



WALTON

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Walton County Heritage Association

September 2020



WALTON COUNTY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION, INC.

OFFICE LOCATION

Walton County Heritage Museum, (Old Train Depot)

Hours: Open Tuesday – Saturday, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Postal Address

**Walton County Heritage Association, Inc.
1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, Florida 32435
Phone: 850-951-2127**

Website: <http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/#>

DEPARTMENTS

Administration

President: Marie Hinson, hinsonharmony@yahoo.com

Vice President: Carolyn Brown

Treasurer: Sam Carnley

Secretary: Mary Lancaster

Public Relations

Vacant

Museum Docent Coordinator

Caroline Brown (Acting)

Genealogy Society

President: Wayne Sconiers, waynesconiers@embarqmail.com

Newsletter

Editor: Sam Carnley, wsamuelcarnley@gmail.com

Assistant Editor and Lead Researcher: Bruce Cosson, bac2work1958@yahoo.com

Editorial Advisor: Diane Merkel, ddmerkel@cox.net

Back Issues: <http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/GenSoc/newsletters.htm>

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Newsletter Cover Collage Photos

Clockwise from top left:

1. **Darlington, Florida, early 1900s, Courtesy of Baker Block Museum, photographer unknown. Edited by Sam Carnley.**
2. *View of a turpentine still in Glendale or Gaskin.* 1904. Black & white photoprint, 4 x 6 in. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/42107>>, accessed 28 June 2017 by Sam Carnley.
3. **William Lewis (Luke) Hurst Family, Fleming Creek/Clear Springs area, north Walton County, ca 1894, from “The Heritage of Walton County, Florida,” p. 190.**
4. **Old Paxton High School, “1961-62 Paxtonian” Year Book, photographer unknown. Edited by Sam Carnley**
5. Walton County Heritage Museum, photo and editing by Sam Carnley.
6. Gladys D. Milton (1924-1999), Midwife, Flowersview/Paxton, photo by her daughter, Maria Milton. Also in “The Heritage of Walton County, Florida,” p. 249, and the September 2018 Newsletter at <http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/GenSoc/NL2018Sep.pdf> Edited by Sam Carnley.
7. Lake Jackson, South Side, in Paxton City Limits, photo and editing by Sam Carnley.
8. Paxton Water Tower, Paxton, Florida, photo and editing by Sam Carnley.
9. Old Freeport School, constructed ca 1908, burned 1943. Photo from “The Heritage of Walton County, Florida,” p. 45. **Photographer unknown. Edited by Sam Carnley.**
10. *Floralia Saw Mill Company's engine number 3 - Paxton, Florida.* 1907. Black & white photonegative, 4 x 5 in. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. Photographer unknown. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/146972>>, accessed 7 September 2019 and edited by Sam Carnley. [Built in 1873 and Originally owned by New York, Ontario and Western Railroad Company as engine number 60; then owned by Southern Iron and Equipment Company as engine number 568 in 1907; then owned by Floralia Saw Mill Company as engine number 3 on March 3, 1907; returned to Southern Iron and Equipment Company and number changed to 915 on March 13, 1913; then owned by Louisiana Saw Mill Company as engine 50 in May, 1913.]

The Walton County Heritage Association, Inc. is an 501 (C) 3 Florida Not for Profit Corporation Recognized by the IRS as a Public Charity Organization for Tax Deductible Donations.

The Walton County Heritage Association was organized for four main purposes:

- To promote the preservation and restoration of buildings and other landmarks of historical interest within Walton County;
- To maintain the Walton County Heritage Museum to preserve the heritage of Walton County for the education and enjoyment of current and future generations by collecting, preserving, and exhibiting artifacts and information from the time of its original inhabitants to the present;
- To foster and enhance the development, education, and sense of history which is unique to Walton County; and
- To secure cooperation and unity of action between individual citizens, businesses, and other groups as may be necessary to fulfill these purposes.

The Association depends upon the support of its members and the business community to accomplish its goals. Annual dues are \$25 for individuals, \$40 for families and \$100 for corporate memberships.

[Click here](#) for the Individual Membership Application

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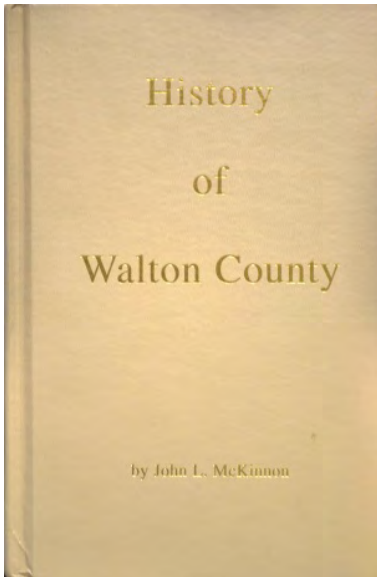
Member Benefits:

- **Automatic** membership in the **Walton County Heritage Museum** and the **Walton County Genealogy Society**.
- **Invitations** to Quarterly Members Meetings
- **Discounts** on Special Events
- **The Museum Research Center:** Members get free copies of documents and use of the Genealogy Society computer when the Museum is open.
- **The Museum Gift Shop:** Members receive discounts on books, special publications, postcards, photographs, CDs, DVDs, videos, and gift items.
- **Free subscriptions** to the WCHA Newsletter and Journal.

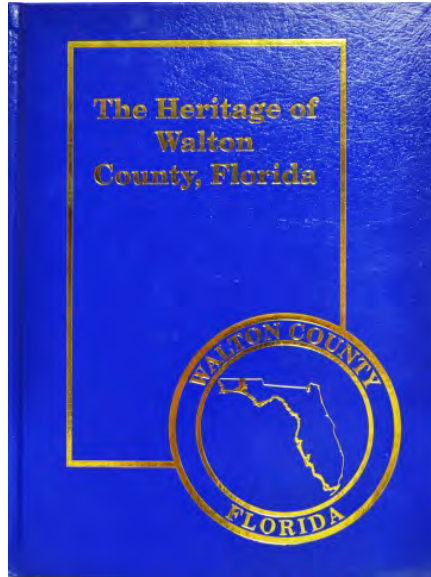
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From the Museum Gift Shop

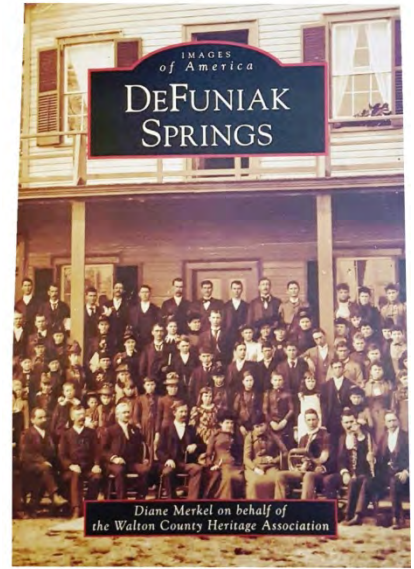
Our most popular books



History of Walton County
by John L. McKinnon. The Museum has sold out of this book and it is out of print, but it is available on line free of charge at this link,
<https://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/georgiabooks/pdfs/gb0503.pdf>



The Heritage of Walton County, Florida. Item code **B13.** History of Walton County's organizations, churches and people. Hard cover, 316 pages, indexed.
\$59.00 plus tax and shipping.



Images of America, DeFuniak Springs. Item code **B06.** By Diane Merkel. Softcover, 128 pages, 185 photos, indexed.
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Robert Marion Anderson

(1915-1986)

Written by

Robert Marion Anderson, Jr.

Edited by Sam Carnley

Robert Marion Anderson was the youngest of the seven children of William Robert and Mary Jane King Anderson of Walton County, Florida. He was a Grandson of Angus Lane Anderson and Sarah Catherine Broxson; great Grandson of Daniel Anderson of Skye, Inverness, Scotland, and Mary Elizabeth McLane of South Carolina; and Great-Great Grandson of Angus Anderson of Skye, Inverness, Scotland, and Katherine McKinnon (?) of Skye, Inverness, Scotland. His siblings were Maude Estelle (Tew), William Michael, Arthur Franklin, Leroy, Angus King, and John Daniel. Robert Marion and Maude Estelle shared the same birthday, separated by 21 years. ¹

Depending on age and location in the world and date he was known by many names. To his Walton County family and childhood **friends he was known as “Marion”, to many in his adult life he was “Bob and some referred to him as “Red” for the red hair in his early years of life.** Regardless of the name the reader may have known him by, he was a proud, Christian gentleman who made mistakes during his lifetime but who also had many successes. From his beginnings as the youngest child of a Florida Farmer to his successful military career and his many civil endeavors in later life, he remained an honest, hardworking, compassionate man who was above all a husband and father, a family man.

