and maybe you’re too young to remember, but you have to remember that in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a lot of ordinary Americans had bomb shelters, too. And did they really think something was going to happen? Maybe not, but I think they wanted to, you know, hedge their bets a little bit [*laughs*]. I mean, lots of ordinary Americans had bomb shelters. You still see them around in public buildings. Occasionally, you’ll see an old, weathered sign that says Fallout Shelter. And there are a lot of kids today who would say, “What is that? What does that mean?” Now, the point at which people did

believe something was going to happen was October 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis. At that point, people seriously believed that there was going to be a nuclear war. And that was probably the peak of the fallout shelter experience. And one of the great debates of the late '50s and early '60s was the moral dilemma about "would you let your neighbor in your fallout shelter?" People don't talk about that today because it's a historical anachronism now, as are the fallout shelters. [656]

LAMIE: Did you feel at the time that the capsule would survive a hit?

MANSON: I thought it might, although the real question was would there be any point in that. Two reasons. One, it might survive a direct hit, but one, could you get out of it, even if it did? And there was this escape tube that was filled with sand and you could crank open the – theoretically – crank open this escape hatch with this giant wrench. It had a big bolt on it. And theoretically the sand would all fall out and you could climb your way out of the thing. But we all thought that if it took a direct hit, the sand would turn to glass or something [*laughs*] and there'd be no way to get out. And the other thing was in the scenarios that we were trained to anticipate, the question is, what would you find when you got out? So the question about whether it actually would survive a direct hit was academic really. [687]

LAMIE: There were no orders for what to do afterwards, or where you were supposed to go if you theoretically survived?

MANSON: No, as a matter of fact. And I always used to say that if there was a war, and if I did survive, then the first place I was going was Pierre, because I was going to declare myself the military governor of South Dakota. [*laughter*] And I might as well have, I suppose, if something like that happened. [698]

LAMIE: Was your entire career spent in South Dakota?

MANSON: My entire missile career was in South Dakota. I left South Dakota and the missile field to go to law school. The Air Force sent me to law school. Then I had the rest of my Air Force career elsewhere. The whole time I was in missiles I was at Ellsworth. [707]

LAMIE: What was your reaction when you heard you were being sent to South Dakota?

MANSON: [*laughs*] South Dakota was my third choice. I wanted to go to F.E. Warren – no, Whiteman – F.E. Warren was my second choice. My first choice was Whiteman, near Kansas City, and F.E. Warren was my second choice. South Dakota was my third choice, and I felt the way anybody would feel if you wanted to do something and you got your third choice. I thought, "Good Lord," you know, it's going to be miserable.

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MANSON: [*continuing*] . . . particularly thrilled about going to South Dakota.

LAMIE: How did you feel once you got there? Was it a little better than you expected?

MANSON: Uhhh . . . yeah. Let me say that one of the reasons why I abhorred the idea of going to South Dakota was because I hate the Winter time [*laughing*]. And I thought it would be a little milder in Missouri at Whiteman, and maybe even somewhat milder at Cheyenne. But the first Winter frankly was, with one exception, a little bit milder than I thought it was going to be. So I felt a little better. The Spring time in South Dakota, I thought, was absolutely beautiful. I thought, "this is fabulous." You know, Spring time and in the Fall. To me, unfortunately, both of those seasons, Spring and Fall, are way too short in South Dakota. Spring time didn't really come until the first of May, and then by the time you were in mid-June, the temperatures were skyrocketing. Some of the missile sites, especially the eastern ones like Delta, it gets pretty hot out there in the badlands. So Summer is pretty miserable out there. And then Fall was basically the month of September, and anytime after the first of October you were liable to have snow. But Spring and Fall were terrific seasons. [023]

LAMIE: Other than the climate, did you fear any kind of cultural problems in South Dakota?

MANSON: I did not. I know that there were minority officers who did, but I didn't for a whole bunch of complex reasons that have to do with the unusual way that I grew up. So I did not have any particular personal concern about that. What was interesting to me was I got to perceive things from a different point of view about another minority group, and that was the Native Americans. I thought, and I want to say that I'm not I don't there are some people that have a, you know, kind of an automatic inclination that there's going to be rampant bias and things like that. I don't. I'm an optimist and I see the sunny side of life most of the time. But I was a little bit surprised to perceive the way Native Americans were treated in South Dakota. And, you know, I guess I want to say that most of the people that I met in South Dakota were fine people. But it was clear to me that there was a real divide between the Native Americans and the majority population there. And this was of interest to me because I had grown up a great deal of my life in New Mexico and I had not perceived that same kind of distance in New Mexico between the Native American population and the rest of the population. But I certainly felt it in South Dakota and saw it. You know, it was interesting to me because in Rapid City, you would think about the kind of jobs that people had, and you virtually never see a Native American in most jobs in Rapid City, you know. And, you know, that's when it kind of struck me that this is not going well here. One night -- and I think I may have an alternate explanation for the story I'm about to tell that has occurred to me in later years, but at the time it was shocking -- one night, I was at home and asleep in bed. And it was maybe two in the morning.

