

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
RICHARD PANKE
Submariner, Navy, Peace Time.

2002

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Panke, Richard A., (1937-). Oral History Interview, 2002.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 40 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Richard A. Panke, a La Crosse, Wisconsin native, discusses his service in the Navy as a submariner aboard the USS Redfish. Panke talks about joining the Navy Reserves after high school in 1955 to help pay college tuition, attending boot camp and electronics school at Great Lakes (Illinois), and extending his enlistment to join the Submarine Service. He discusses learning to repair and operate a variety of electronics. Sent to submarine school at New London (Connecticut), Panke comments on having his classes cut short due to holidays and using the escape training tank. Assigned to the USS Redfish (SS-395), he mentions attending the San Diego premiere showing of *Run Silent, Run Deep*, a movie featuring the Redfish. Panke comments on being constantly busy during dives, the depths and time lengths of dives, and identifying ships by sound while operating sonar. He discusses the six months of extensive on-board training to earn his dolphin pin. Panke comments on the Redfish's diesel engines, batteries, and lack of a snorkel. He speaks of the close friendships developed aboard the submarine. Based in San Diego (California), he talks about running war maneuvers in the Pacific, seeing the nuclear-powered USS Nautilus in Puget Sound, and food aboard ship. Panke details a six-month cruise to Japan, holding open-house tours of the submarine, and seeing an atomic bomb museum in Hiroshima. While aboard the submarine, he touches on taking correspondence courses through the Milwaukee School of Engineering, and when docked at San Diego, he talks about spending weekends helping his uncle install solar energy systems in Hollywood. Panke explains how his Navy studies and experiences benefitted his civilian career designing temperature control and energy management systems. He talks about the history of the Redfish and various articles and pictures about the ship he collected. Panke discusses his civilian career travelling to all the University of Wisconsin campuses as a mechanical engineer, troubleshooting mechanical systems, and designing and installing computerized energy management systems.

Biographical Sketch:

Panke (b.1937) served in the Navy from 1955 to 1959. As a mechanical engineering specialist, he worked twenty-six years for the University of Wisconsin System, married in 1961, and eventually settled in Milwaukee.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2002

Transcribed by Daniel Ehn, 2012

Edited by Joan Bruggink, 2012

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2012

Interview Transcript:

- Jim: Alright. This is the 15th of July, 2002, talking to Richard Panke.
- Panke: And you can call me Dick.
- Jim: And I can call him Dick. And the date is the 15 July, I guess I said that, 2002. Where were you born, sir?
- Panke: In La Crosse, Wisconsin.
- Jim: When was that?
- Panke: 6-10-37. June 10th, '37, 1937.
- Jim: What were you doing after high school?
- Panke: After high school for the first year I went to La Crosse State College, which was then La Crosse State College, for one year in pre-engineering. And at the end of that first year I had to transfer away from La Crosse College and I wanted to go to Iowa State because they had a good engineering school, but the out-of-state tuition was too expensive for our family and so I joined Uncle Sam's Navy and went to electronics school.
- Jim: Wait a minute. When you joined the Navy, did you sign up for a four-year hitch or a six- year hitch, or how'd they do it?
- Panke: Um, actually, I had signed up in the Reserves before, I think like right when I graduated from high school in 1955, I believe, that's when I signed up—probably in my papers there somewhere. But anyway, I signed into the Reserves and I had to complete two years of active duty as a part of a contract, and I went into electronics school. Then after electronics school I volunteered for submarines, which meant I had to extend a year for the submarine school and electronics school combination, which I did.
- Jim: Where did you take the electronics school?
- Panke: At Great Lakes.
- Jim: Same place where you had your boot camp?
- Panke: Yeah.
- Jim: And how long was this course in electronics?
- Panke: It was twenty-six weeks, just about six months.

