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Armando F Sanchez Production

The Cold War: Living Under Its Shadow

Guest: Armando F Sanchez, CEO, Armando F Sanchez Production

Interviewer: Carolyn Clark, Ph.D.

July 21, 2021

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Text of the interview:

Armando F Sanchez

Armando F. Sanchez is CEO of Armando F Sanchez Production and an Oral Historian on Espionage. His New Media global broadcasting organization produces webcast and podcast programs. He is in his 6th year as a lecturer on cruise ships throughout the world. His lecture topic is “Espionage During the Cold War and Its Global Impact”.

Carolyn Clark, Ph.D.: Hi, my name's Carolyn Clark, and I'm here today to interview an extraordinary person named Armando F Sanchez. He is a well-known oral historian and expert on espionage during the world of the Cold War and its global impact. This is something that we are looking at from a personal perspective. I hope you enjoy it. I won't be asking questions that aren't curious ones, and I'm doing this for the public so we can all have a sense of where he came from, where it all started for him, and why his passion for Cold War history has carried him so far. So anyway, we'll start with saying hello to Armando Sanchez. If I may just go through a bit of his bio, he's also the CEO of his own media company Armando F Sanchez Production, and he has a global media outreach. Also known is that he takes cruises quite seriously. Not cruise missiles! Here he's done that in his past, but this time, cruises are where he goes to tell his story. Let's get started, Armando; I see you're on the beach there. You've chosen a background that suits you. Tell me about it.

Sanchez: Well, my wife Trini and I have traveled to all seven continents, and there are some favorite places that we have, and Chile is one of them. It's so remote in many ways, yet the people are wonderful. So I took this image as a reminder of that area. There are so many places around the world that I'm overwhelmed and always in awe of how pictures can never do it justice. You have to go there.

Clark: That's what I'm looking forward to, and for today, we are on just the cusp of 2021, where things are turning, and some places are becoming more accessible after Covid. We're looking back at some disturbing things growing up to people of our generation. I'm almost the same age as you. I will say no further, but I am a child of the 1950s. I think these things we have in common have threaded the eye of the needle for this interview. I'd like you to tell us about your background, mainly how you did two things simultaneously. You managed to keep secrets for so many decades as a child growing

up, and you also managed to unleash them in a good way; at this time, when it's time to look back and figure out what the Cold War was all about, is it still around.

Sanchez: I'm going to work backward. Are we still in the Cold War? Yes, the second or the third one. We are moving into a different era, but it has further implications. So let me go back to the other one, the original cold war 1947, if you will, to 1991. It's a story that binds all of us on the planet because we all experience that no matter where we are.

Some were closer to it than others, those in the United States, those in the Soviet Union. Those in Europe felt the brunt of it. You know, and it's not a history that we see in the books like the Roman history or, you know, Carthaginian. This is a history we lived, though we experienced it, and in some ways, people have begun to forget what happened. Case in point, I still remember throwing ourselves under the desks to practice nuclear attacks.

Now I always remember the tables we went under were wooden, so that wasn't going to help, and we were in San Diego, and the reality was if we were hit, we were never going to know. So you see, I also ran into someone in Michigan, and they said that back there, what they did was put the blood type on their arms and tattooed them on the children. I didn't know that until recently. I mean, so the stories are very personal, and I want to help people awaken the stories of how they were involved, how they were impacted, a lot of the choices you hear much media saying, you know, you have choices about your life. I always think I remember thinking the probability of being drafted was very high, so it limited my options of what I thought I could do in the future. It impacted my family. I was probably being drafted, my father in the war, and people who died. People that worked as part of the Cold War projects don't even know they did it. I'm trying to help people sort of untethering all those bits and pieces, and people are coming to grips that they have family members who were part of the war, part of the espionage war, or the armament war that they didn't even know. So I'm trying to get them to share their stories and be acknowledged.

Clark: Excellent, this is how I see it coming from the ground up. This is the way you take it, one person at a time and listen to their stories, and I'm listening to yours right now. I think it's fascinating. I have a little background from things you've communicated through email with me, but you also have the expertise and an understanding of a specific time. I think you should just be able to tell us what that particular incident was that affected you as a child. I, too, remember hiding under the desks in our elementary school and always where our Girl Scout meetings were in the basement of the elementary school; we had the nuclear logos on the walls, this was the fallout shelter, and my father even built a fallout shelter, which you told me it was worthless which I now understand. I want to know more about that. But in the meantime, tell me what specific incident you would say was the most impactful for your childhood that made you realize that something big was going on.

