

Summer 2009

## Interview of James Szczur

James Szczur  
*La Salle University*

Christopher Spaman  
*La Salle University*

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## FIELD NOTES

**Interviewee:** James Szczur

**Interviewer:** Christopher Spaman

**Interview date:** July 27, 2009

**Interview location:** Christopher's House, 6 Arbour Lane, Sewell NJ

Field notes written on July 27, 2009 and corrected on June 28, 2009

### **The Interviewee:**

Mr. James Michael Szczur was born in the Kensington section of Philadelphia, PA in 1947. He grew up in close proximity to both his grandparents. He was an only child of his parents, who were also born and raised in Philadelphia, PA. Jim, as he was asked to be called during the interview, attended Catholic grammar and high school in Philadelphia. Upon completion of high school, he attended seminary for about 2 years in western PA. He left the seminary and returned home when his father suffered a heart attack. He was drafted into the army in 1968 during the Vietnam War. Jim served for 2 full years, 12 months of which were in Vietnam. After Vietnam, he married his wife Kathleen and attended LaSalle University, graduating in 7 years while attending night school. He held a number of jobs during the course of his career including an audit manager at Mechanics Savings in Loan, an internal auditor at Sunoco, and an IT specialist at EDS (formally Towers Perrin). He moved to Pine Hill, NJ in 1971. His two children were born in 1977 and 1980. The family moved to Washington Township, NJ in 1981, which is where they reside today.

### **The Interviewer:**

I, Christopher Spaman, (b. 1979, Woodbury, NJ) grew up in Washington Township, NJ. I earned a BA in history & political science from Rutgers University in 2003. I currently teach European & World history at Williamstown High School in Monroe Township, NJ. I am pursuing my MA in History at LaSalle University and hope to teach at the collegiate level one day. I reside in Mantua Township, NJ, with my wife Christina.

### **Background:**

Mr. Szczur is a family friend and a war veteran. I used this opportunity to learn more about his family and military background to enhance both my own knowledge and to record a veteran's story for the Veteran's History Project through the Library of Congress. I also did not realize until the interview was taking place that Mr. Szczur is a graduate of LaSalle University, which fits perfectly into the secondary category of interviews being conducted by my peers. Mr. Szczur was a very willing to participate

and was obviously a very proud veteran. He did provide a disclaimer to me that during the interview he may not be able to answer all my questions in regards to his time in Vietnam. I informed him that he need only disclose what he wanted to in order to put him at ease. I asked him if he would mind sharing his stories with my classes during the course of the year and he responded he would be delighted to. I enjoyed our conversation and look forward to seeing him at our next family function.

### **Description of the Interview:**

Mr. Szczur arrived promptly at 10am on Monday, July 27, 2009 to my home at 6 Arbour Lane, Sewell, NJ. I offered Mr. Szczur a cup of coffee and donuts as we chatted about the progress of the Philadelphia Phillies. I also showed him around my house, being that it was his first visit.

After about a half hour we decided to start the interview. Mr. Szczur was wearing shorts and a polo shirt with a VFW logo on it. The interview took place at my kitchen table. During the course of the interview, Mr. Szczur did bang on the table when he got excited in order to emphasize his points. I also took notes by hand, which you can hear in the background of the audio tape. The interview ran for about 2 and ½ hours. We took two breaks during the interview. The first occurred when the phone unexpectedly rang. I disconnected the phones and we continued about 5 minutes later. The second was about half way through the interview. I offered Mr. Szczur a bottle of water and we resumed about 10 minutes after breaking.

Mr. Szczur had either a cold or allergies bothering him, so he coughed now and then during the interview. These coughs and subsequent dialogue related to his coughs were left out of the transcript.

At about 1 pm we finished the interview. I invited Mr. Szczur to lunch; however he respectfully declined, stating that he had a landscaper coming to his home to do some work. I thanked him for his service and for his time. He filled out the appropriate paperwork required by the Veterans History Project and then left. I followed up with a thank you card and a copy of the transcript and audio recording of the interview, which was sent to him in the mail.

### **Note on recording:**

For recording, I used my *Sony 512MB Digital Voice Recorder, ICD-B600* on battery power. The 2 AA batteries were sufficient for the entire interview and I did not need to replace them. Upon completion of the interview, I used the included USB cord to connect the recorder to my HP Mobile Workstation and downloaded the audio in the form of a MP3. I used a *Memorex CD-R (700 MB)* to store the interview transcript, questions, and field notes. I used the included software, *Digital Voice Editor 3*, to transcribe the audio at about 75% speed. I then listened to the audio at regular speed to ensure the accuracy of the transcription.

## **Editing the Transcript:**

My editing decisions included:

- 1) Omitting words such as *um, ah, eh, okay, & you know* from the transcript.
- 2) Using a dash (--) to indicate a pause or change in dialogue.
- 3) Placing a time indicator on the top of each page.
- 4) Using quotations ( ‘ ’ ) to indicate recalled speech.
- 5) Using italic for proper nouns related to movie titles or businesses.
- 6) Omitting some repeated words from both the interviewer and interviewee.
- 7) Using brackets [ ] to indicate information pertaining to gestures, breaks in the interview or any other material I felt was necessary for the reader to be aware of.
- 8) Using empty brackets to refer to my inability to decipher what was said.
- 9) Using parenthesis ( ) to indicate what the interviewer or interviewee I believe intended to say but may not of said.
- 10) Eliminating some false starts.
- 11) Choosing to use the proper English for words such as “because” instead of “cause”
- 12) Choosing to include contractions such as don’t or they’re to ensure the authenticity of the dialogue