A recitation of the basic facts of his life cannot fully convey the caring love and compassion he showed to his immediate and extended family, his community, and the world. I will attempt to convey this love and compassion to the reader with anecdotal evidence. Despite his faults, his goodness always seemed to emerge.

The Early Years 1915 -1940

Robert never really spoke much about his earliest years of life, but I have pieced together all I could learn about them. He was born January 17, 1915 at the family home in the Pleasant Grove Community of the Sandy Creek Precinct, Walton County, Florida. He was the seventh child and sixth son of William Robert **and Mary Jane “Mollie” King. For the first three years of his life his primary source of mothering came from his sister, Maude, a close relationship that continued until her death.**

He received his early education at the Sandy Creek School and his religious learning began at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church. An Anderson Uncle was his minister and his father was Church Recorder. The arrival of the Great Depression Era in 1929-1930 brought a pause in his education.

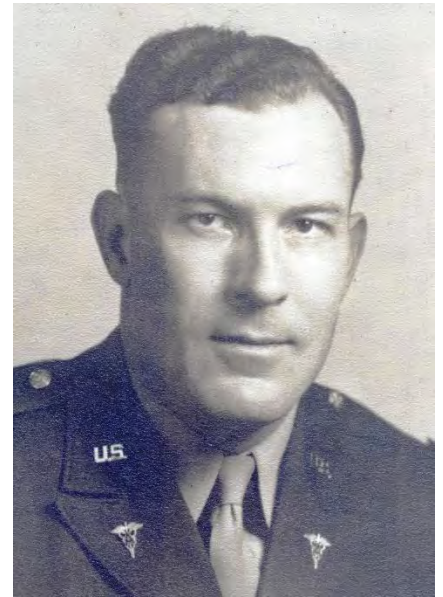


Figure 1. Capt. Robert Anderson, abt. 1944. Photo courtesy of Bob Anderson.

Compounding the crisis of the Great Depression was the death on January 31, 1931 of his father, William Robert. Sometime during the following year, there was a family gathering where two maiden Aunt(s) (cousins?) who lived and taught school in DeFuniak Springs set forth the proposition that least one of the boys should graduate from High School. Settling on Robert (Marion) as their preference they thought he should come to town and live with them during the school year to complete High School. With the death of the head of the family the hands needed to work the farm were already short. Losing Robert to attend school in De Funiak Springs would make the situation even worse. He never recalled, however, any family discussion of whether he should stay and help on the farm or move to town, but he did go live in DeFuniak Springs during the school year.

On more than one occasion Robert told the following story about the work he did to earn cash for the family: During the summer one year when he was in high school, he and his brother Angus took on the job of hauling clay for streets in DeFuniak Springs. This was a project of considerable size. With a team of mules and a wagon they went to the clay pit and hand loaded the wagon using picks and shovels. They drove the loaded wagon to the streets in town under construction on which they spread and tamped the clay to the appropriate depth. They repeated this as many times as possible each day. They worked six days a week from before dawn till after dusk. For every load they delivered and applied to the streets, they were paid \$0.10 (10 cents). Whether or not the details of story are correct, the importance is that it illustrates they did whatever work they could to earn hard cash to support the family during the Great Depression.

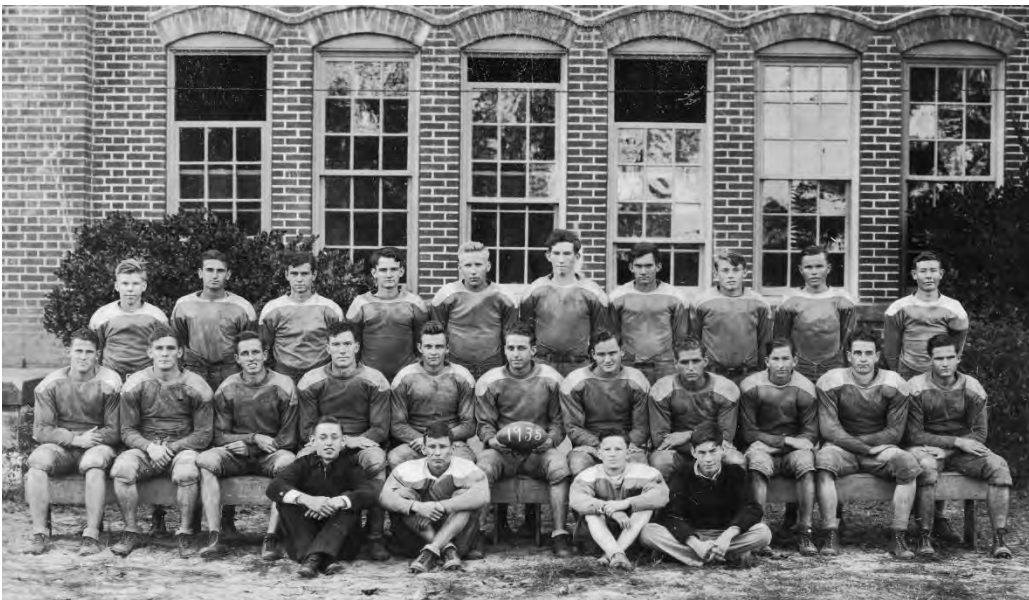


Figure 2. 1935 Walton High School Football Team. Photo courtesy of Bob Anderson.

Due to his physical stature and natural athletic ability, he participated in varsity sports for Walton High School as well as being an academic champion. Undoubtedly, the additional maturity from the approximately three years he had his schooling interrupted added to his overall athletic prowess. A photograph of the 1935 Walton High School Football team appears at left. Robert

graduated from Walton High School in 1936 at age 21.

On graduation he had to decide which direction in life he wanted to go. Would it be back to the farm or a job in town? The decision got an early answer when shortly after graduation he was offered a job teaching Junior High School Math, Geography, and Physical Education along with coaching Basketball and Baseball in DeFuniak Springs for the school year 1936-1937.² This may sound strange today but not so in the early 20th century. Having a college degree was not needed to teach, just a desire

to help people learn and having the personality to manage the classroom (physical size helped also) was all that you needed to be hired as a teacher.

Upon completion of the school year, Robert sought other opportunities that paid more money and found such a job near Panama City in Bay County. The US Army Corps of Engineers was beginning a project to stabilize the channel connecting St Andrews Bay with the Gulf of Mexico by construction of a jetty. He started to work in July 1937 as an Asphalt Laboratory Technician and by the time the project was completed in January 1939 he had been promoted to an Assistant Foreman.³

Looking ahead, he knew that he had better be prepared for the end of the jetty project. So, in August of 1938 he took a part time sales job with Chaver-Fowhand Co. selling flooring. Then in February 1939 he went to work for John C Winston Co. selling textbooks and encyclopedias. Though he appeared to have some success in commissioned sales, he returned to the classroom as a Teacher/Coach at Lynn Haven High School in September 1939. At the completion of the 1939/1940 school year, he enrolled for summer school at Appalachian State Teachers College in Boone, NC where he completed several Physical Education classes. He returned to Lynn Haven High School in September 1940 as a Teacher/Coach.⁴

On November 1, 1940, with the aid of his sister-in-law, Clara Hentz Anderson, he travelled to Marianna, Florida where he married a young woman named Gertrude Prows⁵. The marriage was short as they separated after just a few weeks and they divorced in early 1944.⁶

Robert cut the school year short by enlisting in the Army in late November 1940 when he and three other teacher/coaches drove to Marianna to the Army Enlistment Processing station planning on volunteering for the recently instituted military draft by submitting to the enlistment testing and physical examination.

After a morning of skill and aptitude testing they returned after lunch for the physical examination. The four men were pulled out of the waiting line and taken into a small office where a visiting Army Officer wearing uniform insignia they could not identify was waiting. The officer introduced himself as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Medical Administrative Corps and congratulated them on their scoring so high on the tests. He suggested that they enlist in the Medical Department and if they did, he could guarantee that they would be in Officer Candidate School and an officer within 18 months. Only Robert was interested in this opportunity, the others opted for the Infantry. At the end of the day the four returned to Lynn Haven. Robert was given orders to report to the Camp Blanding, Florida Station Hospital the following December 4.⁷

On December 4 as ordered, he reported to the Station Hospital at Camp Blanding. The Hospital Sergeant Major and First Sergeant were waiting for his arrival. These two senior Noncommissioned Officers directed him through the process of drawing an initial issue of uniforms and personal equipment. Then they returned to the Station Hospital barracks, where began a period of close personal instruction on how to make his bunk, pack his footlocker, wear and maintain his uniforms, and memorize the fundamentals of Military Courtesy (saluting) and basic military drill (marching).