- Jim: Now electronics sounds like a general term, so I need a little more. That involves what?
- Panke: Well, what we were doing was repairing transmitters, receivers, sonar, radar, anything to do with electronics or electricity as far as receiving and transmitting information in the Armed Service. We would repair equipment that was not working and also operate equipment when we were on duty.
- Jim: So you did both? You were both an operator and a maintenance person?
- Panke: Exactly.
- Jim: You did all of those things. That explains why the school was so long.
- Panke: I believe so, yeah. We even built a superheterodyne receiver with the old plug-in tubes.
- Jim: I remember those. Did you enjoy it, the school?
- Panke: Sure, yeah. It was very beneficial for me from a learning standpoint, because I had never studied much in the way of electricity or electronics in my life, to that point. And so that was very beneficial to me, and one of the reasons I extended a year and took this six-month electronics school was that I felt if I'm going to go into the Navy, I want to go in learning something and when I come out I want it to be beneficial for me. And so it did become beneficial for me. Especially from an electronics standpoint.
- Jim: Was it hard? Were there many dropouts?
- Panke: No, there weren't too many. I don't even remember now the size of the class, but maybe ten percent or fifteen percent drop out.
- Jim: Where was this again?
- Panke: At Great Lakes.
- Jim: That's right, you mentioned that. So after that course, did you have an option where to go or did they tell you?
- Panke: No, I had an option; it was either to go on a surface vessel ship somewhere or have shore duty somewhere. It was kinda my choice because this was peacetime and so there was nothing critical going. But I decided, with a friend of mine that I had met in the electronics school, a guy by the name

of Gary Reese from Iowa—I have not seen him for a long time—but we decided to join the submarine service then. So we volunteered for that.

Jim: And that cost you an extra year? You had to volunteer?

Panke: Yep.

Jim: So what was the next step?

Panke: Well, the next step was then to attend the electronics school, which was eight weeks long, and I was in, ah—

Jim: Another electronics school?

Panke: I'm sorry, no, submarine school; [laughs] I'm sorry. An eight-week long submarine school in New London, Connecticut which I attended, and because it was approaching the end of the year when we attended that school and they didn't want to extend it beyond the Christmas holidays, they cut off a week and a half of the school, [laughs] so we got a lot of information jammed into a little bit shorter time period, but it worked out fine. It worked out very good.

Jim: Was that hard?

Panke: The hardest part for me was in the escape training tank. It's a hundred twenty-five feet deep, or high, and you go at twenty-five feet, then you make a free ascent, and fifty feet you make a free ascent, and then you can volunteer to do a hundred feet if you want to, but we were out of time, we didn't have a lot of time, so we weren't able to do that. That was kinda the most difficult thing, the pressure changes on your eardrums.

Jim: At a hundred feet, didn't you need that Momsen lung?

Panke: Then you would have had to have the lung, that wouldn't have been a free ascent. Correct.

Jim: But you didn't do that?

Panke: No, because we were running out of time and so they were trying to cut things out of our class.

Jim: I see. So where did you move to then?

Panke: Well from there, uh, went on leave for two weeks and then reported aboard the USS Redfish, USS-395, which is the submarine I served on then for the next two years.

- Jim: The number again, please. SS—
- Panke: 3-9-5.
- Jim: And that was a fairly new ship?
- Panke: Well, no. It was built in 1944 and it served time in World War II. It was in a couple of movies. The best movie it was in, in my opinion, was *Run Silent, Run Deep* with Clark Gable and Burt Lancaster. And that was filmed onboard the Redfish.
- Jim: While you were there?
- Panke: Unfortunately, those two actors left the submarine after being onboard for about a week or ten days, doing shots for the movie. They left about three days before I reported aboard, so I just missed bumping shoulders with them. But they had the premiere showing in San Diego, which is where we were based when the movie first came out, and Burt Lancaster was there. And we were all there at the movie and got a chance to talk with him and meet him, and that was exciting at that time, certainly.
- Jim: That was where you picked up your submarine, in San Diego?
- Panke: Yes.
- Jim: Now what was that like, going from being a landlubber into something that really was quite different from an ordinary ship?
- Panke: Yeah well, being from Wisconsin in the middle of the country, not near an ocean, being on the ocean for the first time ever was one thing because as far as you could see it was water. And so that was interesting from that standpoint. And then I had spent a lot of time fishing when I was growing up on the Mississippi River, and I spent a lot of time in canoes and in a boat, but never in a submarine. I had second thoughts about it, but you know you're gonna do it, you know it's okay, you know other people have done it, and you do it, and it's done with. And then you get used to it, and it's—
- Jim: And claustrophobia was not a problem?
- Panke: Never. If claustrophobia was a problem with a person, then, number one: they would not have volunteered to join the submarine service; that would be number one, of course. So they wouldn't put themselves in that situation. But number two: the first few days of submarine school, we spent a lot of time with doctors, and psychologists, and psychiatrists,

talking, and they really get into you. And they can detect if you have a fear of claustrophobia or not, and if you do, you're out. You're out.

