

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
HULBERT "HUB" B. PINKERTON
Technical Sergeant, Air Force, World War II.

1995

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Pinkerton, Hulbert B., (b.1920). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 3 sound cassettes (ca. 139 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 139 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Abstract:

Hulbert “Hub” Pinkerton, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses his service as a Technical Sergeant in the Army Air Force 64th Bombing Squadron in the Pacific Front during World War II. Pinkerton describes life in Madison before the War and how the Depression affected his father’s apartment renting and remodeling business. Pinkerton attended the University of Wisconsin for two years and helped his father fix up apartments. He recalls he was playing ball with some kids in the street when his father told him about the attack on Pearl Harbor. Pinkerton explains he received a short deferment from being drafted to care for his mother who had broken her arm; however, he enlisted in the Army Air Force in Milwaukee (Wisconsin) in January, 1942 and left for Jefferson Barracks (Missouri) the same day. Pinkerton mentions he originally considered being a conscientious objector because he “wasn’t interested in killing a lot of people,” but a talk with his pastor (a World War I veteran) and the desire to protect his mother and sisters influenced Pinkerton to join. Pinkerton describes basic training early in the war as poor, stating he marched a lot but had no weapons to practice with. Pinkerton observes that many of his fellow troops had some college education and jokes that until he joined the Air Force, he “didn’t know how to swear.” Based on his mechanical skills, Pinkerton was assigned to Turret School at Lowery Air Force Base in Denver (Colorado), but his training was delayed by an outbreak of meningitis. Pinkerton and other airmen were given live vaccines and quarantined for two weeks before arriving in Denver. Pinkerton details his turret gunner maintenance training. His training focused on the Sperry turret for the B-17 bomber and the Martin turret for the B-25 and B-26 bombers. After the eight-week session, Pinkerton flew to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson (Arizona) and from there flew to Hickam Field (Hawaii). Pinkerton portrays facilities at Hickam Field as still in disrepair following the attack on Pearl Harbor. He mentions inspecting and repairing aircraft that participated in the Battle of Midway in June, 1942. Pinkerton explains the “skip bombing” tactic employed during Midway, which involved planes flying low and bouncing bombs over the surface of the water like skipping stones to take out Japanese ships. Next, Pinkerton discusses being stationed in northern Australia in Charleville and later Moreva. He explains he was in charge of the maintenance of six turret guns on six airplanes. He describes modest living conditions in Charleville: airmen slept on cots on outdoor verandas. A couple months into his stay, Pinkerton relates that he filled in as a ball gunner during the night bombing of Rabaul (New Guinea). He states this was his only mission of the war, as he generally performed turret maintenance on base. During this mission, Pinkerton reveals he had the chance to

shoot an open truck of Japanese soldiers that was putting out a fire, but he admired their courage and couldn't bring himself to shoot. Pinkerton spends much time contrasting the B-17 turrets with the B-24 turrets. A gunner sat inside the B-17 turret whereas the B-24 guns were operated remotely. Also, B-24 turret guns were retractable, but the guns on the B-17s Pinkerton maintained were not. Pinkerton mentions Charles Lindbergh came to the Pacific and advised the Air Force that by redistributing fuel, the B-17 could accept more cargo and fly further than the Air Force thought. Pinkerton states he worked in the repair shop with a capable technician named Brewer, but they were often understaffed. Later in the war, airmen who reached their mission quota helped Pinkerton around the shop. Pinkerton tells many stories of socializing during his service. He remarks that, at each new base, he would find and repair a vehicle (car, truck, or motorcycle) so he could move quickly from aircraft to aircraft. He tells of driving into town with other airmen for dances in Australia and the Philippines. He feels the Australians and Americans got along very well. In December 1942, the 64th Bombing Squadron moved their base just outside Port Moresby (New Guinea). Pinkerton describes going on "vacation"--a week-long trip back to the technical supply in Barraba (Australia) to collect spare parts. Pinkerton tells how he bought a used motorcycle in Australia to make the trip and almost got killed taking hairpin turns in the highlands. Pinkerton comments on life in New Guinea: he enjoyed the variety of fruits and songbirds but had little contact with the natives. He mentions the Air Force played movies for the troops on base as there were no towns or taverns. Pinkerton describes getting malaria as they moved from Dobodura to Hollandia (New Guinea) because he never took his atabrine pills. He claims he recovered by staying active, hiking up a mountain, and taking a cold spring bath. In 1943, his unit was stationed at Owi (Philippines), an uninhabited island on a coral reef. He discusses the challenges of digging for water on the beach and walking over the sharp coral. Pinkerton reveals he snuck on a mission back to Hollandia and got in trouble with his captain. Later, Pinkerton recounts how witnessing an airplane crash on the runway convinced him not to sneak on any more missions. Pinkerton was able to return home on a 30-day furlough for Thanksgiving. In Madison (Wisconsin), he describes falling back into old routines, helping his father fix apartments, and going out nightly to dances and taverns. Pinkerton rejoined his unit in Leyte (Philippines), which he claims had the worst accommodations of the war. They soon moved to Clark Field (Philippines) where Pinkerton expresses frustration that the officers had nice barracks while the enlisted men had tents. Emphasizing the innovation of mechanics, Pinkerton tells how he and other troops improved their tents with screens and lumber from a shipyard in Baguio (Philippines). Pinkerton's friend bribed the port guards with three bottles of whiskey and the airmen took the lumber and built a barrack into the side of a hill. Pinkerton feels the Philippines was much more social than New Guinea and that Filipinos and Americans got along well. He describes driving into town for evening parties with Filipinos where American music was played and befriending a Filipino family that invited him for dinner regularly and briefly convinced him to go into the rice business. He touches upon visiting brothels in the Philippines, using Army-issue condoms, and taking pills to protect against venereal disease. Pinkerton frequently references attempts by airmen at home brewing. In Clark Field, airmen brewed unfermented "green beer" in an old Filipino beer plant. Pinkerton also mentions making coconut liquor and fruit beer. Pinkerton relates he was