Sanchez: The story I tell is that my father when I was six years old, my father quickly left home. There was no anger, there was no discussion, and there was no turmoil that built up. For example, I thought, "Oh, my father left because he got angry with my mom or vice versa." No, he's just sort of gone, and if he said goodbye to me, I don't remember it, but it was like something vanished in my life and left me very open. I loved my dad dearly; I hung out with him a lot. Suddenly, I didn't see him for a very long time, and I couldn't quite word it to ask, "Where is my father?". My mother said, "well, he'll come back. He'll come back," which lasted for almost two years. While he was gone, one day here and one day there, I would receive postcards from different parts of the world and many of them from the United States, from my father saying, "Thinking of you, I miss you, and I hope you're okay." I would get these postcards randomly. I never knew why I was getting them, where he was, no matter what I asked. I couldn't get an answer for it even when he finally came back two years later. I remember the exact day he walked in at the precise moment. I saw him again, and he said: "I'm not

leaving again.” You know, he never could tell me what he did. He gave me innuendos; he would sort of make faces he said, “Well, I hope you got my postcards.” I said, “yeah, you know I take them to school, and everybody's said, wow, this is great. Where did your dad send them from? What was he doing? and I said, “I don't know.” But as time passed, my father said to me “you know I'll share with you as time goes on. I'll talk to you in little bits and pieces, but you can never share what you hear.

Clark: “Imagine, you can never share what you hear.” That's what his words were “never.”

Sanchez: My father would say, “Never share what you know. If you have someone coming up to you and asking you what you know, lie to them, give them a make-up answer, or say you don't know. Whatever you say, it's okay with me, but you know it's for a good reason. Just go ahead and do that”.

Clark: Wow, and that's amazing to me that you know there was this trust in this child of six seven eight years old seeing him very seldom and with all of this mystery involved. Having all this background, knowing at that time very little, but just trusting and learning to be quiet about someone. That's a great deal of burden for a child.

Sanchez: Yes, it was the culture of the time, and I wasn't the only one. I don't know of others per se, but I'm sure there are others where the fathers and the mothers told the children, “You know if you see this, if you hear that, if you learn this keep it to yourself, don't ever point it out. Ignore it”. And it had to be, that was the way it had to be done, and there was no choice at that time. We were curious. We wanted to know, but we were told not to tell by the same token. So you know it evolved in time.

Clark: That's a kind of double vision that children have a wonderful sense of what's true and what's dangerous. I always feel like that quote, “out of the mouths of babes, wisdom rushes in.” It's an old saying that you know children tell the truth, and when you're that young, you have to be hushed about it and find out later what happened. I know that you mentioned it's open to discussion. Now, it's not something you can't disclose. This whole thing ties in with the concept you use the Broken Arrow. The Broken Arrow, which I think you should refer to in terms of your relationship with your father, was brought up by these Broken Arrows. In a sense, can you tell us a bit about that catchword and how it fits in with something that happened in 1957?

Sanchez: Yes, Broken Arrow. Broken Arrow is a statement it was a general statement that was not well known at the time. It says there was an accident with a nuclear armament item, Whether it be a missile or a bomb, there was an accident without knowing precisely the details of that time, and the very first broken arrow which happened to be a B-36 Convair, a bomber which my father was part of the company, and he had excellent security clearance. The plane flew over Albuquerque (New Mexico), and an accident occurred. Somebody pulled the wrong switch, and the bomb dropped right out of the plane! It busted the doors open, and it landed, and it exploded, but not the central core, just the outside of it. It was in a remote area. Well, that caused a massive panic! Not so much that it had dropped, but that other planes were in the same situation, and it could happen again. Thus my father was called in practically overnight. The story has a little bit that he was immediately picked up by the military when he crossed to the United States side, because we lived in Mexico, and directly he was taken away to wherever he had to go. He spent the two years off and on in different places of the world, visiting the planes and ensuring that the system would function correctly again. It did happen in other aircraft as well, but that was his job as part of the team of seven, to travel around the world and to be able to undo and correct that problem.

Clark: Wow, and when you said the bomb dropped, it was a nuclear bomb, but the outer shell was all that was ignited; it wasn't the full ignition?

Sanchez: It was thermonuclear, one thermal nuclear bomb can be a thousand times more potent than the Hiroshima bomb, so I never tell people. Someone asked me, "Well, did it explode?". I said there'd be no Albuquerque in New Mexico if it had. But it's one of several stories. Six different bombs were lost, dropped, and recovered, and it goes on and on, and people are not aware of that.