Over the next several weeks, Private Anderson was under the continuous tutelage of either the First Sergeant or the Sergeant Major. When at last the two Sergeants agreed that he was ready to start to work, he was assigned as a Clerk in the Hospital Headquarters. A few weeks later he received the first of several rapid promotions. By March 1941 it was Staff Sergeant Anderson, and new duties as

Assistant Station Hospital Sergeant Major. By the end of May 1941, he was wearing the stripes of a Master Sergeant as the Station Hospital Sergeant Major. On 6 June 1941, the Chief Surgeon of Fourth Service Corps issued a Technical Warrant promoting him to the grade of Staff Sergeant.⁸

Enlisted promotions like Robert's in the early days of the military mobilization preceding Pearl Harbor were often fast and loose because the Army was rapidly expanding. Persons were often promoted with little regard to time in grade/time in service standards. The imperative was to put the best possible person in the position and award with the commensurate rank for the position. Such appeared to be the case for Robert.

Sometime in June 1941, Robert was notified of his selection for Medical Administrative Corps Officer Candidate School (MAC OCS). He would start on September 12, 1941 at the Medical Field Service School, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.⁹ Robert and his classmates completed the Office Candidate Course and graduated on December 24, 1941 as Second Lieutenants in the Medical Administrative Corps.¹⁰ As the nation was at war, they left immediately after graduation for their first duty stations as new Second Lieutenants.

The World War II Years – 1941-1945

On Christmas Day 1941, 2nd Lieutenant Robert departed Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania for a few days of leave at home before reporting to his first duty assignment as an officer at Camp Blanding, Florida. How or why Camp Blanding was his first duty assignment is unknown. What is known is that only a few recognized the assignment violated Army policy. Then, as today, newly commissioned officers do not remain in or return to the unit where they served as an enlisted person.

When 2nd Lieutenant Anderson reported to the Station Hospital on 3 Jan 1942, he was assigned to duty as the Assistant Medical Supply Officer. Assignment as an Assistant was the routine of the era because the primary training method for both officers and enlisted was observation and direct job experience, under tutelage of an experienced officer or non-commissioned officer. In early 1942, it was the only training method in place for MAC Officers.

On 24 Jan 1942, the Commander, Camp Blanding, received a telegram from 4th Service Corps directing Lieutenant Anderson to submit a request for reassignment. On 26 Jan 1942, the Station Hospital, Camp Blanding received a telegram directing orders be prepared to transfer Lieutenant Robert M. Anderson to Ft. Barrancas, Florida.

He arrived at Fort Barrancus on February 14, 1942 and took up duties as Assistant Medical Supply Officer. With the war raging in both Europe and the Pacific, he became more agitated each passing day that he would be exiled to the backwater of Fort Barrancus for the entire war and he would miss out on the action. On 28 Jun 1942 he submitted a Request for Foreign Service. Four days later 4th Service Corps Headquarters replied that his request would be fulfilled in response to the next requisition for foreign service.

The following week he received orders to report by 20 July 1942 to Fort Devens, Massachusetts for duty with the 120th Medical Battalion, 45th Infantry Division. On arrival he was assigned as Ambulance Platoon Leader, Company A, 120th Medical Battalion. When the 45th Division deployed to Europe, he was not with them because in August he injured his left knee in a training accident that

required surgery at Lovell General Hospital. After treatment and rehabilitation, he was discharged from the Hospital on 23 October 1942 to return to duty on Limited Duty Status with a transfer to the 1st Army Service Corps Surgeon.

It was a disappointed Lt. Anderson who reported to the 1st Army Service Corps Surgeon on November 4, 1942. He was initially assigned to duty as the Unit Supply Officer. On December 17, 1942, he pinned on his collar the Silver Bar of First Lieutenant. On January 1, 1943 he was assigned as Detachment Commander. While by title he had duties as the administrative housekeeper for personnel in Surgeon's office, he had another duty (as is/was often the case) that was not recorded in the permanent personnel file. He performed duties as a courier carrying a variety of documents between the 1st Army Service Corps Surgeon and the Office of Surgeon General in Washington, D. C.

It was while performing this courier duty that he met a young woman who after several months of what has been described as a relentless hot pursuit would become his wife. The story of their first meeting could well have been a script for a Charlie Chaplin theatrical sketch.

The meeting, very much unexpected but which would have long-lasting effect, occurred early one morning in the office of the Surgeon General located in the Ordnance Building in Southeast Washington D.C. **Lt. Anderson's routine on these courier trips** began with a short ride in a military vehicle from the Ft Devens Bachelor Officer Quarters to the railroad station in Leominster to catch a morning commuter train into Boston. At the Boston Union Station he boarded an Express train that traveled to New Haven (Connecticut), New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and finally, Washington, D.C. A short taxi ride from the Union Station to the main entrance of the Ordnance Building followed. It was then through the main entrance door, up three flights of stairs to the second floor, through a forest of desks and filing cabinets that he would arrive at the Office of Surgeon General. After checking in and depositing his documents he had a few hours to refresh and grab a quick meal before returning to the Surgeon General's office to pick a new bundle of documents for the return trip to Ft Devens. There were two or three round trips each week.

On one of these trips, the Lt. was hurrying through the Ordnance department forest of desks and filing cabinets when a young lady carrying a stack of large format books and other papers stepped into his path from a cross aisle. A rather noisy crash ensued as books and papers flew and thudded on the floor and the young lady landed on the floor in a most unladylike position. After he recovered his balance, he helped the young lady to her feet and assisted her in collecting her books and papers. He had always been **known as a lady's man and left her side only after securing her home phone number** and address. The second meeting would be considerably less clamorous.

The lure of possible combat was still in the forefront of Lt. **Anderson's** desires and he sought out every opportunity. On 17 March 1944, a newly promoted Captain (Capt.) Anderson traveled a short distance across Fort Devens to the recently activated 112th General Hospital. The 112th was in training for deployment to England to support the continued combat in the European Theater. The Lt. was assigned as the Hospital Detachment Commander for the remaining months the hospital spent training at Fort Devens before deployment.

On Tuesday, April 25, 1944 there was a short pause in training as Capt. Anderson and Miss Allene Mittendorf were married in Dedham, Massachusetts before a small group in the home of Samuel and Alice Trepp. The Reverend John F. Robinson, a local Presbyterian minister presided. Capt. Sydney

Gorfine, DC, attended the Groom as Best Man. The Bride was attended by her friends Beatrice Goldaer and Mary Levesque. Others present were Mrs. Roy Potts (cousin of the bride from Middleville, Michigan), Alphee Levesque, and four Trepp Children (Katharine, Mary, Robert, and Elizabeth). The newlyweds escaped to a small apartment in Ayre, Massachusetts as the groom had to report back to duty the following day.

The marriage would bring unexpected actions and reactions as he soon learned. On April 26, 1944, he duly reported to his Commanding Officer at the 112nd General Hospital that he had gotten married the previous night. When he was asked the Bride's name, he correctly responded; Mittendorf. The response from the Commander was to revoke his Security Clearance as Mittendorf was a decidedly German name. Capt. Anderson completed the necessary paperwork for verification of his security clearance and went about his business of training for deployment to Europe.

About a week later a counter-intelligence agent visited with the hospital commander, who shortly after called Capt. Anderson into his office. On arrival, the Capt. was greeted with a smiling Commander. **“Your Security Clearance is restored”, related the Commander.** “It made short work when they discovered your **wife has a higher security clearance than you.**”

The 112th General Hospital departed from Boston on 24 June 1944 with the destination of Scotland. While the unit was at sea, Capt. Anderson was appointed to a new duty position; Mess Officer.¹¹ In a World War II General Hospital, the management of the Mess (Food Service) was vested in the Administrative Services. The Dieticians assigned to a General Hospital were restricted to developing and managing the special dietary needs of patients unable to eat the regular mess meals. This role of Mess or Food Service management in Army Hospitals did not fall under the purview of **Dieticians until 16 April 1947 when the Women’s Medical Specialist Corps was created (later Army Medical Specialist Corps.)**

After Capt. Anderson departed for Europe, his pregnant wife left for Kansas City, Missouri where she would live with her sister, Lois, who was awaiting the return of her Army Air Forces husband. In late February 1945 Capt. Anderson received word that his first child, a son, was born on February 8, 1945. His wife named him Robert Marion Anderson, Junior as they had agreed before his departure for England.