sent home earlier than expected because the Army switched to the point system. He went home in July, 1945. Pinkerton recalls hearing about the bombing of Nagasaki while on a troop ship to Hawaii. He comments he initially did not believe that one bomb could destroy an entire city. Pinkerton goes on to say he is “on the fence” about whether dropping the bomb was the right thing to do but feels the Japanese were not ready to surrender without a long invasion. Pinkerton describes reading his Bible cover to cover on the ship back to the States but also spending three days in the brig; he lit a cigar one night during a blackout, which was against ship rules. Pinkerton describes travelling through Panama and landing in New York City where he saw the Statue of Liberty, but the V-J Day parades were already over. Pinkerton was discharged from Fort Sheridan (Illinois) in 1945 and moved back to Madison. Pinkerton explains he went back to UW on the G.I. Bill, finishing his BA, then graduating from law school. He states the G.I. Bill covered all his education expenses and touches upon what it was like having so many veterans on campus. He lived at home but recalls many veterans commuting to UW from “Badger Village.” Pinkerton makes a short digression on the life of Edgar Cayce, a religious leader in the early 20th century who supposedly had mystical and healing powers. Pinkerton reveals he participated in a study group on Cayce at the Vets Home, which brought him into contact with Vietnam Veterans. Finally, Pinkerton addresses how his personality changed during the war. He loosened up in the Air Force, smoking, drinking, and swearing; his father said he “wasn’t the same boy that went over there.” As a handyman, Pinkerton explains that he was always trying to make living conditions better. He tells of tinkering with bomb-loading pulleys; improving tents in the Philippines; and fixing up an old Japanese weapons carrier for his personal transportation. Pinkerton states that to him being in the service “was all one great big adventure. I didn’t really consider it as a sacrifice.”

Biographical Sketch:

Pinkerton (b.1920) was born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin. Before the war, he attended the University of Wisconsin and worked with his father who owned and maintained apartments. Pinkerton joined the Army Air Force in January, 1942. He served as a Technical Sergeant, maintaining turret gunners for B-17 bombers in Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines during World War II. After the war, Pinkerton finished his bachelor’s degree and attended law school at the University of Wisconsin, Madison on the GI Bill.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995

Transcribed by Karen M. Emery, 1997

Transcript edited and abstract written by Darcy I. Gervasio, 2009

Interview Transcript:

Mark: Okay, today's date is March 27, 1995. Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this Monday morning bright and early with Mr. Hulbert, Hub, B. Pinkerton of Madison. A veteran of the Army Air Forces in World War II.

Mark: Good morning. How are you doing?

Pinkerton: I think I'm doing just fine, thank you.

Mark: Good. Thanks for coming in. Let's start this interview by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born and where you were raised and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Pinkerton: Born, Madison, Wisconsin on February 15, 1920. Raised up in Madison, Wisconsin. I'm a native.