Clark: Only recently have I been aware of it, thanks to you guiding me to this website, "32 Arrow". It's called Broken Arrows. Is that what I saw in the most recent article, but there are others? But the one that was May 22, 1957, was the same time my father was going to Russia; I was ten days old or something. He went on a business trip to the steel industry. He was guiding a group of businessmen. He was a professor, and he knew Chinese and Russian steel. He took them to many places across Russia without returning for about eight months. So I had this legend in my family that you know, "I drove my father out of the household." [Laughter] Being the third child, but you know I have to say this whole thing of the absent father and the secrecy of it has a significant effect on children and certainly when it comes out to be true that someone is perhaps working as a spy or something. Still, they're involved on some level with the Cold War. The secrecy of the country was so tantamount. So I think it's an interesting thing when we talk about government transparency now and happiness levels. So how do you feel about the way things are unfolding? I have a thought or two on it, but what do you feel about telling your story and others doing the same how does that affect our sense of governance now and in the past?

Sanchez: Well, you hear a lot about fake news today. You realize well; this has a historical background to all this. Some are out for safety, and some are just mischievous behavior. You have to know the difference between the two, for those reasons. Also, I think a lot of it is the psyche we live under for males and females. I've run into individuals whose parents were in the espionage world, and the children were impacted. I have heard stories the other way around as well. I think overall; it is what it is. I can't change history, but I think one of the things that I find in my mission is to bring their stories to the surface, whether people tell them to me or they tell them amongst themselves, and at the same time learn to appreciate the background of how it impacted them and honor the people that did these projects, that no one knew about. They were doing it for you. They were doing it for, you know, many situations. They were participating in something huge, but because they never told their story, it takes away the respect we should have for these individuals. Then things come more into focus, and they say, "now I understand why he or she did this or did that or why they're this particular personality." It wasn't just out of the blue. They were impacted in some ways. I can think of two nurses who never told their stories about being in Vietnam. When I heard their story, I was floored. Did I think, my gosh, has anyone ever listened to these stories? They said no, it was the first time they were sharing it. Their security clearance was probably at the level of the President of the United States because of the projects they were handling. Thus I found it a travesty. It moved me a lot that they had so much to share, and no one knew about it. So this is just a list of many individuals that I think we should honor in these silent intelligent gathering services. They did this fantastic work, and the secrecy did not allow us to recognize them.

Clark: You know that is so true of so many people. I'll have to be telling you off the record some of the things that went on in my past family history. Generations were in service to the country through the Red Cross when they weren't allowed to be in the Army. They were too old. One particular person, my grandfather, is interesting because you're talking Cold War, yet people who were 55 were engaged in this period. 55-65 great minds all the way through. It wasn't just a young generation. It was across

many. So I think that when you look at these stories, and you mention Vietnam, we think, “oh, that wasn't part of the Cold War,” and yet there are so many similarities within the whole pattern. I can't imagine people isolating and calling this Cold War just one period and that once the Berlin Wall fell, it's over. You know it wasn't that way, and it still isn't.

Sanchez: It was categorized that way, but you realize if you take incidents in bits and pieces, i.e., Vietnam War disconnected from Korean War, disconnected from and entering Afghanistan; many things don't make sense, but if you take them all together and you find there is a common thread between all of it. That one led to the other led to the other. Then the whole package starts to fall in place, which happens here. Now, let me point out for a second, as you said at some other time, I would venture to say that your father, while he was in China and Russia at that time.

Clark: He couldn't get into China.

Sanchez: Okay, but he was in the Soviet Union, so chances are he was doing a certain amount of espionage work. Whether he knew it or not, it is a different category. But the chances are that because of that period, most people were involved. We're in the country; we're doing a certain amount of investigating.

Clark: He was researching and carrying on with a group of businessmen, and then again when he came back. He was told he couldn't publish his work, and he was furious about that. So he was going, and he must not have known that he would be in that boat because he didn't want to spend eight months of his time even away from me.

Sanchez: Chances are he wrote reports, and they were taken from him. Then he was told he could not publicize them.

Clark: And that was partly because of the McCarthy Era, and the business people were afraid that they would be affiliated with that hatred with the McCarthy Era. Everyone was being accused of being a communist. So you know, there was a lot, not everyone, but a lot, of people, was suffering. Their careers suffered terribly, and so I believe that there was a decision made higher up that he wasn't allowed to carry on with his research in America at the time.

Sanchez: And yet this is what I'm saying. We benefited from getting that research done.

Clark: Right! Someone did!