And I heard somebody pounding on my door, so I got up out of bed and went and looked through the peephole. And there was an Indian woman there at the door, maybe in her 20s or 30s. And she had kind of a cut over her eye, and she was bleeding. And I thought, "Good Lord, what on Earth is going on here?" So I opened the door and I let her in, and she said she'd been in some sort of fight with somebody and would I please call the police or call an ambulance for her. I said, "yeah." And so I kind of helped her with the cut over her eye and everything. And she seemed to be better, but I said, "do you still want an ambulance?" And she said, "yeah." And I thought, well I'll do that. So I called 911 and I said, "this woman just showed up at my door, she's obviously been assaulted by somebody and I'd like the police and an ambulance to respond." The dispatcher – the very first question out of the dispatcher's mouth was not, "what's her condition" or anything like that. The very first thing the dispatcher said is, "Is she white or is she an Indian?" And I said, "What difference does that make? Send the goddamn police and an ambulance." And she said, "well, sir, you have to answer my questions." And so I argued with her for a little while, but then I figured, you know, there's no point in arguing about this. This person needs help, and if we're going to get help by saying she's an Indian, well, OK, she's an Indian. And the dispatcher said, "OK, fine, we'll send somebody out there." Oh -- then she asked the other questions, you know, what kind of condition is she in, and all this. Anyway, I was on the phone in the kitchen having this discussion. I went back to the living room where the woman was, and she was gone. But, having called the police and an ambulance, I was expecting the police and an ambulance to show up. I waited for about forty-five minutes. And then I saw a police car cruise by the apartment and kind of slow down, but didn't stop, and kept on going. And I thought, [*making a noise of disgust*]. I was outraged. I was completely outraged. I mean, one of the things about racism to me is that it has never made any logical sense to me. If somebody could give me a logical explanation, I might not like it, but I would say, "oh, OK, that makes sense." [*laughs*] But it doesn't make any sense, and that incident didn't make any sense to me either. [100]

LAMIE: You said you'd come up with an alternate explanation.

MANSON: Well, I got to thinking in later years, although this doesn't explain all of it, that maybe they – for some quirky reason – if she was an Indian they had to take her to an Indian hospital or some bizarre thing like that. And maybe that's, maybe the dispatcher was not trying to be a racist but it had something to do with that. But that doesn't explain the incident. That doesn't explain why an ambulance never came. It doesn't explain why the police never came. And I don't know what happened to the woman. [109]

LAMIE: Did you, were there any Native Americans in the Air Force that you worked with?

MANSON: No. I have never come across a Native American in the Air Force. Never. There may be some, but I've never seen any. And at this point, I've been in the Air Force

in one form or another for thirty years, and I've never seen a Native American.
[114]

LAMIE: Have you puzzled that over? Do you have an explanation?

MANSON: Well, I've thought about it. I don't know that I've come to any precise conclusions about that. That issue is probably a little more complex than it might seem. I know, for example, that Native Americans are in the Army. I've met some. But I don't know enough to answer. [120]

LAMIE: What was the relationship the Air Force had with the local ranchers and community members?

MANSON: Well, it was generally pretty good, because they largely had given up land for these missile sites. And the Air Force always tried to have community days at each of the sites where people would be invited out to tour the sites, and so forth. The only glitch in the relationship – well, one of the glitches in the relationship at least from the viewpoint of the line crewmen – was that a lot of – in fact, I was on duty one day when we had one of these community days. And people came out and visited, and we took them on tours and so forth, and there was one particular rancher or farmer who had not been, had never been out there, not in the 15 years or so since the program had started in South Dakota. And he said he was always interested in going out there, so he came out. And we gave him a tour and we explained how the missiles worked. And he said, "well, where's the place that you shoot down the Russian missiles?" And I said, "well, that's not what we do here, sir. This system can't do that." And he was astounded. He had believed all of these years that we had an ABM system out there [laughs] and he was really upset [laughs]. He didn't know that we could not and, you know, because of the ABM treaty and so forth, not only did we not have the technical capability, but we didn't have the political capability to shoot down incoming ICBMs. And it was a real stunner for him. And he said, "If I had known that, if I had understood that, I never, never would have consented to give up my land for something like this." [laughs] You know, I mean, I didn't know what to say, but apparently he was not necessarily the only one who thought that. And, you know, what do you tell him? Sorry. [laughs] [156]

LAMIE: Were there any peace movement demonstrations while you were there?

MANSON: No. No. You know, I think the peace movement was a little weary after Vietnam. Now, much later, starting in the early 1980s, that's when they became more active around nuclear issues. Active in the sense of going onto sites and trying to get into sites and damage sites and things like that. But in the 70s I think they were just . . . , you know, that's my speculation. And you know I mentioned that most missile officers did not think, may not have thought that something would actually happen. There was a day when we did think something had happened. And this was a day in the Summer of 1977. And one of the things you

have to understand is that when you were on alert out there, SAC – well, SAC had a system called the primary alert system, and if you look at the commander's console, there's a little box, a little speaker, with a little light on it above the commander's console. That was the means by which we would receive messages, including Emergency Action Messages, as they were called, from the SAC Command Post. And those Emergency Action Messages would transmit, if necessary, an Emergency War Order. And they would come in code. And what would happen is, there would be a tone which went off, kind of like deedle deedle deedle – I can't do it, but something like that – and then the Command Post Controller at SAC would then relate in code the message. And the message – the code was usually a series of alphanumeric, so you'd hear the tone, and you would hear, you know, "alpha five bravo six nine x-ray zulu." And the crew would have to copy all of this down. Then they would go to their code books and decode it. And there was a different code page for everyday. Codes changed everyday. So you'd write it all down, copy it all down, go to the books, decode it, and – at least, when you were in the trainer – find out that this is a serious message that changes from defcon three to defcon two, or this is a serious Emergency Action Message that says, you know, prepare Delta-05 for launch. So when you were – the other thing we were trained on was that this is how the messages would always come. Except in one unlikely scenario. And that one unlikely scenario would be that the United States was under attack. An attack had commenced and there was not time to encode a message. In which case, the message would come clear text, plain English. The SAC Controller would say, you know, whatever, in plain English. So most of the time when you were on alert, they tested this system constantly, you know. And you would decode the message and you'd find out it was a test message. And this would go on throughout the whole time you were on alert. In a 24-hour alert, maybe seven or eight times. And so crews got somewhat complacent, you know, they would hear it, you know, and they wouldn't even react. Keep your feet up on the console, keep watching TV. Jot the message down on the plexiglass in front of the console, you know. When *All in the Family* was over, go decode the message. [laughs] So because, you know, it's going to be a test message. And how did we know that? Well, because, you know, we had just come from the outside world. We knew what the world situation was. We'd had an intelligence briefing that morning before we went out to the field, you know. We knew what the political situation was in the world and so you could count on it being a test message. One day, in the Summer of 1977, I'm on alert. I don't remember who my partner was. And here comes the tone. So, you know, nobody jumps because we have a test message. But this time, the Controller at SAC says, "Stand by for a message from the President of the United States." No code, nothing, plain English: "Stand by for a message from the President of the United States." And everybody's going, "Oh my God, what happened? Life was fine when we left this morning. What the Hell is going on?" And I mean, this is a moment where you were just riveted, you know, just going, "good Lord." And then there's a pause of about 15 seconds. Long enough to really feel the anxiety. And President Carter comes on and he says, "Hi, y'all. I'm here at the SAC Command Post and I wanted to see how this thing worked." And

