

## **SPENCE ARRESTED IN N.Y., RELEASED BIZARRE INTERVIEW IS NO NIGHT ON THE TOWN**

**Jerry Seper and Michael Hedges Washington Times; Final Section: A Page: A1 Wednesday, August 9, 1989**

NEW YORK -

He must have thought he was still wearing his red-lined black cape, his wide-brimmed black felt hat and his trademark silk handkerchief dangling at a precise angle from his tailored Edwardian-cut suit.

His plain white knit shirt was wrinkled and soiled, with smudge marks on the back and shoulders from a night on a bench in Central Park. His high-top white Reebok athletic shoes were scuffed, his pants rumpled and loose.

With his belt missing, an unshaven Craig J. Spence - the onetime Washington lobbyist of the rich and powerful who is a focus of a federal investigation - kept tugging at his pleated khaki pants to keep them from falling down.

**"Do you know who you are talking to?" he demanded in a loud voice as he moved his back along a wall of a friend's fashionable East Side apartment, his right hand tightly clutching a razor-blade dispenser from which he slid a double-edged blade. "Do you have any idea who I am?"**

So began a rambling, eight-hour interview of Craig Spence, the object of a monthlong search by print and television reporters and agents of the the Secret Service. The interview ran from midafternoon Monday until shortly before midnight.

Federal authorities have been pursuing him as part of an investigation into allegations of credit-card fraud involving a Washington-based homosexual prostitution ring he frequented and possible security breaches during late-night tours of the White House that he arranged.

After an initial and volatile discussion about suicide and a tense moment in a narrow hallway during which he menaced two reporters with the razor, **Mr. Spence decided to hold court to "impart a few words of wisdom" and to "educate the unwashed" about journalism, politics, government operations, life and death.**

"Death, you know, is only painful to the ones you leave behind," he said, congratulating himself on what he suggested was an excellent quote and encouraging the reporters to write it down. "As a matter of fact, I'm looking forward to it.

"At 48, I'll still look good in hell."

What followed was bizarre, highlighted by moments of brilliance and wit, outrageous and obnoxious behavior, unbridled and spontaneous humor, and profound and unrelenting bragging.

**"How do you think a little faggot like me moved in the circles I did?"** Mr. Spence asked, his hand fondling the razor blade like the flesh of a lover. **"It's because I had contacts at the highest levels of this government.**

**"They'll deny it," he said, his voice rising with anger. "But how do they make me go away, when so many of them have been at my house, at my parties and at my side?"**

Mr. Spence's recollections of times past are filled with the names of many of Washington's powerful and those of influential men and women from other countries. Most of the claims are documented in dozens of filings at the Department of Justice, which are required of lobbyists who work for foreign governments.

What they all had in common, Mr. Spence said, was that they used him for their personal gain, and when things went bad, they forgot his name.

**"I can't think of one person who hasn't benefited personally from knowing me," he said. "I had the world at my house, and now they don't know who I am."**

During the interview, Mr. Spence picked continually at his nose and rubbed his finger across the outline of his shabby mustache. He snorted and coughed up mucus. He constantly rubbed his left eye until it was red, and he said his vision was blurred.

He walked from chair to chair in the apartment, staying only briefly in each spot. He pointed, grabbed, poked and pushed at the reporters to make a point or to avoid a question. He intermittently leaned forward to strike out at his questioners and then leaned back in a defensive mode, lowering his body into whatever chair was at hand.

He refused to answer inquiries he deemed "stupid" and said several times he was going to "terminate" the interview, jumping out of a chair to run to the door. He nearly left on one occasion but couldn't figure out how the locks on the sturdy wooden door worked.

Mr. Spence threatened on four occasions to kill himself. He had planned to do so last week, he said, but New York City police had taken away his loaded 9mm handgun. "That's the great terminator," Mr. Spence said. "Just open your mouth and point to the rear."

The only suicide weapon he had left was the white plastic dispenser of cheap double-edged razor blades, which he displayed threateningly. He fingered the dispenser constantly throughout the interview, pushing one of the blades halfway out to create a knifelike effect.

"The man who cuts himself across the veins is looking for help," Mr. Spence said, his right hand moving the razor slowly along his outstretched left arm. "The man who cuts down the vein is looking to die."

He pulled the razor along his arm lengthwise and smiled, then suddenly moved the thin blade to the chest of one of the two reporters and then to the other. There was silence for a few seconds, then he spoke.

**"I am not a person to fool with. You should know that by now," Mr. Spence said.**

His threat soon ended, however, when he remembered he hadn't eaten dinner. A mugger in Central Park, he said, had taken his last \$100, borrowed the day before from a friend, who also had paid off the last \$400 of a \$5,000 bill for three days in the penthouse at the Parker Meridien. His credit charges had exceeded the card's limit, and he had had no cash to make up the difference.

"I felt sorry for him," said the friend, who asked not to be identified.

The friend, in whose apartment the interview took place, later discovered that \$300 stashed in a jewelry box was missing.

Once he arrived at a nearby restaurant, Ronasi Ristoranti Italiano, Mr. Spence's mood changed again. He became loud and demanding, ordering the waiters around with the snap of his fingers and shouting various vulgarities obviously aimed at shocking both the restaurant's employees and its patrons.

He issued cooking instructions to the chef and chastised the busboys for almost everything.

Mr. Spence, a frequent visitor to Italy, found nothing on the menu to his liking. He ordered a special pasta dish with red, white and green noodles - "just like the Italian flag, but you probably didn't know that," he shouted at the waiter. He demanded minestrone soup, but only after being assured that the vegetables in it were fresh.

He complimented one of the reporters for his choice of wines, selected only because it happened to be the least expensive on the menu, and then proceeded to order three bottles of it.

While lecturing those at his table on proper etiquette, Mr. Spence spilled his wine, knocked over his water glass (which flooded his appetizer of baked clams) and blew his nose on the white linen tablecloth.

After ordering chocolate cake for dessert, he berated the waiter because the piece was too small. "I want to see something brown on this white plate," Mr. Spence shouted. "I see nothing here now." The waiter, quite unhappy at this point, cut another piece and returned it to the table. His waiter's benediction, "enjoy," seemed forced.

At the dinner's end, Mr. Spence borrowed \$10 for cab fare to the Plaza Hotel on Central Park South, where he said he had left his luggage. He said he'd be available to continue the interview in an hour.

He disappeared into the night, not to be seen again.

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Photo, Craig J. Spence, By Peter Kolk/Special to The Washington Times

Photo, The Secret Service has searched Craig Spence's Massachusetts Avenue apartment twice to see if his late-night tours breached White House security., By Peter Kolk/Special to The Washington Times