ORAL MEMOIRS

OF

GUY ANDREWS

An interview conducted on

May 12, 2017

Interviewer: Christine Lamberson

Angelo State University

West Texas Collection

"War Stories: West Texans and the Experience of War, World War I to the Present"

LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Guy Andrews are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on May 12, 2017.

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LAMBERSON: My name is Christine Lamberson and I'm in Brownwood, Texas. It is May 12, 2017 and I am doing a *War Stories* interview. Let's start with your name.

ANDREWS: My name is Guy Andrews.

LAMBERSON: And when and where were you born?

ANDREWS: I was born in Plainview, Texas on August 6, 1950.

LAMBERSON: And did you grow up in Plainview?

ANDREWS: I did.

LAMBERSON**:** And how do you define West Texas?

ADNREWS: Basically, I consider everything sort of west of Abilene is west Texas. Basically, if you draw a line from the east border of the Panhandle down to Laredo, that's kind of . . . technically . . . but Abilene is kind of the gateway to West Texas.

LAMBERSON: And what makes West Texas or West Texans different than anyone else?

ANDREWS: I think it's a combination of a lot of people that migrated out there have a lot of the same experiences. A lot of people are related. They carry a lot of the same values, and so it's just unique. The accents are . . . West Texas accents are little different than other parts of Texas as well. It's more of a West Texas twang that I inherited, of course. But the common values are they tend to be conservative people, family oriented, hard-working. That sort of thing.

LAMBERSON: And so, when and where did you enter the armed forces?

ANDREWS: I actually took my pre-induction physical at Fort Holabird, Maryland. I was working for the FBI when I . . . then I received my greeting from the government. Uh actually drafted, but everyone that was going in, being drafted at that time was being put in infantry. I didn't particularly want to do that, so I decided to go to steno school although I was already a certified court reporter at the time. [Laughs]

LAMBERSON: So, is that what you were doing for the FBI?

ANDREWS: Yes, I was a stenographer for them. It was actually during the time that J. Edgar Hoover was a director, and I reported to one of the department heads that reported to the assistant director.

LAMBERSON: And so, how did you come to have that job, or to be a stenographer?

ANDREWS: I was actually out of high school, wasn't really prepared to go to college, and I got a scholarship to court reporting school. And then the FBI came in actually and recruited. Mr. Hoover was looking for a male because he didn't want the females subjected to some of the

material that I dealt with. Which is kind of crazy because they all wanted to read and see the evidence, so he was kind of out of touch. I mean this was the late '60s, early '70s, so it was totally out of touch with what was going on.

LAMBERSON: So, when were you drafted?

ANDREWS: I was drafted in 1970, in July of '70. I left the FBI July 24, 1970 and I then had a three-month delayed enlistment. So, I actually went into basic training in October, and that was in Fort Ord, California.

LAMBERSON: And what was your training like?

ANDREWS: It actually wasn't that bad. One weekend of training, they changed the whole structure. They went to what was called VOLAR, which was the modern voluntary army, and so they relaxed a lot of the things they used to do, like foot locker inspections and a lot of the harassment that went on. So, it really wasn't a bad experience. I enjoyed it. I managed to lose about forty pounds when I was there so that was a good thing.

LAMBERSON: And what did you think when you were drafted? Obviously, you decided not to go enlist, you know, and be able to choose your MOS a little bit more. But what did you think about the possibility of being, you know, in the military, basically?

ANDREWS: Actually, I was kind of excited when I got my greeting. Being young, I guess I was kind of burnt out, even in a short period of time, from living in Washington. It was a crazy time. There were protest marches going on and it was just an expensive place to live. And the structure of the FBI was such that it was pretty stressful. So, when I got my greeting, I was going, "Yes!"

LAMBERSON: [Both laugh] You were going to get out. And what did you think about the war and the protests and all that kind of stuff?

ANDREWS: Being conservative from Texas, I probably took a little bit of a middle ground on the thing. Of course, I came from a family where my father served in the military, my oldest sister . . . you know. I guess we were kind of patriotic. So, it didn't bother me. I didn't quite understand it. I was never involved with . . . in the political side of it and that sort of thing. So, I did what I needed to do.

LAMBERSON: And had you considered enlisting before you were drafted at all?