The 112th General Hospital arrived at Glasgow, Scotland on 30 Jun 1944. They immediately proceeded to Llandudno, Wales. However, on 1 July 1944 they were directed to move to Cowglen, Glasgow, Scotland which they did during the period 4-8 July 1944. On the evening of 8 July 1944, the Hospital was declared operational. On 10 August 1944 the 112th was ordered to relocate to Teigngrace, Devon. During the period 11 August and 17 August 1944, hospital personnel relocated to Teigngrace, Devon and began operations on 18 August 1944.

On 17 May 1945, the Hospital received orders to immediately prepare for return via ship to the **United states for “further Redeployment after Rehabilitation”.** On 14 Jun 1945, hospital personnel boarded a train for Glasgow, Scotland where they boarded ship and departed the next day. They arrived in New York on 20 June 1945 and immediately departed by train for Fort Leavenworth, Kansas where they arrived on 22 Jun 1945. After further processing the hospital personnel were placed on 90 day leave with orders to report to Fort Lewis, Washington after leave. Capt. Anderson departed for a short

ride to Kansas City, Missouri where he collected his wife and son and proceeded to Panama City, Florida for his leave period.

After the Japanese ceased combat on 11 Aug 1945, the Capt. was contacted at his leave location and directed to report to Hammond General Hospital in Modesto, California at the completion of leave. In mid-September, he departed Florida for California, leaving his wife and son with his sister Maude Tew, with expectations of a short separation until he could arrange for housing in Modesto.

Post WWII – Trying to Find a Right Fit – 1945-1948

Capt. Anderson arrived at Hammond General Hospital on September 19, 1945 and was assigned duty as the Assistant Registrar. However, this assignment did not last long as Hammond General Hospital was beginning its own demobilization. On 30 November 1945 Capt. Anderson departed from Modesto, California for Camp Lewis, Washington.

On December 2, 1945 he joined the Army Service Forces Training Center (ASFTC), Basic Training Section at Camp Lewis, Washington where he assumed command of Co A, 10th Battalion, Army Forces Support Training Center, Camp Lewis, Washington. The Training Center conducted Basic Training for Medical and Engineer personnel. The 10th Battalion conducted Basic Training for Medical personnel specifically. With the general demobilization of the Army, the need for Basic Training was rapidly decreasing and on January 23, 1946 Company A graduated its last class of Medical Basic Trainees and was inactivated. Capt. Anderson was then transferred to Madigan General Hospital where he was assigned duties as Mess Officer. His wife and son joined him in February 1946 after he rented a small apartment near Camp Lewis and Madigan General Hospital.

In April 1946, he was notified that he was being reassigned to Alaska. In early May 1946, he departed for the 179th Station Hospital, at Adak, Alaska. Where, upon arrival, he found himself eagerly awaited because he was the only Medical Administrative Corps officer assigned to the hospital. His wife and son returned to Panama City to live with his sister Maude Tew and await the birth of their second child.

As the only MAC Officer, the Capt. was assigned to the position of Adjutant and Personnel Officer. He quickly discovered that his already diverse experience would be of great value in this assignment. In fall 1946 as the Arctic winter took hold in Adak and the other Aleutian Islands, he began to suffer a series of illnesses associated with sinus infections and pneumonia. On November 4, 1946 he received news that his second son, John Daniel Anderson II, had been born in Panama City the day before.

In late January 1947, the physicians in the 179th reported that Capt. Anderson needed specialty care unavailable in Alaska, necessitating **his immediate transfer to the “Lower 48.” It was determined** that Oliver General Hospital in Augusta, Georgia was the appropriate treatment location and on January 31, 1947 he arrived there to begin inpatient medical care.

Responding well to the treatment, he soon felt well enough to travel and obtaining a leave of absence, departed for Panama City. There he collected his wife and two sons to accompany him to the apartment he had rented in North Augusta, South Carolina, where he would convalesce and continue his treatment until returning to full duty.

The course of treatment was successfully completed in September 1947. As the Army was continuing to demobilize from WWII, a Medical Disposition Board was convened in late September to determine if Capt. Anderson was healthy enough to meet the requirements of all his assigned duties. The Board ruled favorably on his fitness and issued its final report to that effect on October 1, 1947.

With his release from patient status and return to general duties, he found himself assigned to Oliver General Hospital as the Assistant Medical Supply Officer. On 7 January 1948, he submitted a Request for Training to attend the Joint Army-Navy Medical Equipment Maintenance Course. Soon afterwards he was notified of his selection to attend the next session of the course to begin March 15, 1948 at the St Louis (Missouri) Medical Depot. In mid-March 1948, he bade farewell to Oliver General Hospital and reported to St Louis, Missouri with prospects for a new career opportunity. His wife and two sons remained temporarily behind in their South Carolina apartment.

Medical Logistics – The Medical Depot Years – 1948-1954

On March 15, 1948 Capt. Anderson and a select group of Army and Navy Medical Service Corps Officers (some of the Army officers would later transfer to the new US Air Force) made their way to St Louis, Missouri where they travelled down South Arsenal Street, near the heart of the St Louis waterfront along the Mississippi River, to the St Louis Medical Depot. There they spent six months of long days and nights in classroom and hands on training followed by hours of homework before retiring each day. These officers would fill a desperate need for people who could maintain a vast array of new technology medical equipment that was being rapidly adopted in civilian and military health care.

The course provided considerable opportunity for each student to gain practical experience as the St Louis Medical Depot was the largest and most active of the Army Medical Supply and Equipment Maintenance Depots. Because of the rapidly advancing pace of technology adoption and a lack of trained maintenance personnel, maintenance of medical equipment was centered around Medical Depots which performed high level maintenance in Depot Shops and sent personnel to individual medical facilities to install new equipment, inspect and diagnose in-service equipment or perform on-site repair. Additionally, the Depot Maintenance personnel when providing on-site maintenance would provide training to the lesser skilled maintenance personnel assigned at the medical facility.

As the course neared completion in September 1948, the students began to anticipate new assignments. Would they get their geographic preference? Would there be time for the family? Regardless of their desire, assignments were made and duly announced. Capt. Anderson received orders to report to the San Francisco (California) Medical Depot as his next post of duty. At course completion, he returned to South Carolina, collected his family and began the long cross-country drive to California.

On October 1, 1948, he reported for duty at the San Francisco Medical Depot. The Depot was transitioning from a six story, brick building located on one acre at 1855 Folsom Street in the commercial section of San Francisco to large warehouses located at the Oakland Army Terminal across the San Francisco Bay. This relocation was occurring without interrupting its mission support to the western United States and Alaska.

Capt. Anderson was assigned duties as a Medical Equipment Maintenance Officer, a position he filled for most of the next 33 months. As described earlier, the medical equipment maintenance system placed the most highly trained and experienced personnel at the Medical Depot where the more complex maintenance and repair took place. As needed, Depot personnel traveled to local medical treatment facilities to inspect and install new equipment and inspect and repair on-site equipment needed urgently or too large to be easily moved to the Depot for maintenance. The San Francisco Medical Depot served a large portion of the western United States, Alaska, and Hawaii. The Depot also served Medical Facilities of the fledgling Air Force. The Air Force support had special demands as it was conducting some of the earliest medical and human effects research of supersonic flight at Edwards Air Force Base in Southern California. This required significant man-hours to install many new medical diagnostic items and systems plus many more hours of preventive and curative maintenance which often was on short notice.

Additionally, Medical Depot Maintenance personnel were called upon by higher command levels to participate as members of Annual General Inspection teams. It was on an Annual Inspection to a Dispensary unit in Alaska when Capt. Anderson crossed the path of a young Doctor who some 18 years later would be the Commander of his older son.

In July 1950 Capt. Anderson was called away from the Maintenance Shop to take over managing a portion of the warehousing activities of the Depot. This diversion from the shop lasted for seven months. The transfer to supply management was a precursor to a change that was to come when he would permanently end his days doing hands-on medical equipment maintenance.

On 10 July 1950, a third son, William, was born at Letterman General Hospital, San Francisco. On the following September 4, the Capt. became Major Anderson in recognition of his significant achievements not only as maintenance technician but also as a supply manager.