Jim: They can't have any of that.

Panke: No. And the longest we could stay under was probably like three or four days, and then we would have to come up on the surface and run the diesel engines to charge the batteries, so it wasn't like we were under the water for great amounts of time. But three or four days was long enough.

Jim: What was the first dive like? Was that what you expected?

Panke: Yes, pretty much everything that I ever expected. Based on the pressure changes—everyone is busy because everyone has a job to do. If they're on duty, of course, maybe they're steering the sub, maybe they're opening up some valves or closing some valves, or doing something electrical, switching from radar to sonar, which means you go from one compartment down to another compartment and get things turned on and get other things turned off. It's really a busy time, and in actuality I guess I never really stopped to think about it much.

Jim: In other words, while you're busy doing something, you couldn't really tell how deep you were?

Panke: No, no.

Jim: The sensation wasn't much different at five feet or a hundred feet?

Panke: Yeah, we could have been eighty feet or two hundred feet and we would have never known the difference, really. Our test depth, however, was about three hundred-twelve feet, I think.

Jim: Is that to test the integrity of the boat?

Panke: Yes, yes. If you go below that you are pushing the integrity of the boat and the valves and everything else, so that's why they refer to it as a test depth. The new nuclear submarines, when they dive outside of their port today, they do not see daylight for three months. And their test depth is top secret, I have never heard even what it is, but I'm sure it's probably a couple thousand feet. [laughs]

Jim: I'm sure it is. But when you got down to the test depth there was no creaking or noise, or did you get some of that?

Panke: Sometimes you could hear a little bit.

- Jim: Squeaking?
- Panke: Yeah, just a little bit. And if you were on duty—and when we would dive I would operate sonar—then you could hear the creaking easily. I could hear more than someone else.
- Jim: From your boat though?
- Panke: Yes, only from my boat.
- Jim: Pick up whales?
- Panke: Only if they were thrashing in the water. But we could pick up the engines of other surface boats, the screw noise as it's thrashing[?] through the water.
- Jim: What was the range of that sonar?
- Panke: Hoh, boy. I'm gonna say about, um, a thousand feet maybe.
- Jim: So less than a mile then?
- Panke: Less than a mile then, yeah. Less than a half a mile, probably.
- Jim: Was that hard to learn, to detect what you're listening to?
- Panke: It wasn't too difficult. The interesting thing was you got to learn by listening to the thrashing noise and counting the cycle of that, you got to know what size ship it was and even what type ship it was.
- Jim: Really?
- Panke: Yes. A real small prop making a little tiny swishing noise would be a smaller boat, and you could almost detect if it was a small destroyer or escort or something, compared with a cruiser or a—
- Jim: Just from the size of the screw?
- Panke: Yeah, exactly.
- Jim: The revolutions didn't tell you as much, other than the speed of the craft?
- Panke: The speed pretty much, right.
- Jim: How about direction? Whether it was coming at you or going away?

- Panke: Well, you could tell that by the sound increasing and then you could also see it on the sonar scope, if it got in close enough.
- Jim: Oh, you had an image?
- Panke: Right. But that was just in the starting stages back in the '50s.
- Jim: You'd get *blips*, like radar screen?
- Panke: Right.
- Jim: Now what about your communications when you were down in the depths? Did you have a wire out? A floating antenna?
- Panke: No. No, we never had a floating antenna. I think some submarines did have that, but we didn't have one, at least that I was aware of, while I was on board. So we just had no communications with the outside.
- Jim: I understand that everybody on a submarine had more than their basic task. They had to learn a lot of other stuff.
- Panke: Well, yes. When you first report aboard a submarine you are given six months to qualify as a submariner, which allows you to wear the dolphin pin. That identifies you as a submariner. During that six-month time period—and I have a listing here of the one I went through, and I'm going to give you a copy of—it indicates everything that you have to do, and then an officer goes with you and you do things, and he signs off and he dates it. And it's about a seven, or eight, or nine page thing, line after line, you have to know what every pipe is, every wire, everything.
- Jim: You're on the boat, and he's got his clipboard there—
- Panke: And he's asking you, "What is that?" And you have to know what that is. You've learned it from other people on board, qualified submariners, spent time with it, and reading in the books about things.
- Jim: So when there's a problem and somebody can't do their job you should be able to step up—
- Panke: You'd better be able to do it. If, uh, I'm in the torpedo room and we are hit in another part of the ship and I'm sealed in that torpedo room and we have to shoot a torpedo, but all the torpedo men are not in there, I will have to help shoot that torpedo, so I have to know how to do it. I have to know how to start a diesel engine. I have to know how to switch into the generators to charge the batteries or go from the diesel engines direct to the propulsion.

