Dr. Lemoyne Anderson has lived a very unlikely life. His unwavering positivity, enterprising nature, and boundless energy have taken him from western Minnesota to battle grounds in WWII to Chicago to Fort Collins, where he built the touchstone of CSU’s campus: Morgan Library.

Born in Wheaton, MN, “the land of the sky blue waters,” in 1923, Anderson grew up during the Depression. He was a self-professed jock, earning 11 sportsmen letters while staying on the school’s honor roll, playing percussion in the orchestra, and working in a restaurant. His education, supported greatly by his mother who was a teacher, was strong, and the idea of college was embedded in him from a young age. While he believes he “had a very pedestrian life,” this foundation took him very far.

Anderson graduated from high school in 1941 and enrolled at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Four months into his college career, he was studying on a Sunday afternoon and turned on the radio for a break to learn that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. “Things were very disrupted in society, very unsettling,” he recalls. He enlisted in the reserve program and was called up to the Army in March of 1942. Anderson fought overseas for 3 years, during which time he made four amphibious landings in Italy and Southern France, was wounded twice, got captured briefly as a prisoner of war in 1944, suffered trench foot, and was promoted to sergeant and reclassified to identify appropriate living quarters for troops. He was discharged on October 1st, 1945, as a sergeant with 3 stripes, two Purple Hearts, and a Bronze Star. About the war, Anderson says “It was a frightful time … but I think it was, all things considered, a good thing that happened to me as far as identifying goals and giving me a perspective I wouldn’t have had.”

After the war, Anderson returned in Minnesota to finish his Bachelor of Arts in History and his Bachelor of Science in Library Science. The GI Bill of Rights funded his education and provided vocational counseling, which is where he was introduced to the world of library science. He remembers at first “[thinking] the guy who told me about it was crazy, but I took some classes and liked it.” He continued to play music and was active in a fraternity.

In 1948, Anderson graduated and went to Iowa State as a faculty member, teaching library science and on the library staff. He was married in 1950 and moved to Urbana-Champaign to continue his education at the University of Illinois, earning a Master’s in Library Science and a PhD in Higher Education Administration, Education, and Information Science. He and his wife, also a librarian, moved to Chicago to help create a University of Illinois – Chicago branch, but then they had the opportunity to come to Colorado for a job. “More than a job, Anderson corrects, “it was an opportunity to inculcate in the community a sense of the library’s and information science’s importance.” As soon as he finished his PhD in 1957, he came to CSU as the Director of Libraries.

In 1957, there were 6 small libraries around campus, with about 200,000 books total. Coming from Illinois, which housed the largest public library in the world, Anderson was passionate about growing the university’s information resources. He started plans to build a new library immediately, traveling all over the country to research other libraries and raising money. It took four years, but Morgan Library was built in 1965, and his next goal was to reach 1 million volumes, which he did a few years later. The university then qualified for membership in the American Association of Research Libraries, which Anderson became president of four years later.
There are three aspects to run a successful library according to Anderson: the collection itself which is the basis of the whole operation and needs to be representative of the needs of the entire university, then you need a facility to house all of this, then you need a staff that can handle all of this. His faculty initially consisted of 20 people, but by the time Morgan Library was built and Anderson was nearing retirement, they had a staff of over 200, with a budget of $8 million to boot! “Night and day compared to when I came,” he smiles widely. “And that’s why I came!”

Along with building the library and helping to establish CSU as a prominent research university, Anderson also served as the president of the Colorado Library Association, the president of the College and Research Libraries, and a chairman of the Research Libraries Group. “One of the greatest experiences of [his] career” was a trip to China in 1979, only shortly after diplomatic relations had been established with that country. He was picked to serve on the delegation by the head of the Library of Congress. He was on the beginning wave of digitalization, but he retired in 1985, before they even had email. Even so, Anderson asserts that the functions of libraries have stayed the same, mainly “selecting information, storing information, and retrieving information.”

Even at 93 years old, Anderson continues to read professional journals and visit the public library every two weeks. He confesses he “can’t just sit and stare into space,” a product of the same energy that took him out of western Minnesota and all over the world. “Academe has been my life,” he says with a proud smile, “and God bless CSU!”