you could just all over the world practically hear the SAC Alert Force going, "Excuse me? You just wanted to see how this thing worked? Don't do that!" [laughter]

LAMIE: Did he lose your vote at that point?

MANSON: Well, he had probably already lost the vote of most of the missile crew force. Goodness. But, I mean, our hearts just literally stopped at that moment. You know, because it was so weird, you know, and it was, you know. Most alerts turned out to be fairly routine and even the ones that weren't routine, when we had a lot of things going on, it was manageable. But this was so far out of the ordinary, you know, that, oh, those few seconds, before we heard it, were just nightmarish. [260]

LAMIE: Did you go over in your head whether you were really ready to turn the key if that's what he was going to say?

MANSON: Yeah. And I was. But I was trying to – the biggest thing I was trying to figure out is how could the world situation have deteriorated so much in just a few hours? [laughs] You know? Because, you know, the Cold War was a state of, frankly, somewhat well maintained tension. That was the idea. But, you know, and not that all of a sudden someone was going to launch a surprise attack on somebody else. You know that was weird. [272]

LAMIE: The state of tension – we have a book in our library, it's a children's book, and it contains the sentence, "The Cold War did not lead to direct battles." Would you agree with that?

MANSON: Well, in a sense. You know. First of all there's a lot of recently declassified information that shows the number of people who were actually killed in the Cold War. Not anywhere near the number of people that were killed on September 11th. But there were certainly skirmishes that until fairly recently have been classified in which people lost lives, most of them military people. But in some sense the shoot down of the Korean Airlines flight 007 in September 1983 could be ascribed to the Cold War as well. Vietnam is kind of its own particular thing that may or may not have happened with or without the Cold War, so you have to set that aside. But there were a few military battles in the Cold War. [291]

LAMIE: Would you classify the Korean War or military conflict as a Cold War situation?

MANSON: You know, I don't, personally, you know. I think there are a whole bunch of other factors that factor into the Korean War. [295]

LAMIE: So when you think about Cold War battles, you are thinking more about the CIA and Guatemala and stuff like that?

MANSON: No, I'm really thinking about the US Air Force planes being shot down over Armenia and things like that.

[299]

LAMIE: When you talk about the Community Days – my perception, growing up on the East coast, was that these were top secret sites, and now you're saying, "We had doughnuts and cake." How secret were these sites?

MANSON: Well, we did. What was secret – the existence of these sites was not a secret. I mean, if you drive through – first off, the communities knew that they were there. If you drive on Interstate 90, I guess probably not – well, Delta-09, of course is – but if you drive on Interstate 80 through Wyoming and Nebraska, you can see some sites from the roadway. On I-25 in Wyoming, you can see some of the sites from the roadway. Now, the average person doesn't know what there are, they just see something, they don't know what that is. But they weren't secret in that sense. And so we had a lot of visitors who would come out to sites for various things. What was the secret part, really, was how we executed the Emergency War Orders. That was the secret part. And everybody knew that we had ICBMs. The secret parts were these: the manner in which we executed the Emergency War Orders, the targeting, whether or not any particular missile had a nuclear warhead on it. Those were kind of the secret things. When we had visitors out, we would not discuss any of that. Not that any visitor from the community ever asked any of those things. In January of 1978, the chief of the training division came to me and my crew commander, who was at that time Captain Gary Andrews, and said, "You guys have been selected to be on the *Today* show. And we said, "oh, OK, what's this about?" Well, the *Today* show was doing a series about the Strategic Air Command. And they were going to be in Omaha, and then they wanted to be out in the field. So the Air Force told them, "Go to Ellsworth." The reason they picked Ellsworth was because Ellsworth called itself "the showplace of SAC," because at Ellsworth you had both missiles and bombers: B-52s and ICBMs. And also at Ellsworth at the time you had the airborne launch control aircraft as well, which played a very important role in all of this. So you could find all of those things at one base at Ellsworth. January 12th of 1978, Gary Andrews and I went out to Alpha-01 and we were not scheduled to be on alert that day. So this was like all PR things, it wasn't just a random crew that they picked. They picked us for a reason. And so we went out to Alpha-01, we relieved the crew that was on duty out there, and we took over the alert. And an NBC crew came out – in fact, the reporter was Eric Burns, who now works for FOX News channel. And they came out, and we went through the usual visitor procedures and we brought them downstairs and into the capsule. And there was a visitor briefing that we gave all visitors that were in the capsule. And part of that briefing was, "If you hear that warble tone coming out of that box up there, then you must turn off your cameras, go to the back of the capsule, turn around and face the blast door." Now, being journalists, they were highly aggravated at this. And Eric Burns said, "You mean, we can't film what you do?" And we said, "no." And he said, "Well, what will you be doing?" And I said, "We will be determining whether or