ANDREWS: No, no. I just remember the high school assembly we had where the recruiters came in and told us why we should enlist in the Army. Our class clown stood up and said, "I got a question." He said, "What's the life expectancy of a second lieutenant in combat in Vietnam?" And [laughs] it kind of killed his whole thing because it wasn't very long, that's for sure. It was just . . . it was a very odd time, kind of like today, with uncertainty and protest and all kinds of things going on. Right after I got to Washington—it was in May, May the 4th—was the Kent State shooting. Then on the 7th, there was kind of a nation-wide thing and they had a march in there. And all of that kind of sticks in my mind because in the Justice Department, we had large

steel doors. We just shut those and then kind of went out the side doors. But it just . . . you know, if you don't know any better, it's kind of like, "Well, this is kind of a cool experience."

LAMBERSON: So, how long were you at the FBI before you were . . . ?

ANDREWS: I was really only there about four months, right at four months, but that was enough. Some of the things . . . you know, everything had to be in thirteen copies, and that was pre-word processing days. And it was . . . so, it became very stressful, and you weren't allowed to make an error. If you didn't correct it, you . . . it was just a lot of bureaucracy. And you know, we had the main computer system, but everything was done by card. So, it was interesting but stressful at the same time.

LAMBERSON: Okay. So, then you enlisted in . . . tell me again. Which branch were you in?

ANDREWS: I was in the Army.

LAMBERSON: So, you enlisted in the Army, you went to training, and then what came next?

ANDREWS: Well, I went to basic training at Fort Ord, California. And after basic training, then I went to Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana, which was a United States administrating and personnel center. I took my training there and then, out of my class, I was chosen to become permanent party there for a while and I worked for the commanding general of Fort Benjamin Harrison.

LAMBERSON: And how did you like that?

ANDREWS: I liked Fort Benjamin Harrison, except one of the questions you're going to ask is about racial tensions.

LAMBERSON: Yes, indeed.

ANDREWS: We had a tremendous amount of racial tension, even in the administrative branch of the service. Just fights and, you know, lots of racial issues and all that. In fact, I got mugged while I was there, and I got a busted eardrum and all that. And actually, the person that I could identify that did that had been arrested in civilian life twenty-two times and never convicted, and he got three months in Fort Leonard Wood. That was the day before I reported to the commanding general and . . . so, they were very happy to get rid of him. He and some other guys had been in the day room and broke a leg off of a T.V. and beat a guy who wouldn't give them money in the face and put twenty-two stitches in him. So . . . and that went on overseas, too, which I'll talk about when I get to Thailand. But it was pretty tense.

LAMBERSON: And do you think those muggings, those were racially motivated? Or how did the racial tensions figure in there?

ANDREWS: No, they were motivated. At the same time Vietnam was going on—and you saw that in *Forrest Gump* and other things—you had the social movements. Well, a lot of the black

soldiers were draftees and they didn't want to be there in the first place, and so that tension just existed.

LAMBERSON: And so, were those . . . like, those soldiers at Fort Benjamin, were they draftees usually?

ANDREWS: Normally, yeah. They were . . . we had higher-level administrative training, but a lot of these are being trained as mail clerks and stuff like that. And so, even backing up into basic training, we had it. Because Fort Ord, being in California, about probably the majority of the guys then were actually given an option of going to prison or going to the military. A lot of them had been involved in the Watts riots and so we had fights that occurred there and racial tensions. And you know, when you put a bunch of diverse guys like that together, you're going to have it.

LAMBERSON: And what did you think of all that? I mean, I imagine you were coming from somewhere very different than there?

ANDREWS: Yeah. I mean, in West Texas we're definitely sort of racist people. The black people lived in one part of town and even the Hispanic culture and all of that. I mean, our fallback position was we were racist. And so, to see that, well, you know. I mean, I got used to it and perspective changes over time, but it was like, well, that's typical of, quote, "those people."

LAMBERSON: Did the military . . . in training in either location, did they talk at all about racial issues? Was it sort of an open, "let's solve this situation"? Or was it not discussed?

ANDREWS: They didn't really discuss it. I guess the main thrust was all of the main drill sergeants were either black or Hispanic, and so sometimes, that helped solve the problem.

LAMBERSON: And so, how long were you in Indiana?

ANDREWS: About a year as permanent party. In total, about a year and a half.

LAMBERSON: And the where did you go from there?