Sanchez: We did! If we learned what they could or could not do as a country because of the metallurgy background he investigated, there was a positive reaction to that. Yet again, did we recognize that? I think he knew, but I think he knew what was under the ground that he was providing an insightful service that we needed. When I use the word “espionage,” people think of just spies and 007. Yeah, it's not that; it's much broader than that. It was the purposed intent. It wasn't just pure scientific research, there was a military background behind it, and because of the time, I would say I wouldn't be surprised that it was closely tied to that, and Carol, I want to go back and answer your other question that you raised about bunkers. People were building bomb shelters in the back of their houses. I interviewed someone that put out public information in that area, and we were laughing. What else could we do? The bunkers had to absorb (outside) air. Thus you know the moment you brought in the air from the outside, had there been an atomic explosion, that would have been useless. Number two, the radiation aspect of the new hydrogen bombs permeates the Earth's surface, so once it

goes underground, people are exposed, no matter what, unless they are in a contained box of lead. Then the lead poisoning would kill you, so that's the other problem. The other aspect is that you'd have to stay in this box for about 5-10 years before you could come up. Okay, so that's the other aspect, and then the other thing is that we have E-Bombs (EMP). Thermal nuclear bombs are an old thing, probably outdated in many ways. I'm not sure if you're familiar with EMPs?

Clark: A little bit.

Sanchez: EMP bombs are basically a burst, and it burns up every piece of electronics, and you can't put it back together again. It's all fried up, so you kill people slowly through a long process. Nothing works, nothing mechanical, everything is gone, but the buildings and everything is intact. People would be walking around, but we were instantly sent back to the pre-caveman era. The whole idea of going underground in the hole wasn't going to do very much, so I'm saying. It was counterproductive, but it was a psychological response that people grabbed onto as some kind of hope when ultimately, it was of no use at all.

Clark: That's a very interesting possibility even today; some people are survivalists and such all over the world creating bunkers for themselves. Many people would like to ignore all the advice you just mentioned.

Sanchez: People are free to ignore whatever they want. They're free to believe what they want. Right? The sciences, yeah, the science is that the atomic explosion worldwide would decimate everything.

Clark: So yeah, and I also had a neighbor friend who wanted me to go to Chernobyl with her. She was part of a group that was helping people in Chernobyl. She was a social worker, and she needed a teacher to come with her. Unfortunately, she did pass away from a very unusual kind of cancer. I don't know if it was related to her multiple visits extended visits to Chernobyl, but she gave her life in service to these people. I feel for her, you know, she's gone now, but she was a wonderful influence on me. I didn't make the trip with her because I had young children at the time. I couldn't leave them. But it was amazing for me to see and hear how people in Chernobyl were surviving and how the radiation was affecting everything, and it's not over.

Sanchez: No, not for thousands of years; it's not over.

Clark: Yeah, it's not over. So we look at nuclear these nuclear incidents and the camouflage put into the efforts even now trying to keep things off people's radar, so we don't have to worry so much. But I think that the Kennedy Era tightened the idea of service to the nation; we all had such dedication to President Kennedy. Always the phrase "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country!" and growing up in the 50s rang in our ears. So I think we all knew that the Cuban Missile Crisis was a very real scary thing, but it was more accurate to people like your parents, my parents, as to anyone because they knew the research that was going on behind it and the fragility.

Sanchez: My father and I had a conversation about that issue. I asked him, "What is it that you see from your analysis, given what you've seen over the years?". He said this is the problem with this particular situation; it is everywhere. It could take an accident to start everything. If somebody simply leans on the wrong thing and launches a little tiny missile, it'll show up on somebody's radar that thinks we're being attacked, and all heck will break loose. He also said that we want to believe that you know the leaders are in control of everything yadda, yadda. It won't take much more than a "little" accident, so I started to analyze and study the Cold War Era and precisely that Era. I was shocked to

find that the missiles on some of the beaches in Cuba had no central control. Each could be individually launched, so if someone had fallen and leaned on the right button by accident, they would have launched it. The fact that it did not happen is what I marvel at.

Clark: Yeah, and yes!

Sanchez: You know, all these planes are running around; some were getting shot at. There was a U-2 shot over an island. He says you're walking into a room full of firecrackers, and someone will light a match for a cigarette and blow the place to smithereens. That's the scary part, and it should have never gotten to that point for various reasons. I call it and analyze it from that perspective a failure of espionage. Actual espionage at its highest level does not allow this to come up to this point. It should have been prevented a long time ago, so there were many people to be blamed for bringing the situation to this point.

Clark: And the fact that things can happen once can happen again. As we all know, history repeats itself differently than we expect, but I believe that this “nice” view of espionage is kind of a guardianship, a guardian for the world; I like that you have a positive spin on it like that. That you said, espionage should not let it have happened. It shouldn't have gotten to that point.