not we have to take emergency action under an Emergency War Order." And he said, "Well this would be great history. We want to get that on film. We've got to be able to see that." I patted my .38 and said, "no." [laughs] But that's how unsecret they were, you know. I mean, NBC for that show, they showed the entire capsule, they showed – and I think this is maybe for the first time on American television that anybody had seen -- the inside of a launch control center. They showed the safe where we kept the, as we called them, the "cookies," which were the documents to determine certain codes. They showed all of the equipment in the capsule. I mean, there was nothing secret about any of the equipment or anything like that. And, you know, it was broadcast. It actually was not a live broadcast. They filmed it on January 12th and they showed it on January 26th. But that's how sort of non-secret this stuff was. Now, what was interesting about that was, in the days before the TV interview we had a couple of briefings from Air Force Public Affairs. And we sat down with Air Force Public Affairs and they said, "Listen, here is one very important thing. Somebody is going to ask you about nuclear weapons." And they said, "Here is your response to the question about nuclear weapons: "I can neither confirm nor deny the existence of nuclear weapons at this installation." Say it again: "I can neither confirm nor deny the existence of nuclear weapons at this installation." I said, "OK, we can say that." And the reason we could say that is because it was true. Because although I had been – and of course, as you know, the actual launch facilities are located remotely from the launch control facilities – and there were some combat crew members who had never been out to a launch facility. That was not a mandatory part of the training. But we did have a program called maintenance organization where capsule crew members spent a day with a maintenance team. And you do everything – you don't do everything, because you're not trained to do it, but you follow them around and you went everywhere they went. It was good training, because in the capsule you had to do things to let them on and off the sites remotely, so now you had a better understanding of what they were doing. And in the capsule while they were doing maintenance you were always in communication with them. But it was good to see what they were actually doing. And so I had been out to several launch facilities, and had actually been right up to the missiles themselves. But I couldn't tell you if somebody asked me, "Is there a warhead on that missile?" I couldn't tell you by looking at it, you know? You know, the thing that I saw on the tops of the missiles that I saw in the holes was indistinguishable from the training mock-ups that I had seen. So I couldn't; I didn't know. I mean, I could presume. And the fact of the matter was, for example, at Whiteman Air Force Base, there were a number of missiles that did not have warheads. It was clear that they did not have warheads. Because they were part of what was called the Emergency Rocket Communications System. They had communications gear in them and not a warhead. But what was secret was which ones had the communications equipment and which ones had the warhead. At Ellsworth, for several years -- not always, but for several years -- Delta-09 did not have a warhead on it. And I knew that. It was classified at the time, but I knew that. But I didn't know which other ones might not. And Delta-09 didn't for a number of years because Delta-09 was known as the off base training element.

And there was a training launch facility on the base that clearly had no launch capability or anything like that. But Delta-09 was the training element, and did not have a warhead on it. Now, it could have been configured in short order to have a warhead on it. And, you know, it had certain – on the targeting documents, it had certain codes next to Delta-09 because it was not going the same place anything else went. So, it was easy for me to say – and as it turned out, Eric Burns never asked us about nuclear weapons. *[laughs]* [472]

LAMIE: As someone whose career has focused on environmental protection, how did you feel about being in the nuclear business, which, even if you hadn't had to launch, certainly has an environmental impact?

MANSON: Yeah. Well, of course at the time I had no idea that I would ever be in this position, at all. In fact, I could never have guessed in a million years back then that I'd be doing what I do now. But had I, you know, been able to predict, it would not have concerned me. Again, for some of the reasons that we talked about earlier. Because had it come to the point where we had to launch the missiles, quite frankly, environmental protection would have been the last thing on my mind. The world situation would have moved so rapidly past thoughts of environmental protection. The reason we are able to have debates, and they are healthy debates, about environmental protection in America, the reason we are able to have the level of environmental protection that we have, is because we have had relative peace and prosperity for thirty years. Maintained in part by the SAC alert force. And if it got to the point where we had to launch those missiles, then we would have lost the luxury of being concerned about environmental protection. That falls in the category of sad but true. And so it would not have concerned me. Now, having said that, on the other hand, what has been important to the Air Force, at least in recent years, is the extent that you maintain the missiles is to maintain them with due regard for environmental law. But once they're launched, or once the situation comes down to a need to launch them, all those bets are off. [518]

LAMIE: But sitting here now, as someone who is involved in that business, even the by-products of creating the system and then taking the system off-line, is that a concern to you?

MANSON: Well, clearly at this point, because of where we are now, we have to be concerned about the environmental impacts of maintaining the system. And, as you say, the by-products of taking the system off-line and so forth. Yeah, Yeah. You know, we have to apply the environmental laws to the maintenance of that system. [533]

LAMIE: As a founder of the Air and Space Law Program, what precipitated the development of that?

MANSON: The Air and Space Law Program at the Air Force Academy?

LAMIE: As a special branch of Air Force law.