- Jim: The Redfish was a diesel-powered submarine?
- Panke: Right.
- Jim: Two or four diesel engines?
- Panke: Four diesel engines. Two generators. Fifty-two batteries, twenty-six in the forward battery compartment and twenty-six in the after battery compartment. Each battery, I believe, weighed, I think it was two thousand pounds, so that's about one ton. And they're big, lead-acid batteries that are probably two feet square and—
- Jim: That must add a good percentage of the weight of that boat?
- Panke: Oh it does, it does. They're about two feet square and about six feet tall and all lead, so that adds up pretty quickly.
- Jim: I understand that. When you're under the surface, you go by battery?
- Panke: Yes. Always. Except—
- Jim: Did you have a snorkel?
- Panke: See, I was gonna just mention that about a snorkel. We did not have a snorkel, but some of the newer submarines and some of the older ones were retrofitted with what is called a snorkel. And it's about a two foot diameter pipe that would come up out of the water if you were at a depth of maybe around sixty-two feet, which would be periscope depth. You're down under and your periscope is just out, but you could have the snorkel up, taking an inlet of fresh air and exhausting the diesel exhaust and so you could actually run your diesels underwater.
- Jim: With the snorkel?
- Panke: Exactly. But we did not have one. We were not retrofitted with a snorkel.
- Jim: So you found living in the submarine more than you expected, or about what you expected?
- Panke: I think it was maybe more I than expected because of the friendships that you develop with the other sailors onboard.
- Jim: Pretty close?

- Panke: I mean we're close physically, but then we get close mentally, and we share our experiences, we share our pasts, we share our futures.
- Jim: No secrets. [laughs]
- Panke: No secrets from anybody. None whatsoever. And I thought that was interesting.
- Jim: They were your family.
- Panke: Yep, mm-hmm. Close family. Physically, certainly. And mentally. [laughs]
- Jim: And have you kept these friendships after you got out of the service?
- Panke: I did for about ten years. I got out in '59, so this was a long time ago. And I did for about ten or twelve years, but I've kinda lost touch. I was a young guy then and I think most of the other guys were pretty much older than I, and so they may have passed on or—
- Jim: Does the Redfish have an annual reunion?
- Panke: No, they do not. Not that I'm aware of.
- Jim: Is that a common thing or not necessarily common?
- Panke: It's not overly common, but it is something that some ships do have in the Navy. They have a reunion.
- Jim: How many people were aboard? Three hundred and something?
- Panke: Oh no, there was like eighty-five.
- Jim: Oh, eighty-five.
- Panke: Something of that nature.
- Jim: So what was your first duty on the sea? Where did you go from San Diego?
- Panke: From San Diego we usually just operated out in the Pacific with other surface vessels, primarily.
- Jim: Doing what?

- Panke: Just going through war maneuvers. Trying to track each other, listen to each other, communicate back and forth. And then we went up in the Puget Sound area by the state of Washington and we spent about two months up there. About every other week we would take reserves out for like two or three days and then bring them back in, for the experience of being on a submarine.
- Jim: Did you track any Russians? Russian submarines?
- Panke: No, never did. The only unusual submarine that I saw was in that Puget Sound area. One day we were coming in and this other submarine was going out, and it happened to be the Nautilus, which was our first nuclear-powered submarine. And so that was kind of interesting. The captain had everybody on deck looking as much as they could, because it was the first time ever for all of us.
- Jim: It was a pretty good-sized boat?
- Panke: Oh big, yeah. Big boat.
- Jim: [laughs] It made everybody jealous, I suppose?
- Panke: No, no. We had maybe some funny thoughts, but [laughs] nothing real serious.
- Jim: Now tell me about the food. Not a problem?
- Panke: No. Food was probably the best of any branch of the service. Because of the length of time that we were underwater and on six-month cruises and things like that, and the hazardous duty of being on a submarine, they treated those Navy guys, the submariners, really well and they fed well. We ate well. I mean, we had steak, and we had way up above anyone else.
- Jim: How long would you be at sea at a time, generally?
- Panke: Probably out about maybe three or four weeks. And then we'd come back in.
- Jim: Back to San Diego? Not to Hawaii or anyplace like that?
- Panke: San Diego, primarily. We went up through San Francisco and into, is it Vallejo? I'm not sure now. It's a shipyard up there. We had to go in and get some work done and replace a couple of the batteries. We were in there for two months, anyway. But then we had a six-month cruise where we went to Japan. Stopped at Hawaii and then to Yokuska, and then all the way around the island of Japan, and we stopped at about four or five