ANDREWS: I actually went on a temporary duty assignment to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. They were opening up . . . the Army and its wisdom decided it would take reservists in inactive reserve and bring them back for training. And that was another mess. These guys had gone and grown their hair out and all this kind of stuff. But we basically went down to open up that base. Fortunately, I had appendicitis and had my appendix removed, and so that was after a short period of time. [Laughs] So, I didn't have to deal with that aspect, but I certainly felt sorry for the people they brought back in. But then, I came back from that assignment . . . I was out on medical leave, came back to Fort Benjamin Harrison, and we were the ones that made the assignments for personnel all over the world. And I'd come down on manifest from Vietnam several times. And every time that happened, they'd ask me, "Do you want to go to Vietnam?" And I'd go, "I don't think so." Finally, they said, "As an enlisted man," they said, "You're going to have to do an overseas tour." And so, when it came down to Thailand, they go, "Oh, yeah."

Where I went was actually the most sought-after duty station in the world at the time in Thailand.

LAMBERSON: And when was that? Was that you went back to Fort Benjamin Harrison and then you went to Thailand?

ANDREWS: Right. Yeah, it was. I was there from October of '71 to October '72.

LAMBERSON: In Thailand?

ANDREWS: In Thailand. That was interesting. It was fun. I mean, we were . . . even though we were part of the war effort, what my base did was it ran the ammo ports and did all the other different operations in Thailand. But we supported the B-52 base in U-Tapao, Thailand. The place I was stationed was called Samae San, and it was about 1,200 men. Why it was enjoyable, we had an operating budget of $32,000,000 a year back in that time. We had ski boats and Olympic-sized pools and gymnasiums and two theaters. The mess halls were like . . . you were served in the mess halls and that sort of thing. And then just being in Thailand, that's where most people went for R&R. And for young guys in the military, it was about drugs, sex, and women. And that was all readily available, even on the base. Enlisted men's club, with that type of operating budget, was just as swank as most officers' clubs. And they had totally nude Thai dancers and slot machines, and so it was just a totally different time and place, you know, than . . . than . . .

LAMBERSON: So, did you have very much contact with the local Thai people while you were there or . . . ?

ANDREWS: To a certain extent. I lived the last three months . . . actually, my first wife came over after she graduated from college. And we were married in Thailand and spent the last three months living in Pattaya, Thailand, which, at the time, was one of the top ten resorts in the world. And so . . . and then there was some other military families. And you know, we really had a good time.

LAMBERSON: So, you were off-base?

ANDREWS: Yeah, off-base for those last three months. And even on-base, we had air-conditioned barracks and house girls and houseboys that took care of everything. So, it was a fun experience to get to go to . . . and to Bangkok and see that and see a different part of the world. But we did have interface. We had both on-base and off-base house girls and houseboys, so we got to interface with that culture. Plus, we also had a lot of Thai civilians that worked in our operation, and so we interfaced with them a lot. The secretary we had, her husband was a captain in the Thai Navy, and so it was an interesting time.

LAMBERSON: And what did you think of the Thai people or the Thai culture? And did they train you at all?

ANDREWS: Oh, yeah, absolutely. We were restricted to base for the first two weeks, where we went through a program called TARGET, which was Thai-American Relations Guidance and Educational Training. Their customs were so different. And the reason they had a formal program was because we had a GI that went down to a market and was paying for something and the money started blowing away. And he did what was natural for him to do, which was to go step on the money to stop it from blowing. But it has a . . . a picture of the king on it, so they arrested him. There was no status of forces agreement, and so they put him in a Thai jail and about all the military could do for him was to bring C-rations once a month. He was basically in a six by six cage where he couldn't even stand up in it. It was interesting times.

LAMBERSON: And what did you think of all that kind of stuff?

ANDREWS: Well, I mean, that was crazy. But not too long after I was there, there was a coup in Thailand and they really cracked down on that. The shopkeepers wanted to cheat you and there was a lot of stuff that went on that . . . where they really took advantage of the military. They executed a guy that killed an Air Force colonel in public execution where they put him in an enclosure and ten Thais, each with M16s with ten rounds each, they opened up on him. Then they took the enclosure down and made everybody that came pass by. Well, it was . . . after that, it got the word that the shopkeepers wouldn't even . . . I mean, it was quite a deterrent. The Thai people . . . you know, some of them were nice. It's just like people everywhere else, but with their strange customs and that sort of thing. And they don't have anything. The average wage for a Thai was $200 per year. The Thais on base made about $40 a month, which made them wealthy in comparison. So, a lot of times, they came with their hand out or wanted you to get them something from home and that sort of thing. But in general, they were nice people that we worked with. An interesting group. Strange customs.

LAMBERSON: What did your wife think of it when she came?