MANSON: Just the fact that one day that the Department head of the Air Force Academy said, you know, the is the Air Force Academy. We ought to teach Air and Space law. And we actually had had in the general law course at the Academy, we had kind of a chapter of the law of the air, but we had never taught the space law program. And I think that one of the things that precipitated that was that, in the 1980s, people started really talking about the law of outer space for the reason that, you know, throughout the 1960s, the 1960s and the space program of the 1960s, were really test programs. They were research programs, developmental programs, but by the 1980s when we had the space shuttle, we are talking about making productive use of outer space, and so when you start talking about that, you have to start thinking about what are the rules about that as you move from primitive exploration into a regime of use, you know we start talking in the 1980s about a space station where people would live and work for months, as they have now. Well, what are the rules about that? I mean, how do they get along with each other? How do they resolve disputes? Also, by the 1980s, we have, like, six or seven thousand pieces of junk in outer space. Well, who is responsible for that? How do we clean it up? What happens if some of it comes crashing back down to earth? So, people by the 1980s, there were some people who started thinking about space law as early as the 1950s but there were on the fringes, if you will. But, by the 1980s, it starts to become a mainstream concern in government and in the commercial world. Now, what are the rules? How will we do these things? And so, it was time at the Air Force Academy, to have a course about it. That was about the time that other Universities and law schools started developing courses as well because it suddenly had some utility. In the 1950s, if you taught a course in the law of outer space, somebody would think you were a nut, first of all, and who would take the course? It would have absolutely no utility to it, but a different situation by the 1980s. (596)

LAMIE: But there were no laws specific to missiles; it was mostly use of outer space in terms of commercial development.

MANSON: Well, yes, however, there are laws that are pertinent to the missile business. You know, basically, under international law, space is supposedly demilitarized and you cannot place into orbit around the earth weapons of mass destruction. And there are other aspects of international law that may bear on the use of intercontinental ballistic missiles. Some of them are general laws of conflict and some of them are more specialized so what is interesting now is that the law of outer space is pretty soon about to undergo some significant changes, and the reason is because we are now capable of doing things that we could not do before, you know, so here is what I used to tell my students about the law of outer space. I would ask them to remember a simple, almost childish, phrase, and that is, "space is a place." Well, what does that mean, space is a place? It means that space is a place where people will live, where they will work, and where they will

fight because, as soon as you introduce human beings into any place, those things are going to happen, and so, the law of outer space is designed in part to bring order to living, working and fighting in space. Now, it is only recently that we've been able to do those things, and so it is only recently that we had a need for a comprehensive law of outer space. For example, the Moon Treaty. The Moon Treaty says that no party can exploit the natural resources on the moon or other celestial bodies. That's what it says. Well, you know what, that is just fine right now because nobody thinks, or nobody knows if there is anything there. But the minute somebody finds something that is valuable on the moon or some other celestial body, that treaty is going to change. You know, because, somebody is going to want to have that and so, you know..... and so, that's, and when you talk about demilitarizing outer space and not placing weapons in outer space, that's great to the extent that nobody has the capabilities to do it. It's easy to abide by when nobody has the capability to do it, but now when not just the United States, but other nations have the capability to do it, somebody is going to do it and the law will change because it will be difficult to adhere to that kind of _____ so we can philosophize about that.

LAMIE: What do you think about preserving Delta-01 and Delta-09 as a national historic site?

MANSON: I think it is a most fitting idea because, for this reason, the Cold War dominated the last half of the twentieth century, and some will not believe this or accept this, but most of American life, in one way or another, was defined by the Cold War. Most of American life after the second World War; that was, the Cold War was a nearly permanent state of being after World War II and the significance of the Cold War can be put in prospective by looking back at it. That is what we are doing now; we are looking, we are past the Cold War. We are in a whole new era, you know, we do not feel any of the pressures, or any of the things that went with the Cold War any more. It's done; it's over, and because of its far-reaching impact on American life, it needs to be memorialized in some fashion and the preservation of Delta-01 and Delta-09, at least at this point, will be, as far as I can tell, the only national commemorations of the Cold War, the only national emblems of the Cold War and nothing, it is important that we have some thing that marks the Cold War, first of all. In my view, and maybe it is a biased view because I was a missile officer, but nothing could be more appropriate than preserving an ICBM site, because that was sort of emblematic of the Cold War, culturally emblematic of the Cold War. You know, when you look back at contemporary cultural events, or contemporary literature, *Dr. Strangelove*, all of the things like that which attempted at the time to

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literature or movies or television or cultural things that attempted to either make sense of the Cold War or underscore the absurdity of the Cold War. Missiles always figured prominently in that, you know, and that's how kind of in the

American consciousness, we came to organize our thinking about the Cold War and so the preservation of an ICBM site is extremely, extremely historically and culturally appropriate to illustrate the Cold War. And you know, to have that as the organizing theme around which we look back at the Cold War and analyze the Cold War in its historical prospective is absolutely appropriate. Now there is a bill in Congress that would direct the Park Service to study other sites that may have a Cold War theme, but I can't think of another site that so captures the essence of the Cold War than a missile site. What would another site be? It's hard to imagine, you know, would you put a lone B52 bomber on a runway somewhere? You know, that's kind of weird.

LAMIE: Hanford, maybe?

MANSON: Well, not even that, you know, because it's hard to fully interpret that, you know. With the missile, you got kind of a organizing object around which all of the other themes kind of come together. You know, maybe the only other one in, actually, I am embarrassed to say I don't know if we've made this a national historic site or not, would be Tennessee where the early Tennessee and Los Alamos where the early construction of weapons were and Trinity site, you know, but even those sort of pale in comparison with the idea of a missile site, you know. So it's really, really an historically accurate and appropriate thing to preserve. [38]

LAMIE: What do you think the worst mistake would be that we could make in interpreting it for the public?