Sanchez: That's true; when I do my presentations on the cruise ships on top of other places, I always talk of Pearl Harbor, South Korea, and Vietnam. Many incidents were a failure in the espionage world. It was their responsibility to anticipate. Preventing 9/11 is another one that they were available incidents of information. It's just that the people that were supposed to listen to it didn't heed what they were hearing. Some people were actually in disbelief that such a thing could happen. This brings me to the stories of a couple of B-52 pilots that I talked to. Sometimes, there are just incidents where failure to take responsibility and heed the information is the cause. If an incident hits the newspaper, somebody failed to prevent it, and that's what espionage is created to do.

Clark: When you say an incident hits the newspaper, it's implying that there are things that happen that don't hit the newspaper?

Sanchez: Absolutely! Thousands of situations never hit the news, and whom do we credit? These individuals were credited maybe in some secret room; they were patted on the back, they were perhaps given some money for their work which is fine. I think it's a wonderful reward. But I think the story should be told on a much grander scale, and I'll give you an example of US Ambassador James Sweeney. If you did significant research on him, you'd never find him.

I couldn't find him when the story came to me, but it came from Sandia (National) Laboratories. Thus I recorded the interview with him, and I have the exclusive interview which I want to share. But it highlights what people did to prevent war, and I'll give you just its synopsis. He came up finally, because of a series of incidents, with the “two keys” needed to launch the idea where you see, like in submarines, you need two people to put in two keys and turn them simultaneously. Well, that was his invention which was adopted here in the United States, and they immediately gave that secret away to the Russians. Then they (the Soviet Union) absorbed it and put it into their submarines and other systems. No one knew that, but when I learned the story, I wanted to take him and give him credit and others. So yes, you're absolutely right. There's so much that goes on. That person you know, you have somebody, they'll tell you that this or that happened, the public will never know. Still, we need to recognize the men and women in the espionage world, where they call spying or intelligence gathering, whatever it's called, they also need to be acknowledged.

Clark: Yes, and I believe that it's a thing of safety; over 50 years have gone by, and you have these disclosure statements in general as a writer or as an oral historian, you know certain things you are allowed to say and others you're not, so that helps, time goes by but in the meantime. I believe that there's an old phrase that I like to ask you about. It's a phrase that was brought up in the Roman Empire, and it's essential for politics and espionage in the broader sense it's "who will guard the guards?". It's an old juvenile statement, "Who will guard the guards?" We all need to ask ourselves when we're working with secrecy and things that need to be protected. Secrets that help, and we don't need to disclose something, or it becomes unraveled in a very negative effect. Then, what does that do for the higher-ups? Whom we can trust is the question of who will guard the guards?

Sanchez: That debate is always ongoing, and there will never be resolved.

Clark: That's why it's an old saying, right?

Sanchez: The problem here is that secrecy is counter to the culture of democracy, and presidents have always had to wrestle with that. He says (a president) well, we're a democracy. Yes, but do we do evil things to our enemies? Yes, but we're a democracy. You know, so it's good that it goes back and forth. Individuals are caught in the middle of this. People who are very powerful and have firm religious commitments suddenly find themselves working in an administration or an organization doing precisely the opposite. You know it's very corrupt; you work with very evil people, very dangerous people the possibility of torture and death is continuous. So balancing the religious fervor that one has with the realities of the espionage world the way it is. It's challenging. It's a very complex issue, but there have been periods when the United States has said formally spying on our friends was not "very gentlemen like" of us, and they proceeded not to, and they paid the price for that. It's something that will always be there. The threat of the underworld of espionage is part of our nature. We tend to walk away from it, and that's the part I want to bring back and say no because we're letting go of many people who have done a great deal of fantastic work to keep us all safe. After all, they were at that level, and they have to be acknowledged.

Clark: That's good, and I think bringing up these issues will also help us understand the importance of secrecy in our society today. Particularly in the United States, with much idealism in our background. How do we reconcile these differences of thought? So going back to having the people in your family, their immediate stories. Going back to some of those, I would like to hear more of what shaped you and made you realize there were some anecdotes that you had outlined for me. I want to stress also that your second most fascinating aspect is that you've done so much for the Latino people you are coming in contact with throughout your life. I say "group" in the sense of a matrix of people and that you worked so much with outreach for decades in this. You chose not to go into espionage when you had a door open to that career. Instead, you decided to do wonderful charitable works with the media, and I would like to hear a little more about that.