In July 1951 it was announced that San Francisco Medical Depot and the recently designated Alameda Medical Depot (formerly Pacific Overseas Medical Depot) would consolidate at the Alameda Medical Depot location. In compliance therewith, Depot personnel began the process of moving the Depot's inventory and maintenance operations to a new home in Alameda, five miles from the present location, while continuing to provide their normal supply and maintenance support.

Shortly after the depot consolidation was announced Major Anderson was placed on Temporary Duty with the Army Surgeon General for an unspecified purpose. This Temporary Duty period spanned the deactivation of the San Francisco Medical Depot and activation of the Alameda Medical Depot. During this Temporary Duty, the Major relocated the family back to Panama City. He subsequently made several trips to Washington, D.C. before finally leaving for Germany in late October or November 1951.

Years later the Author learned what this “Mysterious” Temporary Duty entailed and the reason for the secrecy. The author has not found any official record of the story that follows. Its only known source are conversations the author had with Robert and German personnel involved in the recovery of Rhine Medical Depot

In Germany the construction of a permanent Medical Depot facility was nearing completion in Einseidlerhof, near Kaiserslautern, where all the Medical Supply inventories and Medical Equipment Maintenance activities of the several Medical Supply Depots in Europe would be consolidated. As the

consolidation process began it became apparent that a crisis was developing in Germany. Increasingly, basic medical supplies were being ordered for priority shipment from the United States to Europe because in-country inventories of the items could not be found in the new Medical Depot warehouse. The Surgeon General staff foreseeing the impending disaster assembled a group of six officers to replace the Medical Depot leadership. These officers travelled individually to Germany where they assembled **in Heidelberg at the Chief Surgeon's Office**. In late November 1951 they travelled to Einseidlerhof where they relieved the Medical Depot Commander and other key leaders. They then began a rather monumental task of restoring order to the Medical Supply system in Europe.

The first task for the new leadership team was to re-warehouse the inventory and get supplies moving to the hospitals and other medical facilities quickly. They accomplished the task by dividing the US military personnel (from the 67th and 33rd Medical Depots) and the Germany paramilitary personnel (8040th Civilian Labor Group) into two work groups. Each group worked a 12-hour shift. At shift end, the personnel would eat and then retire to the barracks to sleep. This 12 on/12 off routine would continue for about 75 days when the task was declared complete and the Depot could resume normal operations.

The re-warehousing of supplies was just part of the challenge. Another part was documenting the warehouse location and inventory records. Major Anderson was assigned the key role of Chief, Stock Control Division. This part of the Medical Depot organization maintained the inventory records and processed the supply requisitions from hospital and medical activities. As this function was being civilianized to reduce Military manpower needs, it also entailed training German Civilian employees to perform the work.

The civilianization of the Stock Control Division also created an unexpected problem. It was a problem giving Major Anderson the opportunity to demonstrate empathy for others during trying circumstances. To understand the problem, it is important for the reader to visualize the physical situation. The Stock Control Division was housed in a large room filled with desks seating about 40 people. Three small offices were located at one end of the room. Seated at about 25 of the desks were people who recorded supply action on requisitions. Two or three people circulated around the room moving requisitions and documents from desk to desk. Other persons edited incoming requisitions, others edited completed requisitions before passing them to the warehouse to select and prepare the items for shipment, and to the transportation office to prepare shipping documents and to a financial accounting team.

Major Anderson entered the room one cold December morning and detected a strong odor. After lunch, the odor was even stronger. As he walked around the room, he realized the smell **was "Body Odor,"** of unwashed bodies that also emanated from the wool clothing the employees wore. Concerned about the impact on health of the employees he began to inquire about bathing habits and sanitary conditions in the civilian employee homes. What he discovered was most only bathed once a week and others every other week because they either did not have indoor bathrooms or only indoor toilets. With this information he looked around to see if perhaps he could find space for employee showers. Finding such space he approached the Depot Commander with a recommendation to fit rooms with a changing area and a shower area with multiple shower heads. He had already developed a cost and time estimate for the conversions. In a staff meeting the shower recommendation was expanded to include providing

one meal a day in the Mess hall for the civilian employees. The staff meeting ended with approval of the two items included in the expanded recommendation. Refitting the two rooms for employee bathing took about ten days. Within the month following, **the “Body Odor” scent in the Stock Control Division** vanished.

In late 1952 Major Anderson would lead the installation of the automated Inventory and Financial Accounting system used by the Medical Depots in the United States. This System with its Inventory Stock Status report would remain for 25 years until his son arrived to install a new generation **of Inventory and Financial Accounting System at Rhine Medical Depot’s successor**; the United States Army Medical Materiel Center-Europe.

A third part of the recovery was the challenge of creating one unified organization; Rhine Medical Depot, with personnel from two equal military units; the 67th Medical Depot and the 33rd Medical Depot, each of which had been very proficient operators as independent units. The new leadership team was well prepared for the challenge and came with a plan for allocating positions that favored neither unit yet provided for both the individual unit integrity and a unified Rhine Medical Depot. This plan remained in existence with minor alterations until the early 2000’s.

In early December 1951 Major **Anderson was notified that “Temporary” family quarters would be available in Pirmasens after January 1, 1952 and that “Permanent” quarters in Vogelweh would be available in June 1952.** He elected to take the temporary quarters in Pirmasens and initiated the process for the family move from Florida to Germany. The family was delighted that their separation would be ending earlier than originally thought.

The family departed Panama City for New York in Mid-December. Along their route they stopped and visited family and friends in North Augusta, South Carolina and Silver Springs, Maryland, before arriving in New York City several days before Christmas. On December 26 they reported to the processing center at Fort Hamilton. Aboard the SS United States, the family departed New York on 31 Dec 1951 and stopped in Southampton, England five days later. They departed South Hampton about mid-day and arrived in Le Harve, France about dusk.

Major Anderson met his family on the pier when the SS United States docked at Le Harve where **the “Duty Train”** awaited them. An overnight train ride to Frankfurt, followed by a ride in a military vehicle, brought them to their temporary home on the fourth floor of newly constructed apartment building in Pirmasens. The family soon discovered that this new home sat in a sea of mud and construction. As promised, the family moved from Pirmasens to Vogelweh in Kaiserslautern in June after school was out for the year.

By June 1952, the Rhine Medical Depot was operating in a “Steady” state. However, in late 1952 the Army in Europe began to implement and organize “Logistics in Depth” by creating a Communications Zone in France that required resettling theater level support activities from Germany to France. This included Rhine Medical Depot. Four new Medical Depot sites were developed in France and supply inventories began a westward movement from Rhine Medical Depot in early 1953.

In preparation for transfer of the 33rd Medical Depot from Rhine Medical Depot to France, Major Anderson was given a new assignment; Assistant for Supply Operations, Rhine Medical Depot.

In May 1953, the 33rd Medical Depot was officially reassigned from Einseidlerhof, Germany to Fontainebleau, France and Major Anderson moved with the 33rd Medical Depot as its Executive Officer.

The Fontainebleau Medical Depot was located on a former French Army Cavalry post in a town **famous for Napoleon's large "country palace."** The post was compact but adequate for the mission. Fontainebleau was also home to the Allied Forces Headquarters center (later renamed as NATO 's Central Europe HQ). The Medical Depot occupied several large warehouse buildings at the post.

Life at the Fontainebleau Medical Depot had become routine when one day in September 1953 Major Anderson was carrying a box to be re-warehoused when a forklift turned a corner rather quickly and struck the unsuspecting Major in the lower back, pitching him forward onto the floor with the box. At first, the incident seemed insignificant, but as the days passed the Major complained of severe lower back pain. Weeks passed as he was shuffled between the local Doctors and the regional General Hospital in LaChapelle-St Mesmin (Orleans), France.

In May 1954 **the Major's** condition had deteriorated to the point he was undergoing inpatient treatment. About 20 May 1954 the Surgeon General's Orthopedic Consultant accompanied by a Senior Staff Physician from the Chief Surgeon, Europe, made a staff training and evaluation visit to the General Hospital. When these Senior Medical Corps Physicians entered the orthopedic ward, they saw an old friend; Major Anderson. They stopped for conversation and began examining him. The Orthopedic Consultant promptly asked for the x-rays. After examining the x-rays, the Consultant pointed out to **the hospital staff physicians' numerous fractures in the lower back (spine).** The Senior Officers declared that the Major needed Neurosurgical care, a medical specialty not available in Europe at the time, and that he needed to be returned to the United States for treatment in the most expeditious manner possible.