ANDREWS: It was just a little bit intimidating. Of course, we lived in a compound where . . . with a lot of other Americans. So, that . . . she was with other people's wives most of the time. And they would take the bus to Bangkok, which was about 90 miles away, and go shopping and stuff like that. Dealing with house girls and houseboys that spoke very little English . . . but I think she enjoyed it very much.

LAMBERSON: And what did she think about—before she came over—about you being there on a base with . . . ?

ANDREWS: Actually, her father was in the Army and he spent four years in the South Pacific. And it was a part of his life that—he had gotten married before he went over—he couldn't actually share, so her parents thought that would be a great experience for her to go and experience some of the same things. But I guess we were too young and stupid to know that it's a twenty-three-hour flight and she didn't know on the way over that she had a layover in Hong Kong and things like that. So, it's good sometimes to be young and stupid and all of that. And then she got to actually come back on a military flight because even though she wasn't Thai, she was considered an overseas inquired dependent. So, she got to fly back at least as far as Okinawa before we got bucked off the flight and then she commercialed it.

LAMBERSON: So, how long had you two been married? Were you married before you . . . ?

ANDREWS: We were married in May of 1972 and then we divorced in '99. So, we were married twenty-seven years.

LAMBERSON: So, did she move with you to the other bases as well?

ANDREWS: Well, the only other station I had before I got out was at Fort Hood, and so we lived in Killeen. Then I went from there into Texas A&M and started college at twenty-three.

LAMBERSON: Did you keep in close touch with her or the rest of your family when you were stationed in Thailand, before she came, obviously? Did you write letters?

ANDREWS: Yeah, wrote letters just about every day. And back then, we didn't have the cell phone and the good communication, and so you could talk, but it was really kind of difficult on a MARS[1] station radio. But you had to go over radio and everything, so conversation was awkward. We didn't do that much but we wrote letters back and forth.

LAMBERSON: And what did the rest of your family, your parents or whomever, think of your service? Or how did it affect them?

ANDREWS: Well, you know, they knew that since I was in Thailand, it wasn't as bad as going to Vietnam. Their main concern was it had had happened quite often as . . . we landed in Tan Son Nhut on the way over, and sometimes they would change your orders and you would wind up in . . . but I think after Thailand they didn't worry about that too much. We were fairly isolated from the war. Although, I mean, we had some incidents that happened with sappers coming into the B-52 base at a time where Thailand was infiltrated up in the North and that sort of thing where we went on alert . . .

LAMBERSON: But you were personally isolated from combat?

ANDREWS: Yeah. I mean, we all . . of course, you all have a weapon and all of that, but yeah, you never really thought about it. We didn't ever see it. We even had somebody that cleaned the weapons, so it was pretty isolated.

LAMBERSON: And what was your sense of your mission there of what you were supposed to be doing?

ANDREWS: Well, we really had an interesting mission in supporting the B-52 base. We ran two ammo ports that supplied bombs for the B-52s. And we ran those pretty much during that time frame—twenty-four, seven—that we were bombing Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. All at the same time, trying to get rid of the Ho Chi Minh trail, basically. We were training Cambodians. We had first special forces that . . . in Thailand that were supposedly illegal. I don't know. We

[1] Military Auxiliary Radio System

were . . . were training Cambodians inside Thailand for jungle warfare. I was actually on the Cambodian border one time and was sitting in the restaurant, and in walks a guy with a cowboy hats and boots and stuff. And I talked to him and asked him where he was from. He's from Houston. I said, "Well, what are you doing over here?" And he was running munitions into Cambodia as a truck driver, basically. All of that was interesting to watch that develop.

We had a group that operated what was called the "elephant cage," and it was a circle of transmitters that looked like a big cage, and they would intercept the conversations between pilots in Mandarin Chinese and have to interpret it and feed it back to ours. So, that was interesting. And that was probably the highest suicide rate, the guys who were under so much pressure. A lot of them committed suicide. Lots of drugs in Thailand. We had people that died from that. We had people that were listed as MIA because they caught strains of venereal disease that were incurable. So, basically, just a weird time.

LAMBERSON: And what did you think of that? How did you interact with that culture?

ANDREWS: Well, it's something that you just get used to. And you run with your group of people that are . . . so, my friends were more conservative and a lot of them were college educated and that sort of thing. So, we knew places not to go and all of that. So, we weren't the guys that were going to the prostitute district and spending times in the bars. Most of the time, we were on base with different activities at the USO club. And fact is, the best Scrabble player I ever played against was a Thai female that hung out there. And I thought I was a good Scrabble player and had a good vocabulary. I never did beat her playing Scrabble. To experience the Thai food . . . and really, it was a deal about how spoiled that we are as Americans. Because they're living on that $200 a year and I'm making $350 a month. And as an enlisted man, I was making as much as our secretary's husband in the Thai navy. When she found out about what our salaries were, she was just in disbelief. Their spending is totally different. We got charged quadruple for everything that we bought.