Sanchez: Some things happen in my life that I'm not happy about. I was recruited. Several agencies recruited me; I mean, I share it just like that, I was recruited by the Mexican drug cartel, the DEA, the CIA, and others. It seemed proper to do what needed to be done, but over the years, I found that there was more to life than just that world, and I needed to do something positive. You know, something that would give me a sense of satisfaction that I controlled. There's so much going on in the world that is so dangerous, negative, and brutal that I needed something to give me a sense of redemption. To feel better about me. Hopefully! Additionally, my father always felt the stress of what he did or what he was working on, yet he felt like this was wrong. As a human, many things were going wrong. But it

was the time. It was the pressure of the incident of the Cold War, so I was delighted to do the interviews, but through the process, I also highlight individuals I have found.

Veterans who have done superb jobs that no one recognized. I started to acknowledge my two uncles, whose work was always very secret. I learned about it more in college. They were rebuilding the aircraft in Laos for the Green Berets, but we remember “we were never in Laos,” so they were there as civilians. You know, again, how my family got caught into all this whirlwind; it's that's a different story. They should be acknowledged because, yes, they did very well. They came out of the war somewhat wealthy because of the process and how things were. But the whole idea is that they couldn't share their labor or contributions, and there are other individuals like that.

The Navajo Code Talkers is another one that I always mention. Thank goodness there's a movie about them to learn their story firsthand of how they contributed to the nation's well-being. When I see people saying, “well, you know, Native Indians should go back to India,” even though that doesn't make sense, the whole idea is that they're at the forefront of contributing.

Clark: Can you please repeat the name of that group that you speak of Navajo for me.

Sanchez: The Navajo code talkers used their Native American [Southern Athabaskan] language because it was secretive. Not even if people overheard them, they would not recognize the language. So the Navajo were using their language to do essential communication. People did not know that if they were going to be captured, the lieutenants, who were constantly following them, had orders to shoot them on the spot so they wouldn't fall into enemy hands. Consequently, we don't think of Native Americans contributing, but this is only one of many stories where they were very much part of it, and it goes on and on.

The group of Japanese-Americans in internment camps here in the US volunteered to go to war and go to Europe. Those are stories I don't want to be lost. Absolutely! This anti-Asia sentiment, you don't understand, let me add one more thing here. Something that I think is very critical, you know, people in the middle of the United States suddenly see Pakistanis or Indians or something putting up a shop. Suddenly, people are outraged that someone's taking away the work. They don't understand that these people were contributing to the nation's well-being, maybe in the espionage world in their country, and then they had to be pulled out and brought to the US for safety purposes. Thus people don't understand that these people are heroes. They're patriots, and you know they were put there for protection so that they could lift themselves, and people think, “Oh, they came here to take away all our resources.” I said quite the contrary they're saving us, so those points nudge me a great deal, and I figure, how can I get their stories further out there so that people understand that these are heroes. They're not just someone who came here to take away anything.

Clark: And this is so true because it's generational too. This is what you talk about family generational dedication. Trying to bring things to light at a particular time is so important when it's safe to do so, and that's important, and now perhaps there are missions we cannot talk about a lot of them that may not be coming to light now and should indeed come to light at the right time.

Sanchez: If we don't bring up their stories, I think we lose part of our history, a large portion.

Clark: Absolutely!

Sanchez: But on a different and higher note, if we don't come to acknowledge the individuals, even on a family level, the individuals who did this work, then I think it is a travesty for the family itself. If I can slip it in there, one story is that only recently, within the last two years, this gentleman told his wife that his job in the Navy was in a very highly secretive project dealing with tapping into the communication cables of the Soviet Union, near the Soviet Union. But his wife never knew what he did until recently. She only got bits and pieces, but she couldn't understand what precisely he did and why he was the way he was. When she finally found the story, and I found out about maybe a month later, she was so overwhelmed with grief that she thought all these negative thoughts but didn't realize what he had accomplished. So if I can help nudge those stories. I've helped several families to be able to bring it up to the surface amongst themselves or others who have said I didn't understand my father, now I know what he meant by this or that, or my mom did this or that, but now I know what they were talking about. I couldn't put the pieces together, and then they say, now I realize, and now I'm taken back. I always thought the most negative about him now; I'm looking at him from a new point of view. All of us have to heal.

Clark: That's so true, and having this story, they say it takes five generations sometimes for things to settle in a family line, five I've always heard three. I know in Greek tragedy, which I'm familiar with, it was many generations before things would be reconciled but would you also mention your wonderful mother and her contribution to your evolution of secrecy in your family because so far, you've been mentioning your father's association if you will tell us briefly about your remarkable mother of yours and a little more about her.

Sanchez: My mother was born in Mexico. She moved up to the border on the Mexican side (Tijuana), and she started working for the Mexican judicial system at the federal level. She did not want to live on the United States side with my father. That's why we lived on the Mexican side. I kept going to the Catholic school on the U.S. side daily when I was a child.