The Senior Medical Corps Officers, having assumed care of the Major, took immediate steps to call the Chief Surgeon, Europe, and inform him of the patient's diagnosis and situation. The Surgeon General's Consultant called the Surgeon General's Office to discuss the best location for treatment and to initiate the evacuation process.

Three days later Major Anderson was transported by US Army Ambulance train from Orleans, France to Frankfurt, Germany, where he was prepared for air evacuation to the United States which finally occurred on 7 June 1954. He arrived at Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston, TX on 8 June 1954.

While Major Anderson was moving through the evacuation system, personnel from the 33rd Medical Depot were aiding the family in packing household goods, delivering the automobile to port for shipment to the US, and making transportation arrangements for the family to return to the U. S. The family was taken by military vehicle to Frankfurt for a flight to New York. After retrieving the family car from the port facility in New York, the family drove to Panama City where the children were placed into hands of Anderson family members. Allene flew to San Antonio, Texas the next day to be with her husband.

By the time that she arrived at Brooke Army Medical Center, her husband was beginning his recovery from a surgery that removed numerous bone fragments from his lower back, the equivalent of two complete spine segments. To hold the patient together, the surgeons used titanium surgical wire.

His recovery was difficult as in addition to recovering from the highly invasive lower spine surgery, he suffered withdrawal symptoms from the addiction to narcotics given him in managing his pain before surgery.

Medical Logistics – The Hospital Years – 1954-1957

By September 1954 his recovery was complete enough for his return to duty. He was assigned **to Fort Lewis, Washington with the Post Dispensary/Surgeon' Office as the Medical Supply Officer** on reporting for duty 23 September 1954. Duty at Fort Lewis was very low key after the duty in Germany and France, but in mid-February 1955, he began to experience severe lower back pain. The Dispensary staff Physician sent him to Madigan General Hospital for treatment. The initial examination on admission to the hospital disclosed that **repairs made in prior year's surgery were now unstable and** additional treatment by the same team of surgeons was required.

The Major arrived at Brooke Army Medical Center on 23 March 1955 by Medical Evacuation Airlift. His new surgery removed more bone fragments and another spinal bone unit. Post-surgical testing disclosed major nerve damage to the legs that would require lengthy rehabilitation. In mid-April 1945, the family who had been left behind at Fort Lewis was authorized to relocate to Fort Sam Houston to support the patient in his lengthy rehabilitation activity. The rehabilitation was quite successful, and he was cleared for duty at the end of July 1954.

On 27 August 1955, Major Anderson reported to his new assignment as Chief, Supply and Services Division, US Army Hospital, Fort Carson, Colorado. While he was back for duty, some rehabilitation support was still required. The Army Medical Department at this time was significantly smaller than it was after World War II. As such, it was a close-knit family of professionals that took care of their own. To ensure that further surgery for him would not be required, the Supply and Services Division was overstaffed with Senior NCOs and Junior Officers. (Most of the Junior Officers were in a training program). With this very capable group and the expanded staffing the Major had no need to engage in strenuous activity.

Life at the Fort Carson Hospital was good for all. Major Anderson was responsible for implementing several labor-saving, efficiency improvements that benefited the Linen Service and Housekeeping as well as training the several junior officers. It was beginning to look like he would be able to complete a 20-year military career at Fort Carson and retire.

The winter of 1956-1957 brought another health crisis when the Major came down with a severe case of pneumonia. The medical staff at Fort Carson quickly recognized that he required specialized treatment and sent him north 90 miles to Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Aurora, Colorado (Denver), where the Army's premier pulmonary specialists were centered. It took several weeks before doctors were able to see any improvement in the patient as they found their drug treatment options were severely limited due to the patient's allergy to penicillin and related drugs. It was only after a new class of drugs known as mycins became available for his treatment in larger quantities in early spring 1957 that they began to see significant improvement in the patient.

During the time Major Anderson was being treated at Fitzsimons, the Commander of the Fort Carson Hospital was doing everything he could to retain him at there. By regulation, he should have

been reassigned to Fitzsimons when it became apparent that he would not return to duty within 30 days of treatment starting. The Fort Carson Hospital Commander however, faced the prospect of operating without a Chief, Supply and Services and chances of replacement seemed dim. Thus, he deliberately delayed any reassignment action. In doing so the Hospital Commander had Capt. Ralph O. Brignon, the senior officer in training, travel two or three times a week to Fitzsimons with the various documents requiring the action and signature of Major Anderson, de facto Chief, Supply and Services Division.

As his recovery continued with rejuvenated strength, the Pulmonary Specialists began discussing what measures could be taken to spare the Major from future bouts of pneumonia. The Department consensus was that the lower two-thirds of the right lung and the lower one-third of the left lung which were heavily damaged from pneumonia scarring should be removed. This would significantly reduce the likelihood of pneumonia in the future and leave him with sufficient lung capacity to remain on active duty. Surgery was scheduled for early July 1957.

The surgery began as planned, but it soon became apparent that this rather routine 2-3-hour procedure would be significantly less routine than thought. As the surgeon began opening tissue to access the thoracic cavity, he realized the patient had very highly developed muscle tissue across the upper back. It took almost six hours to cut, peel back, and fasten each of the muscle layers. Once the Upper Thoracic rib cage was exposed it took only about 30 minutes to reach through retracted ribs to cut away the lung tissue and close the lungs back up. Then began another seven hours of work as each layer of muscle tissue was unfasten, stretched and sewn together. Finally, after over 14 hours on the operating table, the surgery was finished, and the patient was moved into the Recovery/ICU area.¹²

The next day as Major Anderson lingered in the recovery/ICU area it became apparent that something was not right. Yes, the surgery was much longer and more difficult than expected but he should not be having the breathing problems he was experiencing. After more than a week in the ICU, the surgery team reviewed the surgery to try and identify what might have happened to cause the problems being manifested in the patient. At some point in the review, they looked at the anesthesia record. The surgeons were shocked and dismayed at what they saw. The Anesthesiologist for this case was a fourth-year resident. His choice of anesthesia, cyclo-propane, for this surgery was very inappropriate due to its high toxicity to lung tissue. The anesthesia had inflicted first, and second degree burns on the remaining lung tissue. Even though they could get him over the tissue burn, the Major would most likely no longer possess the lung capacity required to remain on active duty. The Medical and Surgical staff at Fitzsimons immediately went to work to help the patient's lung recovery, all the while pondering the next step.

Sometime in mid-July, Capt. Brignon arrived on the ward to see the Major and found some of the Medical staff huddled in hushed conversation. Moving as close as he could without being noticed and straining to hear their words, he soon realized the doctors were conducting a Medical Board, the first step in the medical retirement process.¹³

Capt Brignon's reaction was immediate. As quickly as possible he moved to a phone and called the Fort Carson Hospital Executive Officer and informed him of what he overheard from the medical board. While Capt. Brignon returned to Robert's bedside to accomplish his tasks for the day, the Executive Offer and Commander of the Fort Carson Hospital were busy calling to mobilize a variety of efforts at Department of Army level. The Commander spoke to his old friend and comrade, LTG

Leonard D. Heaton, The Surgeon General, seeking his assistance to delay the Medical Retirement process until Major Anderson, who had been selected for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, received his promotion. LTG Heaton assured the Commander he would delay the Medical Retirement process and would also visit with The Adjutant General about speeding up the Lieutenant Colonel promotions.

Meanwhile, the Executive Officer was speaking to the Surgeons General's Chief of Logistics and the Chief of the Medical Service Corps about replacing Major Anderson and/or transferring the officers in training. The Executive Officer assured them that Capt Brignon could replace the Major and should remain at Fort Carson as such.

The actions of the Commander and Executive Officer were more than rewarded when LTG Heaton called and assured them that Major Anderson would be promoted in August 1957 regardless of what was called for in the official promotion forecast. The Medical Retirement package for the Major was somehow misplaced at the Office of the Surgeon General and did not receive the necessary approval until sometime in September 1957.

On 22 August 1957 the Commander and Executive Officer of the US Army Hospital Fort Carson accompanied by Capt Brignon (the newly appointed Chief, Supply and Services Division) traveled to Fitzsimons General Hospital where in an afternoon ceremony they pinned Major Anderson with the silver oak leaves of a Lieutenant Colonel.¹⁴

On 6 October 1957 Lt. Colonel Robert M. Anderson was formally transferred to the Patient Holding Detachment at Fitzsimons General Hospital. The following 17 November, he was medically retired from the US Army with a 70% permanent disability.