MANSON: Well, that is [*laughs*] – historical interpretation is a risky business, as you know, anyway. So I'm not sure what the worst, the worst mistake might be not to do it at all. [*laughs*] OK. One of the things that is difficult about this is that, I think, that is somewhat, could be difficult, um, is, and let me say that, I have not heard that this is a problem. But it is something that I think you have to be conscious of, because your duty as historians is not to act as a cheerleader, it's to be historically accurate. On the other hand, and this is where the tricky part comes in, you know, you have to display something and interpret something in its historical context and portray it as accurately, interpret it as accurately, as possible. I think that there are potential pitfalls when you attempt to do that in a context where people who were actually there are still alive, because they will want you to portray it, if you don't portray in the way they want it portrayed, you know, then things get difficult. So, I think that the interesting thing about the historian's job at this point in history is to be cognizant of the potential force and tension there. And it may well be that at an early point in history that the historian, even the visionary historian, has to be somewhat respectful of the living people that, you know, I am not saying you have to do it the way they tell you to do it, but you have to have some sensitivity, and you have to blend that sensitivity with historical accuracy. But I think that you can't totally discard that sensitivity and say, well you know, we are the historians, and, you know, we'll do it the way we want to do it at this point in history because I think there has to be some sensitivity to the people who lived it, you know, and

that was to some degree part, not all, but part of the issue with the Smithsonian interpretation of the Enola Gay. You know, the living people who are still here who lived that, to them, it's not history, and to them, it would be like an inaccurate newspaper article, you know. It is not history, it's what really happened to me, they would say. And so, the tough part of an historian's job is to have some regard for that, while at the same time not being captured entirely by that. I do think, and this – so that's part of my message to you not only as someone who lived it but by the Assistant Secretary as well. This is a very bizarre situation for me to be in. You know, as I said, I never believed that I would ever be in a situation like this so I would ask you, only that that you give as historians -- and I would tell any historian this -- that you give due regard to the sensitivities of people who really lived these things, and as I said, by the way I have not heard that there is any issue there at all. But I can – I appreciate the balance, or I appreciate the potential for conflict that exists there. But I think you do your level best to portray it accurately and to interpret it with sensitivity, then I don't think there are any mistakes you can make. Now all of that is easier said than done [*laughs*], but I think that's the thing. Maybe the worst mistake that could be made, other than not doing it at all, would be to not seek wide input including -- cause you know part of this story and this is obviously just not the story of missileers and maintainers, but this is the story of communities. The communities around the missile site, this is the story of the economies of the Cold War, this is the story of world history because the Cold War is a world historical event; it is not, you know, confined to the United States, or certainly not confined to those particular military bases and their communities. It is a world historical event as well, but all of these other things, the communities, the people who lived in those communities—they are all part of the story, too. Wall Drug, where many, many, many missile crews had breakfast and lunch, that's kind of part of the story. The Diamond Cafe, in Newell, South Dakota, I don't know if it is even still there, but that is part of the story because it would not have been there very long if it hadn't been for the missile crews, you know; Bear Butte in western South Dakota, Spearfish and Belle Fourche and towns like Philip and White Owl in the north central part of the state, and all of these communities are part of this story, too, and the way the people in these communities felt, whether they liked it or whether they didn't like it, however they felt about living in the shadow of those missiles. That's got to be part of the story, too. And that, you know, that, despite having community days and so forth, that's something the average missile guy didn't know a whole lot about, you know, well, knew a little bit about, but didn't know as much about as ought to be part of this story. And so that's important, too. And, how the state of South Dakota and the Black Hills region as a whole regarded this enterprise. There are people who live in Rapid City who live in housing that was built by Boeing in the early 1960s and those houses in a sense are part of the story, too. I lived in one of them for a while, and actually, surprisingly enough, when I first moved to this one particular area of Rapid City where some of this housing is, I didn't initially realize. I mean, all of these houses, they look all the same, and so, I got to thinking, this looks almost like a military base itself with all these houses looking the same; well, they were because it was part of the mini company town

built in midst of Rapid City by Boeing when the missile complex was under construction. That is part of the story. All the people at Boeing, they're part of this story; guys like General Bernie Shreiver who was the father of the Air Force Missile program; he is still alive; in fact, he is about 90 years old. He is part of the story. You know, of course, every American president since Harry Truman is part of the story. All of America in the latter half of the twentieth century is part of the story. You know, and obviously, you have to make decisions about the limits of interpretation around these things, but I just mention this because it is, as an organizing theme about the Cold War, it is so rich in potential interpretation. There is even, and I have said this to people before, everything in my life that happened up until the end of the Cold War, which might be marked as 1991 or so, everything that happened in my life up to that point was in some way connected to the Cold War. I was only able to do some of the things I did because my father had been in the Army. Why was my dad in the Army? Well, because, in the midst of the Cold War, there was a large standing army to be in. And, had he not been in the Army, I might have grown up in quite a bit more dire circumstances in south Texas cause he never would have been in Missouri and all sorts of other things. And a lot of things that happened in America have some connection to the Cold War, some more solid than others. Everything that happened from the end of World War II until the end of the Cold War is all an integrated part of the Cold War. [219]

LAMIE: Have current events affected how you look at the Cold War?

MANSON: Well, I think, in some ways. In some ways, the Cold War was less dangerous than the present era and I say that because, in the Cold War at least we had a good idea of who the enemy was, which direction they were coming from, both you know in a metaphorical sense and in a literal sense. We thought we had pretty good defenses, we thought we had the capability to match them in every respect, and we thought we had the capability to retaliate with such massive force that they could never again threaten us if that became necessary. Now in, what President Bush has called "a different kind of war," I am not sure any of those things occurred. We sort of know who the enemy is but they are kind of shadowy; and, you know, we are just not sure. We don't know which direction they are coming from, maybe metaphorically we do, but certainly not literally. We don't know what their capabilities really are; we don't know if we are adequately defended against them or not; and we are somewhat uncertain that we would ever be about to wipe them out as surely as we might have wiped out another enemy in the Cold War so this is, if not more dangerous, certainly causes a lot more anxiety, I think, for the average American, and for the leadership, than the Cold War. So this is, that's the vast difference. It is similar in the sense that, in the Cold War, we had no idea how long that would go on. We don't know how long this is going to go on. The Cold War came to be a permanent state of life. This may well, too; we just don't know. We just don't know. So, there are some parallels, and there are some stark, stark differences.