Clark: I want to stop you for a moment there, just to say you were going to two schools, which I felt remarkable, two sets of schools, one child going to two schools.

Sanchez: Yes, my mom said, "You will also go to Mexican school. You're not going to get away with it!" Thus, I would go to night school for kids and weekends, yes, and on Saturdays. Therefore it was, yeah, that was unique, but I'm very grateful for that. So there were public events, social events, and places where personnel from the federal court system would meet. They (lawyers and judges) would sometimes meet in the corner, and sometimes too much drinking went on. They started talking and sharing, and I saw many negotiations in the back rooms because I was running around walking around. They thought I was oblivious to what was going on, but I realized they were talking about very vital things, and some of it, unfortunately, led to violence. The negotiations were going on, and there was no way my mother could plug my ears. It was just part of the household, so, in time, my mother took me aside. I don't think she knew totally that my father had told me not to say anything and be safe. So I've got the same message, but I got it in Spanish. She said, "whatever you hear, never talk about it, never mention it, ever! It was almost verbatim but for a different purpose.

Clark: So, in Spanish, can you say that. Say the quote that your mother said if you have her words, how would you say that. Spanish: "*Si alguien te pregunta, no escuchaste nada, no sabes nada, no entendiste nada, no comprendiste nada. Nada!*" (English: "If someone asks you, you heard nothing, you know nothing, you didn't understand anything, you didn't comprehend anything. Nothing!"). Thus, "nada" was a wonderful word. Therefore, I realized that it was okay to start lying because I couldn't play dumb all the time, I was somewhat intelligent, and I began to make up my own stories. My

mother would come up and pat me. She said, “let's keep doing that.” How often do you get parents to say what a great job you did?

Sanchez: Then I'd go to Catholic school during the day, and I think you know, but I wasn't the only one, I mean, I was other children. I'm sure they were in the same boat as I was. How do we work this out? You had to create a multi-level point of perspective, and this is where I can do this, and there I can't do that, and it's helped me my whole life to understand the different situations. I almost laugh at this, but it's a skill that many agencies liked about me that I could look them straight in the eye and enlighten them.

Clark: That is remarkable not something that many families can bring their children into for the purposes that you had to go through in life, but I also thought it was interesting that your parents were on the same page when it came to telling a story about why your father was absent, and that was to take care of some sick relatives.

Sanchez: Yes, that was the cover story I was given, and I knew my father was an orphan; my mother was an orphan too, so I had to be careful about how I used that story. The thing was that my father continued in the secret aeronautics projects until his later life. Even in his last year, he was working with B-2 bombers. I got to see bits and pieces of black material, and I would pick it up; he'd happen to have it in the shirt pocket, I'd pick it up, and I asked, “What is this?” “That” he'd sort of started telling me, but he wouldn't openly tell me, and he tells me several innuendos; I thought, “Okay, we're still dealing with that stuff,” But he continued, “You'll see this stuff later on. It'll be very popular very soon.” He was always working on that. He also worked on the Gemini (NASA space capsule) project in Burbank, California, and I didn't learn that until maybe ten years later. He said, “I worked on that when I saw it launched!” Then later, I could ask him questions, so I'm very proud of my parents, but by the same token, it put me in a moral dilemma that I had to work out. It did take its toll, but in time it was necessary.

Clark: Sure, and in that time, it is something. May I just ask you to get it straight? Was your father an engineer?

Sanchez: No, actually, he was a technical engineer. He somewhat had a knack for problem-solving, so he was more trained on the job. He was always given titles. He had a stack of certificates that he had earned. He was always a fantastic learner, but his job was always troubleshooting. The engineers would say, “we don't know why it doesn't work,” and then that's where he would come in, and they would bring him in, and he would sometimes even sleep inside the areas or where the planes were, and he'd sit there and study it and look at it and come up with some crazy contraption ideas. He was excellent at thinking out of the box, and I thank him for that because my wife always tells me, “Where do you come up with all these crazy ideas?” They say I guess, that I got it from my father.

Clark: Taking responsibility for the gifts given to you, that's why I mention it, and that's certainly something that you've done as a child. I think it's wonderful. The culture of lying, the Catholic school culture that you were in, and you were bilingual in two schools. Seeing things from a different perspective as a young child has made you a very diverse person and a very wonderful father. Your children do some amazing things now too. Now they're grown, your family is amazing to me, and your wonderful school teacher wife is a gift for keeping you happy and going on cruises with you. You must be feeling at this time. Let's get this out there, and let's see who else will come to you to tell your story, and you can make a compilation from that.