So ended the active Military Service of Robert M. Anderson. However, the life that came after the Army lasted far longer than the three to five years that the doctors expected.

A Lifetime after the Army

At the time of Robert's retirement from the Army, the advice the doctors offered on the best place to live his remaining years the most comfortably was:

A location that 1,000 to 3,000 feet elevation where there were four distinct seasons and the winters were not too cold and the summers not too hot. They all agreed that the Ozark Mountain area of Arkansas and Missouri was the most promising location.

In November and early December 1957, newly retired Robert took a road trip to Northwest Florida to visit his brothers and sister. On the return drive to Colorado, he spent two weeks exploring different locations in the Arkansas and Missouri Ozarks. Of all the places he visited, he thought that Northwest Arkansas in Benton or Washington county looked like the best location. He documented his explorations with still and motion pictures. In the week between his return to Colorado and the beginning of the school Christmas break the family reviewed the still and motion pictures and concurred with his notion of Northwest Arkansas.

Christmas break 1957 was a family road trip to Northwest Arkansas. Several days were spent looking at various properties, but only a 157-acre farm located north of Bentonville along Sugar Creek

was the unanimous choice of the family. Before the family returned to Colorado, the farm was purchased, and Mrs. Anderson secured a contract to teach Business at the Bentonville High School beginning with School year 1958-1959.

By the end of the School year in June 1958, the family had sold their home in Colorado, packed their belongings, and left for Arkansas and a new life away from the military.

Starting a new life – Farm and College

Life on a farm in Arkansas was a fantastic adventure for the three Anderson boys. However, it was not all play as a farm demands work all the time. With Robert's health still weak, it fell to the boys to accomplish most of the work. Their youthful energy and exuberance under the guidance of **Robert's** proven leadership ensured the most urgent tasks were completed. Soon animals were on the farm, two **mixed breed pups then two calves, one of which would become the family's milk supply.**

By early August, a sense of normalcy came to life with a new school year. For the oldest son, Robert, Jr., High School football practice started the second week in August. Robert Senior became a student at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville as he strove to complete his Bachelor's degree with the financial assistance of VA rehabilitation funds. School started the last week of August for his wife and the children.

Robert graduated with a Bachelors of Arts degree from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville on 26 January 1961. He was a good student with high academic achievement and received recognition through initiation into a national History Fraternity.¹⁵

First Post-Army Job

With the completion of a college degree and more robust health, Robert felt he was prepared to return to full-time work. The Bentonville Chamber of Commerce had seen some growth in membership in the late 1950's and was ready to try its efforts at more economic development. With encouragement from the City of Bentonville, the Chamber of Commerce was seeking a full-time Association Executive and Economic Development person. A retired Army officer appeared to fill the need well and Robert was hired in February 1961.

The Chamber of Commerce Executive position suited him well. His congenial manner, broad knowledge and depth of subject proved to a most effective choice. He was able to attract several small businesses to Bentonville that brought over 300 jobs to the community in just three years. His astounding ability to meet with people and establish a rapport almost immediately was his most effective tool for economic and community development. His open mindedness and truthful honesty in relationship allowed him to develop a substantial contact base within the Chamber of Commerce arena, state and local government and the state and local political apparatus. In a state that was overwhelmingly Democratic he was masterful at keeping his more Republican ideas under wraps to the public.

The upshot of his ability to work with all sorts of different people and political thought was that shortly after coming to Arkansas and as a result of military service connections, he met and developed

a steadfast relationship with Winthrop Rockefeller, a transplanted New Yorker, who would become the first Republican Governor of Arkansas. He also was on a first name basis with the then Democratic Governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus. Governor Faubus and Robert spoke almost weekly for a quarter hour or so as the Governor sought information to keep his finger on the local pulse. Both Faubus and Rockefeller knew that Robert was talking to others on a regular basis, but they accepted it because they trusted his sincere honesty.

By mid-1964 Robert had the economic development bandwagon for Bentonville starting to really gain momentum when the Chamber of Commerce Board convened in the group's office for a meeting. A topic of concern was the rapid growth bringing too many new people to town **threatening the local's** control of business. Consequently, they thought Robert needed to slow down his business recruiting. Before the week was over Robert submitted his resignation to the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

The Newspaper Experiment

Using the many contacts developed in his time with the Chamber, Robert immediately began to organize financing to pursue a venture he had been cultivating in his mind for many years; publishing a newspaper. His newspaper would not just report news, it would be a voice for more Republican ideas **and what is today looked at as being “conservative” views. It took several months to organize the** financial backers, decide on the technical publishing details of format, frequency, and operating **methods. Finally, in April 1965, the idea came to fruition when the “Benton County Observer” began** publishing weekly on Wednesday (one day earlier than the long-established Benton County Democrat).

As an idealistic venture the newspaper was successful as it brought a vast array of new ideas and thought to the people of Benton County. As a business however the newspaper was less than successful. After only two years of operation the newspaper ceased publication, sold its equipment and furnishings, and became another footnote of history. After the four and one-half years of working full time, Robert's health had begun to visibly deteriorate, and the fortunes of the newspaper had seriously negative forces on his health.

In retrospect, he and others came to see the “Observer” as about a decade ahead of its time. By the mid 1970's the ascendancy of Winthrop Rockefeller to Governor of Arkansas and the election of Republican John P. Hammerschmidt, from Harrison, Arkansas, as the Arkansas Third District Congressman to the U. S. House of Representatives shook the long dominate Democratic party to its **very roots. Hammerschmidt's defeat of** Democrat Jim Trimble, a fixture in the seat for almost 30 years, signaled the true beginning of a rising second party in Arkansas and advanced the view that being a Republican was not bad.

After closing the newspaper Robert took some time to refresh and restore. He had as primary activities gardening and playing golf. He and his wife also made use of every opportunity to go fishing. He sold the farm to Cooper Communities, one of the businesses he had recruited when with the Chamber of Commerce. He then purchased a smaller farm southwest of Bentonville near Cave Springs.

In late 1967 Robert made one of his frequent trips to Northwest Florida to visit family. On this trip he also visited with a classmate from his days at Walton High. This visit would bring another change of direction for this life.

Florida Healthcare Jobs

The former classmate from high school was a Physician practicing in Crestview, Florida, located in Okaloosa County, Walton County's neighbor on the west. As their conversation went on, the doctor began to relate the many issues they were having at the Crestview Hospital. The Crestview Hospital was one of three hospitals in the Okaloosa County Hospital District, a public district with a governing board appointed by the Governor. The management of day-to-day operations of the district was delegated to an Administrator. The Administrator's trust level with the doctors in Crestview was very low for numerous reasons. But the most critical issue is that there was no local administrator for the Crestview Hospital as once again the District Administrator's selection for the job had proven to be unsuccessful in correcting the problems at Crestview. The upshot of the meeting was that Robert applied for, interviewed for, and was hired for the job of Administrator of the Crestview Hospital at a considerable salary increase over the Chamber of Commerce job.



Figure 3. Robert Anderson, about 1968. Photo courtesy of Bob Anderson.

Robert undertook this new job because he simply needed the money. The Internal Revenue Service had placed a judgment on him for unpaid taxes from the defunct Benton County Observer. This job in Florida would provide the wherewithal to pay off the tax debt. It was agreed that his wife would stay in Arkansas until the school year was completed and her contract ended.

Robert dove into this new job with his usual tenacity and determination. He quickly discovered numerous cash drains and made appropriate corrections. He also found that the hospital (and district) did not have a collection program for unpaid bills. He searched and found a person to take on the collections with immediate success. His success at Crestview was not viewed kindly by the District Administrator and a running battle ensued from almost his first day on the job. By July 1968, the workplace conflict had gotten to the point that not even the influence and protection of the Crestview Doctors could keep the conflict with the District Administrator from boiling over. At a late July meeting of the District Board, the Crestview Doctors forced a showdown over the District Administrator, who they all felt must be fired immediately. The District Board by a narrow vote chose to not act upon the Crestview Doctors request. Keeping the District Administrator was a bell ringing occasion for Robert. He handed in his immediate resignation.

Robert was prepared for the vote to go against firing the District Administrator and already had a new job lined up with Medi-Centers of America as the Administrator of their newest facility which was located in Leesburg, a short distance from Orlando. Medi-Centers were nursing and rehabilitation facilities and the facility in Leesburg was located across the street from the existing community hospital.