different cities and we'd have open house for Japanese people. We'd clean up the ship, they could come down one end, walk through quickly, and go out the other side. And they knew we were coming a week in advance, and people would be lined up for three city blocks. But we could never get all of them through because we were only allowed a certain length of time. We stopped also at Hiroshima, and that was probably the most interesting place I've ever stopped because there is where we dropped our first atomic bomb. And we went to the museum, a couple of us guys, and some of the pictures and things that you see there, it just really, really, makes you think about what life is all about. Pretty difficult. And then from there we went to the Philippine Islands, we went to Hong Kong. The Philippine Islands, we were there for about a week or two and then Hong Kong, we were there about a week. And then we went to Formosa for about a week. And then we just kinda repeated that.

Jim: When you went into port, did you have to stay aboard?

Panke: No, no. We could get off. If we were there for a week we probably had two or three days where we could get together with a couple of guys—

Jim: Stay at a hotel?

Panke: Yeah, we could go in a hotel, or we could just go in town or on a tour. We tried to see as much as we could when we were at those ports. So it was peacetime, like I mentioned earlier, and so there was really not much fear at that moment.

Jim: I was in Japan and Korea in 1950 and '51.

Panke: Oh, okay.

Jim: I saw a lot of stuff, a lot of stuff.

Panke: Yeah. Right.

Jim: You didn't miss anything, not going to Pusan [South Korea].

Panke: Oh, just kinda like nothing, huh?

Jim: Like nothing.

Panke: Really?

Jim: It's a very unattractive place. Okay. Did you do any schoolwork? Were there any courses you could take while you were at sea?

- Panke: Yeah I took some. I took correspondence courses from Iowa State, which is where I was going to transfer to. And when you're in the submarine it's just like if you're a paratrooper, you get hazardous duty pay, which is extra pay over and above what you get.
- Jim: How much was that?
- Panke: It was like about fifty or sixty bucks a month back then. And so I had that put away into a bank account for all the years I was there. Then I started communicating with Iowa State, thinking, "Well that's where I'm gonna end up going." But then I got wind of Milwaukee School of Engineering, and that was more appealing to me because I wanted to get into mechanical engineering. And I had the electronics background and so I was taking some correspondence courses through there. And when I got out of the service, then I went to Milwaukee School of Engineering.
- Jim: Did you get mail on a regular basis? Was that ever a problem?
- Panke: Um, no, mail wasn't really much of a problem. I didn't have a lot of people that I was communicating with other than my mother and dad. And I had an uncle and an aunt who lived in North Hollywood near Los Angeles who I visited very often on weekends when we were in San Diego. And he was involved with solar energy back then. Unbelievable, he was like an inventor. He was working on solar energy in these movie star homes around North Hollywood and stuff. And I would go up there on weekends and help him install these things. The piping, and the tanks, and the solar panels and everything. So I got an education in solar energy back in the late '50s [Jim laughs] which I still use today. In fact, three years ago I got enough money together and designed a system for the Waunakee High School, just north of here, and we put six big panels on the roof of the gymnasium building, and it didn't cost Waunakee anything. I was able to get enough money through grants, and in the summertime when it's sunny, like it's been this summer for sure, and the school is not in session so there's no electricity being used, the energy is still being collected by the solar panels and converted to electricity and the building meter runs in reverse, runs backwards, and that electricity that's being produced goes out into the city of Waunakee and is used by other people.
- Jim: Oh my goodness!
- Panke: And so as that meter is reversing, the cost to the school reduces accordingly. So that's kind of interesting.
- Jim: They should put a medal on the side of the building with your name.