Sanchez: I have to practice what I preach. As I participated, encouraged, or developed other people's stories, I figured I had to do mine. But it isn't my personal story; it's my family's story. It's a story where my family also contributed to the safety of this nation and others that I never knew. I mentioned my uncle. I've got another uncle who did a project part of the Israeli War. His project was very secretive. I don't know what it is about my family, but it permeated between different individuals. I think we all have them. I don't think we all hear the stories, but I'm sure of it in the end; family is like yours. I'm sure, but I believe my life was never dull at the end of the day. I always saw things a little differently because people would tell me something. I'll give you a quick example. I'm sorry if I'm going overboard.

We were in Thailand. My wife and I were on tour, and one of the people with us shared that he was from Switzerland. We were in this one particular bar. We were drinking beers and just enjoying ourselves. He said, "I have such wonderful memories of this place during Vietnam (War)." I started talking with him, and I wondered, "What do you mean?" He said, "I made a great deal of money because we were gun-running through here into Laos and Vietnam." We don't hear those stories where it wasn't all bad for some individuals.

I was on a cruise ship a couple of years ago, and this lady was a very dynamic person; she was in her late 30s and we were enjoying some drinks, and she said you're the lecturer on the ship. I said, "Yeah, and she says, well, I'm going to tell you something that I don't tell anyone else." I said, "What's that?" She shares, "I'm a gun-runner. I'm very good at it." She continues, "I just came back from a country, and I just closed a great deal. I sold much armament, and I'm doing well. So right now, order whatever you want to drink. Drinks are on me". So you know, you meet diverse individuals, and you realize, wow, a lot is going on behind the scenes that you would never think of. Many people in professions deal with this world. It is what it is. I don't make moral judgments about it. It makes life very interesting to learn that there are many perspectives on one issue.

Clark: Well, that's for sure, and when you speak of gun-runners, I usually say, "Let's not go there." Today is national wild horse and horse appreciation day. I particularly grew up with the Colorado cousins on my mother's side of the family, never talking about guns even though I know that there are plenty of them. I find that gun violence across the world and gun-runners, and all of that, is a very dangerous situation today. We have so many more guns than we have people and not needed. So again, I take an issue with nuclear proliferation, guns, and all of that. Yet on the personal level, you can see for yourself that even the quietest people have partaken in something like that, and they're proud because they did a good job. I find it interesting.

Sanchez: Well, thank you, thank you for that acknowledgment, and we'll pass it on to, again, individuals who did a lot of exceptional projects. And please, if anyone's listening to this, if you think you know your family member did something, and even if they passed away, try to put it together and follow the lead. If you do, you'll resuscitate their spirit and contribution. Don't let the story go away, even if it's just kept in the family, but acknowledge it and embrace it because it impacted the family dynamics and how it evolved. Yeah, I'm not always clear on that, but it did affect us by choices and where we lived or decisions we made that people didn't understand. Why did they do "A" instead of "B." If you look back enough, things will start falling together, and people can live off that in a more positive reality.

Clark: That's a wonderful thing. Thank you very much, and if you have one contact piece of information, please put it at the beginning and the end of this program so that people will know they

listen to the beginning and the end best of all. What is the context for getting in touch with you in these kinds of projects, these oral tradition oral historian projects that you have?

Sanchez: Yes, on YouTube, Armando F Sanchez Production, and if you have specific individuals in mind, you will be able to backtrack on there, but you can see all my shows there. I only have maybe 200 shows posted. I've done maybe 2,000 of them over my lifetime, but they're all wonderful role model stories, and it adds to it, and I'm very proud to say that you're one of them on my shows.

Clark: How was I one of them?

Sanchez: Well, I interviewed you, so that shows up posted as part of Armando F Sanchez Production. It's not just production. I know I'm just trying, as they say, just a poet, right?

Brilliant people are more than just poets. Your group (other poets) have a way of confining that we're just over here on the corner, but you're actually at the threshold of most of the mindset of making people aware of many things in our lives, so keep up the great work!

Clark: Well, that's what I'll say for you. You've just said it for me; thank you so much. Thank you very much.

Sanchez: Carol, I enjoyed your questions, and I hope you know the answer more now. Thank you for the opportunity, and thank you for allowing me to tell people to find the stories of your family. It's closer than you believe. The contributions were enormous. Some people still can't talk about it. Help them to at least share their feelings about it. Help them live better. Help them acknowledge their contributions and embrace the contributions they made for the benefit of all of us.

Clark: That's right. Sacrifice comes in many forms. Yes, it's true. Thank you so much. I appreciate this so much. It's an honor to talk to you about this, and I look forward to seeing those other editions coming forth and those in the past on YouTube in Armando F Sanchez Production.

Sanchez: Thank you very much.