Robert got to work with a newfound zest. The result being that the Leesburg Medi-Center began making a profit almost immediately. By late Summer of 1969, the Medic-Center was licensed as a Specialized Hospital opening additional revenue potential. The entire operation at Leesburg was profitable consistently, month-to-month and this brought Robert very favorable attention within the corporation and in Florida healthcare. Other than some newly discovered allergy issues, it looked like that Central Florida and Medi-Centers of America was developing into a long-term relationship.

In Summer 1971, the Crestview Doctors came calling. The Okaloosa County Hospital District Board had undergone a major change and one of the first actions this new board took was to fire the District Administrator. They were now coming with hat in hand to Robert seeking his return to Okaloosa County to now be the District Administrator. The arguments of the Crestview Doctors for his return were quite persuasive, and he returned to Northwest Florida in December 1971.

In his new role as District Administrator, Robert restarted the bill collection program that had been terminated after his previous departure. He also investigated the high cost of supply at the Fort Walton Beach Hospital and stopped the major theft and diversion of supplies at that facility. He also brought in his financial officer from Leesburg as the District Finance Manager and he made immediate improvements to the billing process and particularly the MEDICARE billing timeliness, improved first time submission acceptance rate and overall a significantly improved MEDICARE reimbursement rate. The final major cost area examined by Robert and his Finance Manager was the contracted Professional Services in Laboratory/Pathology and X-Ray/Radiology. The rates the District paid on these contracts was significantly greater than any hospital or district in the multi-state region. If the contracts were renegotiated to more reasonable levels and the terms of payment tightened to make the contractor bear a portion of the non-payment of patient bills, the district would gain over two million dollars a year.

The contract negotiations were intense and brutal. The Laboratory/Pathology contract was renegotiated first. In the end the Pathologist was given a take it or get out contract. He signed the new contract and went about his daily business without great ado. The Radiology contract was nightmarish. But finally, after some 8 months, the radiologist signed the contract with the reduced fees and a reduction of the gross billing to allow for nonpayment.

During the Laboratory and Radiology contract negotiations, it was discovered that some if not all the Obstetricians were diverting large quantities of supplies and equipment into their non-hospital clinical practices. As Robert began tightening the controls, the Obstetricians fought back by calling political favors from Hospital District Board Members. Finally, in August 1972 a very tired, physically depleted Robert faced a showdown vote with the District Board over some matter that the OB doctors did not support. When the Board, in obvious deference to the OB doctors decided not to support the Administrator on the issue, Robert submitted his resignation.

Return to Arkansas Retirement

In August 1972 Robert and his wife returned to Arkansas; she went back to teaching and Robert began to take better care of himself. As his health returned, he once again enjoyed his passions; golf, gardening and discussing politics. Shortly after their return to Arkansas, they sold the farm and moved into the city of Bentonville to ease his **wife's** daily commute. His wife was also very insistent that the

house in town had to be complete (that is, nothing required to be done inside to make it fit their needs). Robert had to admit that ever since they bought their first house in Colorado in 1956, it and every one after had turned into a perpetual construction project. The only real improvements made to the house in town during the years they occupied were external.

They added a “Florida Room” on the north side of the house with a high ceiling, and six-foot-tall windows on three sides. The room was very light and airy year around, shaded by tall oak trees, the windows were open nearly every hour from early spring to late fall. The previous owners of the house had extended the living space by constructing a kitchen in what was a storage room and adding a window on the east wall. They then converted the former kitchen area into a family room area, but they left all the kitchen cabinets and the sink in place. This resulted in a long room running two-thirds the length of the house on the north side where a dining area was in the west end, the family room area in the center and the kitchen with a small eating area on the east end. Most mornings you would find Robert sitting at the table by the window, reading the newspaper, drinking coffee, and smoking a cigarette.

Thus, they settled into a routine for the next five years. About twice a year Robert would travel to Florida to visit family and attend the Anderson-Broxson Family Reunion each October. He also talked by phone to cousins, nieces, and nephews at least once and often twice weekly. With the end of the school year in May 1978, his wife completed twenty years of service and retired from teaching in public schools. She would continue to teach Sunday School for another decade and a half. That spring, she also filed as candidate for Delegate to the Arkansas Constitutional Convention to held in January 1979. With school out and her election as a Constitutional Convention Delegate they took a long-planned vacation to Europe.

The European vacation was really a “trip to see the grand children” as their oldest and youngest sons were both stationed in Germany with the US Army. Robert and his wife were joined on the trip by their longtime friend Ralph Brignon and his wife, Norma. The visit with their oldest son was also a bit nostalgic as the oldest son, Robert Junior, was assigned to the successor unit of the Rhine Medical Depot where the son was assigned to essentially the position as his father, just twenty-five years later. During the time with Robert Junior, Robert Senior was received by the unit as a Distinguished visitor with the full unclassified Command Briefing followed by a tour of the facilities and a midday reception. During the tour, numerous long tenured German employees took extra time to greet this former member of the Rhine Medical Depot. The midday reception became much larger than anticipated when a very large number of retired German employees came to greet their former comrade. The visit even got a half page story and picture in Stars and Stripes.

Robert and the wife spent ten days visiting sights in England and Scotland (including playing 18 holes at the Royal and Ancient Golf Club at St. Andrews) then returned to Germany for a few days before winging back to the United States.

Upon return from Europe, Robert set about his usual routine. In November and December, he accompanied his wife on several trips to Little Rock to find temporary living accommodations for the Constitutional Convention. They found an apartment only minutes walking distance from the Capitol **Building and minutes from St Vincent’s Hospital.**

January 1979 opened with Robert and Allene in Little Rock to attend the Eighth Constitutional Convention of Arkansas. It was not all work as there were several social gatherings during the convention for Delegates and Spouses. During the third week of the Convention Robert began to experience some chest discomfort and described it as it was only a little more than his normal discomfort level of pain. On Friday evening Robert complained of severe chest pain. A call to 911, brought an almost immediate response. The trip to St. Vincent Hospital Emergency Room took less than five minutes and he was placed in the hands of some of the best Cardiac specialists in the state. Robert had had a full-**blown cardiac arrest. Fortunately, the proximity to St Vincent's Hospital** minimized any heart damage. After a few days and nights in the hospital he was released with a variety of instructions pertaining to eating, exercise and smoking (the no smoking instruction was ignored). At the conclusion of the primary session of the Convention, they returned home to Bentonville.

Life after the heart attack was very much like before the heart attack. Robert did take on a new responsibility when he was appointed to the Benton County Public Facilities Board. This Board had a primary mission of financing the construction of housing for low income and lower middle-income families as well as various public building and structures. Beginning in 1980 the number of trips undertaken each year to visit children and grandchildren grew as the sons in Germany returned to the United States, Robert Junior to Maryland and William to Florida.

In July 1986 Robert Junior retired from active duty with the Army and returned with his family to Northwest Arkansas. By late July, Robert Junior had his family settled in a rented house in Bentonville and anticipated his start in Graduate School at the University of Arkansas.

On July 27, 1986 Robert Senior had an extraordinary day of golf. He had a winning morning with the Men's Nine Hole Golf Association and then played eighteen holes with friends in the afternoon. By late afternoon he returned home very tired. After a light supper, he retired to bed for the night. About four AM, he awakened Allene and suggested she call for an ambulance. Within minutes the ambulance arrived and whisked him the three blocks to the Emergency Room. The Emergency Room Doctor was a neighbor and it was he that related this to the waiting family.

As he was being moved from the stretcher to a bed, he turned and said, "I'm dying." With that said, he closed his eyes and breathed not again.

Epilogue

On July 30, 1986, a Memorial Celebration of Life for Robert M. Anderson, Sr. was held at First Baptist Church, Bentonville. The service was well attended with large numbers from the Bella Vista Chapter of The Retired Officer's Officers Association and the **Bella Vista Men's Nine Hole Golf Association**. Also attending were numerous city and county elected officials, along with current and former members of the Benton County Republican Committee.

Immediately following the memorial service, Allene and her two **older sons and her oldest son's** wife, Margot, departed for Florida where another Memorial service was to be held on the First of August at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, near DeFuniak Springs, Florida. His son, William with his family, joined the family for the service. William was living in Perry, Florida where he commanded a Florida

National Guard Maintenance Company and two members of the unit who had met Robert on one of his visits to Perry accompanied William and served as pall bearers at the service. Following the memorial service, the ashes of Robert Marion Anderson, Sr. were interred in the Cemetery co-located at the church. He is buried alongside his parents and five of his six siblings and their wives.

So ends this story. The story of a Walton County Farm Boy who traveled the world, settled in Arkansas but, who in the end returned home to the sands of Walton County.

Sources:

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