- Panke: Yeah. [laughs] Well, I got big panels on the roof, but my name isn't up there. [laughs] I just helped do it. It was kinda interesting because that was an end result of my joining the Navy, joining the submarine service, being stationed in San Diego, seeing my uncle in North Hollywood near Los Angeles; this all was one big cycle and it came back several years later.
- Jim: You never went back to La Crosse?
- Panke: La Crosse? Yeah. After I was married my wife and I moved there for about two years with the company, Johnson Service Company at that time it was called. It's called Johnson Control right now. We went back and I worked there a couple of years. But then we moved to Milwaukee.
- Jim: What were you doing there, for them?
- Panke: I was designing temperature control systems. And computerized energy management systems. And that's where I got my start, about 1961. And to bring you all the way up through about forty-one years, this is a book that I just wrote—I wrote it about twelve years ago, but for a different topic and a different reason. I wanted to share information with people. And this Fairmont Press out of the Atlanta area found out about it and they just published it last year. It's *Energy Management Systems & Direct Digital Control*. About two hundred fifty-five pages. It's on the internet, it's sold worldwide, and—it's interesting. [laughs]
- Jim: I bet it is. That's wonderful.
- Panke: Do you mind if I just go through some of these things I'm going to give you, quickly?
- Jim: No, let me ask you my final question.
- Panke: Oh, okay.
- Jim: Tell me about when you got married and kids and that sort of stuff.
- Panke: Okay. I was married in 1961, I believe; yes, because we just celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary this past year. We had three children, who are all in their late 30s now. Two girls and a boy. One of the girls is in Minneapolis, one is in Madison here, and the boy is in the Milwaukee area, he's a restaurant manager. And they're doing very good, they are all—
- Jim: What about grandchildren?

- Panke: I have some adopted grandchildren. One in Milwaukee, and two of them are here in the Madison area.
- Jim: That's nice.
- Panke: Yeah. And each one of the children of the three kids have a dog, and each one is a golden retriever, [laughs] which is kind of unusual. Well, I've had three golden retrievers over the years since we've been married, so the kids were introduced to them.
- Jim: Are you a hunter?
- Panke: Yes. I used to hunt pheasant with them. But golden retrievers were a little irritating for me because of the long hair, and they'd run through the brush, and they were good hunters, but it would take me forever to brush out all those burrs and everything and I finally decided, "Uh, you're gonna stay home this weekend. I'll just go out alone." [laughs]
- Jim: I had one.
- Panke: Did you?
- Jim: Yeah. Best dog I ever had.
- Panke: Oh, they're beautiful.
- Jim: I've had a lot of dogs, yeah, and that was my favorite dog. He wasn't much of a hunter, but he could retrieve absolutely anything; once he understood what I wanted, he'd go get it. Sometimes that dummy would bring back live pheasants!
- Panke: [laughs] Uh-oh!
- Jim: I'd go out to this pheasant farm, you know, and there would be birds flying around. And he'd be so excited, by the time we got him out of the car and got started, he was way ahead of me. I could hardly hold him down. And then I'd see birds going up, and birds going up, and he was having more fun. Sometimes he brought back one of the birds, and I hadn't even pulled the trigger. He'd run it down, and he was so excited—**[End of Tape 1, Side A]**—The stupid bird was looking around. So I had to get him to let go of the bird and then I threw the bird up and then shot it.
- Panke: Yeah. Well, golden retrievers, I found, are so gentle with children, with anyone. And they're a really pleasant dog.

- Jim: Oh yeah, he was so devoted that it was embarrassing. When you had a party, I made him stay the hell out of the living room when we had folks there. But sooner or later I see the nose come around the corner and if I wasn't paying attention, he was right there with his head on—I simply could not, you know—
- Panke: I went through similar things with mine.
- Jim: The other cute thing is that I kept the guns in one closet; all I had to do was open the door, I mean the click—
- Panke: Yes, of the door handle, yeah—
- Jim: From the door handle. There's all kinds of closets, but this one closet, one click, and "wssh"—
- Panke: He's right there, yep.
- Jim: Boy! We're going! [both laugh]
- Panke: They're so much fun to have around, it's really exciting, so—
- Jim: So tell me, have you joined any veterans' organizations?
- Panke: No, I have not. I think I tried the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] and they wouldn't let me in because I wasn't involved in a war time—
- Jim: [unintelligible]
- Panke: Here's the picture of it, the Redfish; you've probably seen one similar.
- Jim: Yeah.
- Panke: That shows all the compartments and where everything is. Um, this is a little article on the submarine.
- Jim: [referencing the photograph] This is the Redfish, can I write that?
- Panke: Yes, USS Redfish. This is the submarine escape training tank description here. And it might be something very unusual; not many people have kept that.
- Jim: Can I have that?
- Panke: These are all yours.