LAMBERSON: Was there conflict or tension . . . either racial tension on that basis similar to what you experience before, or also tension between people who were drafted and not in support of the war, or doing more drugs? Was that tense?

ANDREWS: We had . . . a lot of the black soldiers that had been drafted were over there because drugs were so free. You could buy . . . like, they had already rolled marijuana cigarettes that were about the same price as thirty-five cents a pack of cigarettes, but they wanted to get you hooked on heroin. It was pure stuff. And a lot of the black soldiers got into heroin and they wanted to cause trouble by standing in line and damping. And they just didn't want to be there. So, we had . . . at the movies, you could see it coming. It would be all the sudden, the beer cans would start flying and you just learned, "I don't want to do that activity because it's . . ." But a lot of tension. But there was one particular leader over there. We named him "Cherry Top" because he had this big afro, which was not regulation, and his hat kind of fit on the top. He was an instigator of a lot of that Black Panther movement that was going on. What they did was you could put a contract on somebody for $200, and so people got tired of it and took up a collection and put a contract out on him. He found out about it and asked to be medevac'd out of the country, and the problems kind of ended after that. It was that period of time, but again, it's living through . . . it's like, "I was . . . I wasn't here for that." But it happens and so you live

through it and you adapt.

LAMBERSON: By this point . . . you said that in the beginning when you were drafted or enlisted that you didn't really have a lot of opinion it sounds like about whether we should be in Vietnam, or about the war and what we were doing there, etcetera. So, by the time you were in Thailand, did you have a stronger view about the war itself or about the political issues?

ANDREWS: Again, I was still pretty conservative and supported it. I don't think I knew enough about the politics or why we were there or really cared at that time to know. You kind of get involved with looking at the mission itself, and so I knew what we were doing. One of my good friends worked in the security part, so I knew a lot of what was going on. It's like . . . I guess the thing that was hard to understand was why we weren't winning the war. We were dropping bombs twenty-four hours a day and we have all this military power. In that regard, it's a little frustrating. It's like, "Why are we here?" Of course, we lost so many people and that sort of thing. But I never was like an anti-war protestor or anything like that, even coming out of the military and going to Texas A&M. We had several thousands of veterans that had been there and A&M was very pro-military and all of that. So, you know, we continued to support . . . our main issue was they were threatening to cut benefits, so we formed organizations to fight it and even formed the first Texas A&M American Legion Post. The legion found out we had such a large veterans organization, so they came in and I wound up as the first commander of the American Legion. I'm not sure how that happened, but . . .

LAMBERSON: So, would you . . . and while you were there, were you still working as a stenographer?

ANDREWS: Yes, but in the Army's infinite wisdom, I was . . . did machine shorthand at 300 words a minute. By the time they made me go through the Army school . . . and I actually got moved into a program that accelerated me seven months into the program because they said, "We'll put you into the program but we don't think you'll be able to catch up with the Army correspondent stuff and all that." And two nights . . . and I actually lost speed and never really used it after that. So, that's one of the reasons I decided to go to college because I lost that skill and speed, and I determined that wasn't what I wanted to do anyway. And, actually, the people that influenced me most were Aggies that were officers in the war and supported me. Our lieutenant from Thailand actually worked for Southwestern Bell and then he talked about going to A&M. And my last boss was an Aggie, so I went to A&M. And then I got a job with Southwestern Bell thanks to a friend. So, the Aggie network was working even before I became a part of it.

LAMBERSON: So, after Thailand you went to Fort Hood. How long were you still in the Army before that?

ANDREWS: I had about ten months left. And, actually, they had an early-out program, so I got out. I was in two years, ten months, and five days, and took the early-out program to go to school. So, I went directly from Fort Hood to College Station and started school.

LAMBERSON: And what were you doing in Fort Hood?

ANDREWS: I was actually a . . . "Stenographer" was the title but I worked for the commanding officer of the 13th support brigade, which we supported the 7th Cavalry Division helicopter unit.

LAMBERSON: And what was your rank when you left?

ANDREWS: I was an E-5.

LAMBERSON: And so then why did you decide to do the early out program?

ANDREWS: To go to . . . To go to college. Because school started in August . . .

LAMBERSON: Right.