Mark: East side, west side?

Pinkerton: Well, we had a farm out on the northeast side. And we moved into town on the near east side and that's where I was when the war started.

Mark: Interesting. What did your father do for a living? Your parents. Your mother may have worked as well.

Pinkerton: Well, we had an apartment business and some older buildings that we kept cutting up ever smaller to make more apartments out of. So, besides maintaining what we had and remodeling, why that was the building experience that I had. I was going to school to try to get a BA in Letters & Science and then go into Law school. Then I got interested in changing our diet around.

Mark: Changing your diet around? What do you mean?

Pinkerton: Family diet. Yeah, well, my mother was sick. My dad wasn't feeling all that well and I wasn't all that hot either. So, about the time we got to figuring out that the war was coming along I said I better get my physical being straightened around. So I got a deferment because my mother had broken her arm and I was the only one that wasn't in school. My two sisters would try to finish up the semester and I was supposed to come in I think the last of November. I'd already had the exam and passed that. So I think they said, "Okay, you can be deferred for 60 days until the next February call-up." and before that came along I went down to Milwaukee on Monday morning and enlisted in the Air Force.

Mark: I want to come back to the decision in a couple of minutes. About the Depression, did that affect your father's business much? People always need places to live but people don't have any money to pay at the same time. I find people were affected by the Depression differently. I'm just interested in your experience.

Pinkerton: Yeah. He had, back about 1927, he had put an addition on one of his buildings there. And he kind of used to regret having done that because he had to mortgage everything he had to get it done. It was expensive. 1927-28 when prices were high. And then the Crash came. We had a hard time. I mean, stuff that I'm renting now for \$546 a month we were getting \$37.50 a month [laughs]. If we could keep it rented. If they would pay. I mean, how many times we had to go around and knock on doors and say, "You're two weeks behind now or a month behind. When are you going to catch up?" That was rough. But, I know I used to, when I was born in 1920, see about 1933, 34 I was 13,14, I'd go around with a dime in my pocket. My dad said you always want to have some money. I'd keep that dime for months at a time [laughs].

Mark: No penny candy for you.

Pinkerton: No siree!

Mark: At the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor, you were, geez you were 21. You had graduated from high school and were working for some time then.

Pinkerton: Well, yeah. I think that, see that would be in December and that's when my deferment was granted. Was it granted yet then? I don't know. I forget. Right in there. But sure, it was a nice sunny afternoon and I was out in the street out there playing ball with some kids. My dad said come in and listen to this. It was on the radio. Pearl Harbor had been attacked at 7:00 that morning.

Mark: And as a 21 year old young man of service age, did you realize the implications that might have for your life?

Pinkerton: Yeah, I did. Well, see I knew German and I figure if I was going to get in the war it would be kind of neat to be over there where if I could be of any help why I'd be talking to Germans. Translating and stuff like that. But I didn't think I'd be bombed out or anything, I wasn't bothered that way. I thought it would be a great adventure to get in the service.

Mark: You had graduated high school in '39 or '40 or whatever and you were subject to the draft 1940 so you.

Pinkerton: I had friends that had gone in that summer. I was hearing from them.

Mark: Did you watch news events and think we were going to get in this? Was this something that didn't occur to you? Were you too busy working or studying or whatever?

Pinkerton: No. One of your questions is something about when the war started over there in 1941 and I was watching this stuff when they went into France. Yeah, well my dad was a great guy to be interested in the America First Committee. And so, I didn't know a lot better but I figured well, I don't know how that's going to come out but see their idea was that we wouldn't be in the war. Let them fight over there. And really not a lot of thought was given to the Japanese coming in. But I was up on the idea that the Japs were unhappy with the way we were treating them. Just what they'd ever do about it I didn't know. But, yeah, I'm one of these guys that takes things as it comes. And I wasn't fretting or worried. Friends of mine had been, were in the service and stuff. I thought, well, we'd have a lot of fun at this thing.

Mark: So you did enter active duty then in 1942?

Pinkerton: Yup. January 27.

Mark: So that was very soon after Pearl Harbor. Would you describe for me, again we've touched on this already, I forget what we talked about before we turned the tape player on. Would you describe your decision to join the Air Force, in particular, and why the Air Force as opposed to the Navy or the Army or the Marines or whatever the case may be? And then tell me a little bit about your entry into active duty. Where did you go? Where did you get sworn in? Where did you get the haircut and the whole business?