- Jim: Oh, good.
- Panke: Okay. And it talks about the depths, 250,000 gallons of fresh water, chemically treated, and it tells everything about it, here. So you'll find that of high interest.
- Jim: Yeah, I think I'll have to make a copy of this for me, at home.
- Panke: Yeah, it's interesting. Now when we went to Japan, these three guys here were at the diving helm of the Redfish when we made our 5,000th dive. Every dive that is made by a submarine, they keep track of, you know, da-da-da-da-da. And here it shows these three guys who had been on the submarine the longest. They normally aren't at the diving helm, but they were at the helm when they made the 5,000th dive. The Redfish.
- Jim: That's wonderful.
- Panke: And this is far eastern waters on July 12th, exactly fifteen years and three months from the date of its commission.
- Jim: It took them fifteen years to make those five thousand dives?
- Panke: Yes, exactly fifteen years and three months from the date it was commissioned. So is just a little article that I clipped out and made a copy for you.
- Jim: Thank you.
- Panke: Here's a thing about the Redfish that I made up several years ago. The depth that it can go; the length, three hundred-eleven feet, six inches. I mean, everything about it, from when it was commissioned in 1944, who did it, when it arrived at Pearl Harbor, ships that it sank, movies that it was in, and that's for you.
- Jim: That's wonderful; thank you.
- Panke: And here's a picture of the Redfish. It's SS-395, it's right on the side there, so that's the actual picture. In fact, that picture is—this is worthwhile—that picture is this picture.
- Jim: Ah.
- Panke: And what I did was I took this picture and scanned it on a computer, and then enlarged it slowly and kinda cleaned it up a little bit. This was all blotchy and stuff. And then that's the end result.

- Jim: It's a better picture than what you started with.
- Panke: Exactly. [laughs] It's kinda funny. Okay then, this is another picture of the Redfish, named right here, and this was taken from the San Francisco Bay Bridge in October of '57. And I was onboard at that time. And a photographer, they take pictures of all these ships coming under the bridge, and they go and find the ship and they offer pictures for sale. So that's just another picture of it. This is a picture of the sloth[?]
- Jim: That you all wore?
- Panke: Yeah, that I had on my Navy jacket. And that's the USS Redfish. Woody Woodpecker. And then here are some pictures—this is an internet location here, by Pat Householder, he was aboard this at one time. These pictures were taken like in 1965. This is the internet location up here, but it's just—there's the [unintelligible] and everything. And here's the compartment thing again. I just thought you'd enjoy that. This is the history of the Redfish.
- Jim: Oh, that's good.
- Panke: Commissioning and launch, and it goes on. All the war patrols; all the war patrols. Here's the Redfish in Guam, way back when. Similar to the other picture, other pictures, in the movies here. After the movies and so on, more pictures. And then, oh, decommissioned in 1968. There it was.
- Jim: Is it still in dry dock?
- Panke: No, no, no, no. They dragged it out in the middle of the Pacific and sunk it. They used it for target practice.
- Jim: Oh my goodness.
- Panke: Here it is. Hitting and then being sunk. So I thought you'd find this of interest. There's a submarine, the USS Cobia, which is in Manitowoc at the war memorial up there.
- Jim: Right, I know about that.
- Panke: Okay. The submarine Cobia that's tied up right alongside, that you can take a tour of. And now Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts and groups of people can make arrangements to sleep overnight on this. They put a whole bunch of bunks in now.
- Jim: [laughs] Did they put some torpedoes in there too? So they can—