ANDREWS: . . . and so, if I had stayed until October . . .

LAMBERSON: I gotcha. I gotcha.

ANDREWS: . . . I would have had to wait.

LAMBERSON: So, then did you have any particular challenges as you transitioned into civilian life and going back to school? You mentioned a little bit about forming the veterans' groups.

ANDREWS: Not really. It was really an enjoyable time. The only thing was being twenty-three and a freshman was interesting. The first thing I did was grow a beard and let my hair grow out because coming out with the military, hair cut and all this, you know, people come up to you. I remember a guy says, "Do you know where freshman orientation is?" I said, "No, but I'm going. If you find out, let me know." [Both laugh] And that sort of thing, you know. You were just older. And of course, I was married, so we lived in married student housing, which was different. A little 600 square foot university-supplied deal. But that was also fun because there was so many veterans that lived in there, graduate students that we got to know. Actually, that was probably the time in life I had more disposable income. My wife got a job on campus and I was getting the GI Bill, so it was a fun time. I spent all of my time studying. I never was prepared and probably just a mediocre student coming out of high school and didn't really have an interest in going. But through the military experience, I saw the difference between officers and enlisted and having that education, what that meant. So, I'll never forget when I went to my counselor, he looked at the records and the SAT scores and said, "Well, you know, based on what I've seen, you're probably not going to make it. You go to freshman orientation and they tell you one out of ten of you isn't going to make it." So, I studied all the time and did that and wound up magna cum laude. So, I was able to go back and say, "In your face."

LAMBERSON: And so, tell me a little bit more about the American Legion that you formed.

ANDREWS: Actually, one of the prominent generals that built everything—his name is Earl Rudder—his wife was still living at the time, and the American Legion just wanted to form the Earl Rudder post of the American Legion in his honor and bring in veterans rather than being

their own organization. So, we met with them. And, actually, I was the vice president of the veterans' organization, and another guy named Ken Dietzler that was a helicopter pilot was the president. We basically switched roles; I became the commander and he became the vice-commander. And again, our motivation mainly was they talked about cutting benefits, so the first venture into politics was to have a voice in what was going on.

LAMBERSON: And did you enjoy that kind of activity?

ANDREWS: Yeah, it was okay. It was more about camaraderie. We would do some projects to fix up stuff and we had a few parties. That's what GIs and former GIs do.

LAMBERSON: Did you find the atmosphere at A&M supportive of veterans?

ANDREWS: Absolutely. It still . . . I think there's 60,000 students on campus now. At that time, there were 18,000 and 4,000 were in the Corps. The Corps still is the spirit of Aggieland and still was then, but during the time I went to school—I graduated in three years—we went from 18,000 to 31,000 students in that period of time. But the values are so conservative and so supportive. A&M puts more officers in the military than the service academies do. I mean, it was just a transition from military into people that were pro-military, so it had that same basic core values. Very conservative.

LAMBERSON: And then where did you . . . You said you got a job with Southwestern Bell? Is that right?

ANDREWS: Well, actually, I went to work with a company called Burroughs first, that no longer exists. It was a competitor for NCR banking equipment and all of that. I worked there for about a year and a half and then my friend kept . . . "You need to come work for Southwestern Bell." And after I could see that there was not much future in that, I went and spent twenty-five and a half years with them.

LAMBERSON: And where was that?

ANDREWS: Well, I started off in Lubbock but I was living in San Antonio at the time. I went to Lubbock, back to San Antonio, St. Louis for ten years, Austin, and then Odessa.

LAMBERSON: And what brought you to Brownwood?

ANDREWS: Actually, after I retired I worked in Conroe for six years in the city, in community development, then moved to economic development back in Odessa, went to work for a private industry. Went to work just in time for the downturn, and so started looking for a job. Brownwood just appealed . . . and at sixty-five, I'm going, "I don't need to be in another large community." So, it's been a perfect move.

LAMBERSON: Looking back on your service, how do you feel about it?

ANDREWS: I wouldn't trade it for anything. The level of maturity . . . and the fact is, I'm going

to . . . every person coming out of high school ought to spend at least two years in the military to get direction and all that. I'm not sure it would be for everybody. A lot of people that I've talked to, it made a whole difference in their lives. So, I wouldn't trade it for any experiences that I had while I was at the military or any of the friendships I made. You have a camaraderie, and you still know those people. And this website, "Together We Served," it helps you keep up with that.

LAMBERSON: And do you have any advice that you would give young folks who are entering the military?