LAMIE: I have a bunch more questions for you, but I am really sensitive to your time.

MANSON: Let me see what is coming up, because this is important to me. [break for schedule check]

LAMIE: I would like to ask you about what lessons you think you learned from your time as a missileer that have brought you to where you are now?

MANSON: Hmmmm. That is a hard and interesting question. Boy, that is a difficult question. The reason it is a difficult question is that--I have a sense of an answer, but it's fairly hard to articulate. Let me say that at a kind of a superficial level, it was for me a lot of responsibility and maybe there's not a specific concrete lesson other than learning to handle a tremendous amount of responsibility in a rational and dutiful way. That may be the most significant lesson for me personally. That may be it.

LAMIE: As you are aware, we have done a few oral histories already and they were people handpicked by the Air Force and, you sort of touched on this earlier, that I have a sense that, maybe, they are giving us answers that they want us to have, and, when I talk to some people casually, they will tell me stuff that does not mesh with that record.

MANSON: Yes.

LAMIE: Is there any suggestion on how to get around that or.....

MANSON: No. [*laughs*] I think, well, you know, I could actually -- and although you may worry that these are handpicked people -- but I can tell you of people who were definitely not company men who have their own particular perspective on this. In any case, I think that that's a hard thing, you might, maybe you have been in contact with the Association of Air Force Missileers.

LAMIE: Charlie Simpson?

MANSON: Yes. And I don't know how good their particular contacts are in terms of finding people with diverse perspectives. One thing you have to keep in mind is the range of perspectives, while it is in fact a range, is somewhat more narrow than if you took a sample of the general public, of course, you know, these people were, they were all volunteers in one sense or another, and you know, so I guess I'll just leave it at that, but as you know, I would encourage you to try and ferret out [interrupted] [345]

MANSON: but I would encourage you to continue to find people with diverse perspectives because I think that helps you in terms of interpretation and historical accuracy. Now, I don't think you are going to find very many people...you are going to find people, who say, "I hated every minute of being a missile officer. It was terrible."

In fact if you will forgive me, I'll try to put this as sensitively as I can, there is one guy that I know and I know him very, very well, and I like him, he is a great friend. He hated every minute of being a missile officer, and he used to say that when he got through with being a missile officer -- he was stationed at Whiteman Air Force Base -- he said when he got through with being a missile officer, he was going to go to downtown Kansas City and perform oral sex for money in order to get his self-respect back. That's how much he hated being a missile officer. You know, and he eventually left missiles and went on to a different career in the Air Force and, you know, had a very successful rest of his career in the Air Force. Now, he is a leading member of his community and so forth. There is a guy who absolutely could not stand the job.

LAMIE: What was it about it he did not like?

MANSON: Everything. *[laughs]* Actually, I'll put you in touch with him if you want, because he absolutely.... and so he may have a very different perspective on it. Now, I don't think you are going to find, you are not going to find, for example, more than one or two who would say it was such a total crock and, you are not going to find anybody who at the time, well you may find a few, find people who say, you know, this is absolutely morally wrong and all, cause they would not have done it. *[laughs]* They would be out, so the range of opinion is somewhat more constrained than if you took a sample of the general public. But one person that everybody who touches this issue needs to talk to is General Lee Butler. He was the very last commander-in-chief of the Strategic Air Command before SAC went out of business in 1992. Because the other thing that sort of defined the Cold War was the Strategic Air Command itself which was molded in the image of General LeMay. You know, I mean, SAC itself was a kind of cultural icon and SAC thought of itself as almost like a church, you know, and it had rigid rules. In fact, I remember one time that a colonel was giving us a briefing on something and some guy raised his hand and said, "Well, wait a minute, sir, I thought the rule was X." I don't remember what the topic was. And the colonel looked at him and said, "Son, that's the way they do it in the Air Force, but in SAC we do it right." You know, and it was sort of like SAC was something greater than the rest of the Air Force itself, and that was one of the things that was compellingly interesting to me. I mean, I was not completely a SAC true believer, but it surely was interesting, you know, and I wasn't a dissident either, but, you know, it was just very interesting. Anyway, General Lee Butler was the last commander-in-chief of the Strategic Air Command and SAC went out of business in 1992 and there has been nothing else in the history of the Air Force since then that was like the Strategic Air Command even though there remain, as you know, missiles on alert. Well, I don't know what their state of alert is, but there are still missiles that are out there. General Butler, since retiring as the last commander-in-chief of SAC, has become something of an anti-nuclear activist. I don't know that he would describe himself that way, but he has spoken and written a lot about nuclear proliferation and the maintenance of nuclear forces and he is fairly critical. He is critical of what was called the SIOP which is a term that you ought to become familiar with --it stands

for Single Integrated Operations Plan, which is the overall planning document for the targeting of the missiles; but it -- not only the targeting of missiles but the commitment of bombers and sea-launch ballistic missiles as well -- and General Butler has a very different perspective than you would expect a former commander-in-chief of the Strategic Air Command to have. And he is part of the story and I think you ought to try to talk to him, too. Colonel Tom Lillie. Do you know Colonel Tom Lillie? He can track down General Butler for you and, because, as I said, he has a somewhat different perspective than you would expect. Not every SAC commander-in-chief was a clone of General LeMay. [500]

LAMIE: I don't know if the situation could have stood another Curtis LeMay. He was quite something.

MANSON: Yes. He was the J. Edgar Hoover of the Air Force.

LAMIE: Is there a common characteristic that you think all successful missileers share, and what would that be?