- Panke: I don't know if they put those in. [laughs] I know they put all the bunks back in. So that people can actually go in now and sleep overnight. And that submarine is identical to the Redfish.
- Jim: Same model?
- Panke: Everything about it. I've been in it about four or five times.
- Jim: You can't find any differences?
- Panke: No. Exactly. And here's another one; this is just another internet location. Chief of naval operations, I believe, and so on. It just talks about silent victory submarine service during this five years of time period. And all of the sudden here is the USS Redfish SS-395 mentioned in this article thing here about all the submarine operations during World War II.
- Jim: Excellent. This wasn't written by Eddie Beeks[?], I see.
- Panke: No.
- Jim: I've read his stuff. You can see them on television; I just saw them yesterday. The History Channel had a big—I'd seen it before.
- Panke: Oh. Every once in a while they really do have something neat. So here's a blank, empty folder you can put all that stuff in there, it's labeled Redfish, it's yours.
- Jim: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.
- Panke: Okay.
- Jim: Super.
- Panke: Okay, that's about it.
- Jim: What was your last duty then? Not sea duty, just your work. You just retired?
- Panke: I just retired from work. I worked for the University of Wisconsin system for the past twenty-six years.
- Jim: We didn't cover that. Doing what?
- Panke: I was a mechanical engineer, I traveled the state of Wisconsin to all twenty-six campuses. A lot of people don't realize there are twenty-six separate campuses. Thirteen two-year colleges, such as Baraboo,

Janesville, Waukesha, Wausau, and other places; there's thirteen of those. And then there are thirteen four-year universities like Madison, Milwaukee, Whitewater, La Crosse, Stevens Point, and so forth. And so I traveled around and worked with the maintenance people to help them solve problems that they were having with their chillers, their boilers, pumps, fans, fume hood exhaust system, underground oil storage tanks. Anything mechanical that I had background knowledge on I would travel to these campuses and help them.

Jim: What a repair guy you turned out to be. High-tech repair.

Panke: Yes. And I also designed about sixteen or eighteen of the computerized energy management systems, of the book I wrote. They are installed on the campuses, and over the course of one year, when you consider of all the energy that these systems can save by programming the operation of equipment only when needed, only turn the fans on when there are people present, keep the temperatures low in the winter, keep them up a little in the summer, but leave it comfortable for everyone and just control everything on these campuses. Probably saving about, I'm gonna guess about two and a half million dollars a year in energy over the past many years that I've been doing this. For about eighteen or twenty years now. And so it's really paid off and really helped the state a lot.

Jim: People talk about solar energy and wind energy. Jim Underkofler, do you know who he is? He's at Wisconsin Power and Light Company.

Panke: I've heard his name. Wisconsin Power & Light, right.

Jim: Well, he and I have lunch every Tuesday. With a bunch of other guys. But he says the main reason that the solar and the wind [unintelligible] is they still haven't figured out how to store the electricity, and he says that's the thing that's holding all of that stuff up.

Panke: Yeah, that's the problem is the storage of them. In fact, as an example, in my car right now, I bought four of these solar lamps that you can put in your yard. And they have little tiny collectors—I should have brought one up and showed you—they have little collectors on the top of them. A little lamp on a post light. And there is a little battery in there about as big around as my finger. And that's a storage battery. During the daytime the sun's energy is converted from solar energy to electric energy and it charges that battery and as soon as it get dark out or you can even put your hand over the top and fake it out like it's dark, and you can look inside, the little light bulb goes on. And then the light, kinda, it's not real bright like a hundred watt bulb, certainly, but it's like a little flashlight and it reflects out and just illuminates the little area there. And I bought four of them just for our backyard, 'cause we just built a house, as I mentioned, a year ago,

a new house. And one of them was not working and I took the battery out and I put that battery in one that I knew was working, and I couldn't get that one to work, so I know it's the battery. And that's basically how I troubleshoot things on the college campuses.

Jim: I don't think you'll ever retire! They'll be having you come out to these places because the guy they hired to replace you will need some questions answered. You probably won't change your lifestyle at all.

Panke: Well, I have to stay away for thirty days; I just retired a week ago, today.

Jim: Before they can hire you part time?

Panke: Yep, yep. Before you can go back even part time. August 12th I'll be back working part time for about a year, or maybe two years, depending on my health, and it's fine right now, and so I don't anticipate anything major happening other than—

Jim: Nobody does.

Panke: —slowing up a little.

Jim: No kidding.

Panke: Yeah, slowing up a little.

Jim: That goes on.

Panke: Yeah, right. So that's about it.

Jim: Thank you so much. It was really interesting. I'm really glad you stopped in. And I appreciate all this stuff.

Panke: I was looking forward to it and I wanted to get as much information as I could together; I went back through all my old books that my parents had made when they were alive and I was in the service. They would be cutting articles out of newspapers and everything, so I went back as far as I could to gather information for you and hopefully—

Jim: Well I appreciate it. It's gonna be used very promptly.

Panke: Okay. [Tape abruptly stops]

[End of Interview]