ANDREWS: Make the most of it and enjoy the time that you've got there. It's not always fun things and you're put in situations that may be different, but it's all part of growing up. My whole idea is I wanted to be the best at everything I could, and so every permanent station I had, I was . . . I got an Army Accommodation Medal. I had three of those, and for somebody who is non-combatant, it's about the best you can do to do the best job you can.

LAMBERSON: Did your military service influence your conception of the United States or of its role in the world?

ANDREWS: In some ways positive and in some ways negative. The atmosphere in that part of the world . . . The movie I think that gives you feel for what it was like was *Apocalypse Now*, and when they're going down the river and everybody was stoned and they didn't know who the commanding officer was. So much of that nobody really knew what was going on . . . that it was so . . . it was disorganized and there wasn't a clear-cut mission and all of that. And I think the military has improved a lot since that time without the draft. But drafting people into the military is not such a great idea and it probably had a lot of people that were killed as a result of that that were promising people. I served with people that were in law school or attorneys, and here, they're drafted and put into a situation, especially if you're put into a combat situation, and then the aftermath of that. But basically, in spite of our faults, we're still a strong nation and hopefully we can get back to that, and if we don't, were going to be in trouble anyway.

LAMBERSON: Going back to the support you told me about, being in a military-friendly place like College Station or at A&M, what was your experience like when you were stationed at other places in the U.S.? Did you interact with people off-base very often? And did that feel different to you than later?

ANDREWS: I never left base at basic training. It didn't appeal to me even though we got leaves. I just stayed there and there was another guy who stayed there. We would, like, mop floors and do stuff so the other guys didn't have to work so hard. I didn't have much interface at Fort Benjamin Harrison except we were hired to do guard duty at Spring National drag races. And that was quite an experience to deal with some of those local folks up in Indiana. Then Fort Hood, at Killeen . . . just a mess at the time. You could hardly find a place to live and do . . . a lot of stuff that happened in our apartment complex, there was a lot of domestic disturbances and some guys coming back from there. That went on, there was racial tension there, there was drug dealing going on, murders on the base.

LAMBERSON: So, that was really different?

ANDREWS: Yeah, that was different. But all of that, if you look back and reflect on it, you can either make it something totally negative or . . . did you learn something from it that you can help others in that situation? I compare myself to my brother that lived in the same town his entire career, never moved from there, never did anything else, and our perspectives are totally different on lots of issues. Still conservative and pro-American and that sort of thing, but I have a little . . . different experiences than he has.

LAMBERSON: And what sort of differences does that make?

ANDREWS: Well, his . . . I think you don't grow as much when you stay at the same place because you're with the same people that you grew up with. And small towns like Plainview and Brownwood, everybody is related and everything. So, your perspective is different. Coming to Brownwood, I'd bring perspective from a lot of different places. And you look at the stuff that goes on and you go . . . you know that shouldn't be happening, but it's just typical small town, and it's hard to change mindsets. But if you've been someplace where change is constant, then you learn to adapt, and you learn different perspectives, and you learn different people's points of views. Probably in Southwestern Bell is the place where it changed the most because you're getting people from all over, with all different levels of experience, and you're subjected to all different types of bosses and organizations and things like that. So, that, as much as military shapes . . .

LAMBERSON: Well, do you have anything else you want to add or any particular vivid memories that I haven't asked about?

ANDREWS: Not that . . . I think I've pretty much covered the stuff. Some of it I couldn't cover with you, a few memories, like a bar fight in Thailand.

LAMBERSON: That you were involved in?

ANDREWS: Yeah, it was one of those two-hit things where I hit him and he hit the floor. That was with a Thai taxi-cab driver.

LAMBERSON: It was a bar room fight that you won?

ANDREWS: Yeah, well . . . yeah. I won that part of it but was almost arrested by the Thai police, and a couple of navy guys saved me.

LAMBERSON: And what was the cause of it?

ANDREWS: This taxi driver was trying to cheat us, and when we were ready to go back to base, he wanted to charge some enormous price to take us back. He was running a scam. He jumped up and started acting threatening, puts his finger in my face, and calls me a name. "God damn American GI." I just popped him one time and knocked him out, then the Thai police grabbed my arm and these two navy guys sitting at this bar said, "You don't touch him. That's an American GI."

"Oh. You GI?"

"Oh, really? Idiot, yeah, that's why I have my hair short and all that." Anyway, that's not typical of me, but [laughs] that's one thing . . . you know what I mean . . . stuff like that happens.

LAMBERSON: Of course. Any others?