MANSON: A common characteristic that all missileers share.

LAMIE: That would make them successful at it, and not malcontents.

MANSON: *[laughs]* Nothing strikes me, really, that makes them any different than other Air Force officers in that regard, you know, because you know, first of all, nobody is truly a career missileer in the sense that nobody is going to be down there pulling alerts for twenty years. They all have aspirations to do something else, and maybe it's aspirations ultimately to come back as a colonel or a brigadier general and command the missile wing but they all want to do something else in between. And so, in a sense, the time they spend as line crew members is important to their professional development, but they all know that they are not going to be doing that...

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...forever and that may be important. That may be something that keeps them motivated. I think you can only do that job for short periods of time and, so, you know, two, three, four years, at a time, and, you will notice if you have visited some still-operational bases, that the line crew members tend to be, you probably won't find any better that are very much older than their early 30s, if that old, and they tend to be lieutenants and junior captains—that the people who are actually out there in the field pulling alerts. And you know that says something, I am not sure what it says, but it says something, you know, and it is curious, because in some ways it is a physically easier job than being a fighter pilot. Yet, you will find 45-year old fighter pilots, but you won't find 45-year old guys pulling missile alerts. So.

LAMIE: One of the gentlemen we talked to for the oral history said he never said it at the time but he always felt there were far too many missiles, that it was overkill.

MANSON: Yes.

LAMIE: Is that a sentiment you would share?

MANSON: Um, that is a pretty complicated issue. Did we have too many missiles? I don't know. Did we have more warheads than we needed? Certainly, you know, at the height of the Cold War we had a huge number of warheads. Not all of those were on missiles or in bombers. A number of them were withheld. How many do you need? That's a complicated -- I mean, I don't know, how many do you need? I am not going to disagree with him, because I don't really have any basis to agree or disagree. I think it is an interesting and very complex question, and it kind of depends upon what goals the United States thought it wanted to achieve and the extent to which it wanted to achieve those goals. For me, it is difficult to say that we had too many or not enough in strictly military terms. In kind of social terms, you know, one nuclear warhead beyond the two that were used in Japan, there is an argument that one more than that, is too many. But, given the way the world developed after World War II, that's an interesting perspective; but the way the world actually developed, it was inevitable that there would be more than what we used in Japan at the end of the war. But, how many is enough; how many is too many -- a very complex question. He may well be right—in terms of warheads; now, in terms of the number of missiles themselves, I would probably tend to disagree with that because the missiles all had, each missile, each sortie, had a very specific target and the SIOP was designed to insure that every target was adequately covered in military terms. So, I don't know if in military terms there were too many missiles; I would probably disagree with that because you've got to cover every target; you've got to cover every target adequately; you have to have the capability to strike a target again if it is not sufficiently destroyed. You have to have backup and redundant capabilities so I would probably disagree that there were too many missiles. On the larger philosophical question, I can't disagree or agree on that. It's just very complex.

LAMIE: Did you know where your missiles were targeted?

MANSON: No, not specifically.

LAMIE: Why was that?

MANSON: Well, because the fundamental principle of information security is a need to know; and I had no need to know specifically where the missiles were targeted. You know, I had from the documents that we had with us in the capsule, we could tell fairly.... we could....well, it was printed right in the documents, some fairly general information about the targets, but did I know that Delta-05 or Kilo-03 was,

you know, had the address of some specific installation in some specific base or town in a target country? No. Did I need to know that? No.

LAMIE: Did you want to know?

MANSON: Sure. Curious. Absolutely curious.

LAMIE: There wasn't a sense that if you knew it was going to Kiev and you met someone whose grandmom lived in Kiev, that it would impair the mission in a way, that you would be more hesitant to launch?

MANSON: There may be something to that; you know, I cannot say there wouldn't be something to that. Because, certainly on the Air Force installation, there were people who knew a whole heck of a lot more about that than the average person who was sitting in the capsules. And, maybe there is something to that. I don't know; but, in order to do the job, you certainly didn't have a need to know that.

LAMIE: Is there anything that we should have asked you that I didn't think of?

MANSON: *[laughs]* You've probably already asked people what an average day on alert was like; that's an important thing. And I'm probably out of time to talk about that. But, you know, part of the story is the way missile officers lived, too. A lot of the ones who were married lived on base; a lot who were not married lived off base. And, the kinds of things they did, the places they went, you know, there were a large number of single people in this job, and you know they did the things that single people do. And so, to some extent, that is part of the story. But, I think it would be important to get a sense from people what it was like to be there on a typical day, if there is such a thing as a typical day, but, other than that, I think you have covered all the bases.

LAMIE: Maybe we can have Round II when you come out for the dedication ceremony.

MANSON: Sure, I would be glad to. I am a little distressed because I cannot, I told somebody at some point that I would donate my missile crew uniform and I thought I knew where it was and I've been looking for it and I cannot find it.

LAMIE: Well, it's okay with us if you don't find it yet, because we are not properly set up to curate it. So, if it stays hidden for a while, we're better off on our end.

MANSON: OK, because I still have it. But, I am going to try and locate it. I also have, and I know where they are. I have a number of documents that relate to all of this as well that, maybe are not particularly useful for display or anything, but, in terms, from an historian's point of view, using them to understand and aid in the interpretation of the site; they may be useful. And so at some point, I will see that you get those as well.

LAMIE: We really appreciate it. Thank you. We appreciate your taking time out of your busy day to talk to us.

MANSON: Well, you know, I do it for a couple of reasons. One, on a personal level, it is important to me and two, I think it is important for the National Park Service as well. You know, if I'd been just some average guy in Sacramento who had this experience, I would still take the time to talk to you about it.

LAMIE: We really appreciate that.