ANDREWS: Not that we want to talk about.

LAMBERSON: Well, I'm open.

ANDREWS: Huh?

LAMBERSON: I said I'm open to talk about anything you'd like to.

ANDREWS: Well, you want to talk about the R&R strip in Bangkok?

LAMBERSON: Sure.

ANDREWS: Nah.

LAMBERSON: [Laughs] Did you ever go R&R anywhere else?

ANDREWS: No, we were on a one-year R&R. People would've died for the place we lived. Actually, we lived in Pattaya. I moved there before my wife came over. The guy that owned the place that we lived owned the R&R strip. A very wealthy, powerful guy. But he didn't like the Bangkok scene, so he lived there. But he said, "If you go, tell them Pat Pong sent you." Pat Pong Road is the R&R strip. So, we go, and we weren't mixing up with the girls even though they're there and all that stuff. We heard about one place at the end called the Roaring Twenties, so a friend of mine, we walked down the street. And it's at the very end of Pat Pong and kind of dimly lit. This Frenchman comes along the street and we go, "Hey, did you come out of the Roaring Twenties?"

"Oui." And I said, "What's it like?" He said, "Well on the first floor, take the top off, the second floor is take the bottom off, and on the third floor . . . " So, we went straight up to the third floor and, oh my gosh, you see the true Thailand that it's known for. I mean, it's the capital of the sex trade and all that, but it was pretty wide open then. Of course, I was twenty-one and it was kind of interesting. So, you learn about that culture and stuff like that.

LAMBERSON: So, you learned a lot?

ANDREWS: Too much information for you. Well, we had sick call on base from seven o'clock to eight o'clock. Eight o'clock to noon was VD sick call, and there's lots of guys that participated. And we had an operation called "Go Flow" where they had random drug testing, but they would bring everybody at one time, and you actually had to pee in the bottle in front of somebody and all of that. We had guys that died from overdoses—of heroin, especially, one-hundred percent pure. They would pour it into a guy's beer, the bar girls, something made them mad. Go drink the beer, and never wake up.

LAMBERSON: So, like, if you were on an R&R or just out and whatnot, were you careful? Or were you worried about this kind of thing or not really?

ANDREWS: If you're not participating . . .

LAMBERSON: It was separate enough for you.

ANDREWS: Yeah, I mean, there were a bunch of people in the military at that time, just total morons or . . . and part of that was just lifestyle. So, they would go participate without thinking about consequences of what you're doing or any kind of protection. And it's like, "Really, dude? This girl's probably been with . . . what?" We had 500,000 troops and most of them came to Bangkok for that reason. Hawaii was another spot that was more family oriented and all that, but boys will be boys, and when you put that opportunity out there, well they're going to do it. Again, some of those guys caught strains of syphilis that . . . of course, the nickname was Black Syphilis. If you got that, they just listed you as MIA and put you in a place until you died because you weren't going to go back to the United States and spread that stuff. Nothing for young eyes to be seeing.

LAMBERSON: It sounds like the military was trying but having a hard time maintaining discipline at that point.

ANDREWS: Yeah, there was so . . . in Vietnam, you had fragging of officers that went on. And I wasn't there but one of my best friends who was coming back from Vietnam as I was going to Thailand, you know, we had talks, and he was talking about guys fragging the officers. And he was in the infantry unit and, you know, he'd be in a vehicle and just pull the turret down and . . . they said it happened all the time. Put a grenade in the gas tank—I don't know how that worked exactly, but—screw off the time, and blow up. So, lots of strange things.

LAMBERSON: Lots of trouble.

ANDREWS: So many of those guys . . . one of my best friends was a ranger, and they don't . . . just don't talk about that stuff because so much of it is surreal. You're going, "Did I really just see that or not?" Yeah, I saw a guy fall out of a helicopter in Thailand, and what he was doing—it was a racial incident—he was leaning out the door and doing the black power symbol and stuff, and the officer just takes that helicopter and goes, "bang," and he's gone, right on the helio-pad. Just splattered him.

LAMBERSON: Anything else?

ANDREWS: No. I wouldn't trade the experience, although insane.

LAMBERSON: You still got something out of it.

ANDREWS: A nice life, and you learn there's evil people around. I still don't get war, but it's like, how do you get to that point where you can't compromise or find a solution in all that? But

that's the nature of the beast. That's a question I'll ask when I get to heaven. Why is there war? It doesn't make sense. Ever since Cain and Abel . . .

LAMBERSON: Thank you so much for coming in.