Pinkerton: Well, I talked to our pastor, Pastor Swine, about being a conscientious objector. I wasn't all that interested in killing a lot of people. And he had been a pilot, training for a pilot in the First World War. And I thought, as I've thought about it since, that he was a real good counselor because he didn't say do this or don't do that. He just listened to me and he said, "Well, you know. You've got to make up your mind what you want to do." But I think as it comes out that he knew enough about what the Germans were doing to be on the side of really getting mixed up in it, doing something to stop those guys.

Mark: Now, which denomination?

Pinkerton: First Congregational Church in Madison. He was pastor there for 35 years. Finally left in 1955 I think, something like that. So that was my original thought. But then I thought, well, I couldn't quite see me being a conscientious objector, that if worse came to worse, and my mother and sisters

were to be in a problem with opposing soldiers, I'd fight. I wouldn't just let them go. So on that basis, I figured I couldn't really be a conscientious objector. So I thought, now, well, it would be fun to be a pilot. Well, I didn't know anything about flying but I took the pilot examination and I didn't pass it quite. Darn near, but I did later on in the service when they asked for more pilots.

Mark: Was this the written test? Or--

Pinkerton: The visual test. Well, I don't know how I made out on the written test but I had two years in college by that time, pass that part. So, then I got this deferment until the first call-up in February. Let's see, are we on track yet?

Mark: Uh hum.

Pinkerton: And, so my dad, he had wanted to volunteer for the Navy in the First World War but I think the war quit and he was a little too old. He was right in there. If the war had kept on going I think he'd have gone into the Navy. He liked boats and stuff. But I couldn't see that. But he didn't say anything, well, you do what you want. So, I found out that, I think at that time, if you went down to Milwaukee, the people that were first in the week, they were putting in the Air Force. And later on when they had that quota filled up then they were taking into the Army. So I figured--

Mark: This was just the scuttlebutt that was going around among young guys like you?

Pinkerton: Yeah. So I figured, well, I'll get down there first thing Monday morning.
[laughs]

Mark: And it apparently worked because you got in the Air Force?

Pinkerton: Yup. I remember I stayed up until about 2:00 that night doing some painting. I figured, well, this room needs to be painted, that room needs to be painted and it won't get painted if I'm gone. So my dad and my sister drove me down to Milwaukee that morning. Now I'm off on a great adventure.

Mark: Did you enter active duty then? Or did you go home for some leave?

Pinkerton: Nope, that was it.

Mark: That was it. You were on the bus going where?

Pinkerton: Chicago, to ...

Mark: Army post, Sheridan?

Pinkerton: Fort Sheridan, yeah. Right, yeah.

Mark: And that's where you took your basic training? Or was this--

Pinkerton: What little I got, yeah. Well, ...

Mark: This is fairly early in the war so I guess the question's about what sort of training you got. You were in Fort Sheridan how long?

Pinkerton: Not very long. Maybe a week and a half or something like that.

Mark: And what did you do from there?

Pinkerton: Well, first of all you had to get your clothes issued to you. Be in the barracks and get some shots, I think. And I remember that the following Sunday afternoon, god, I must have got homesick but I didn't know it. I walked up and down the shore there for about three hours and finally when I realized that that was what you called homesickness. But it never bothered me again. That was it. I must have got over it. But, and then we were shipped to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. And I think it was there that they gave us the examinations. I'm hazy whether it happened there at Fort Sheridan or Jefferson Barracks but I think it was Jefferson Barracks. Wanted to know what my past history was and I wrote out a whole list of stuff. I could type 65 words a minute, do plumbing, do wiring, do carpentry work, roofing, climb trees 'cause I'd done all that stuff. And indicated that I would like to go to radio school, be a radio operator on airplanes. But, see there was nothing in my resume that said I knew anything at all about radio or electronics or anything like that. So, when they came back they said, "Well, we're not going to send you to radio school and spend \$3,000 for that when we can use you just like you are." I said, "For what? And they said for general maintenance on the buildings, barracks and stuff. Oh, yeah, fine. So I was--

Mark: --[unintelligible] military career there.

Pinkerton: Yeah, I was going to accept it but then they called me in and they said, "Can you really type 65 words a minute?" I said, "Well, try me." And, you know, I did. Then there was a fellow by the name of, I think his name was Whiting, I'd have to look over my records, and he said, "You come around to my office about 10:00 tonight. I want to talk to you." And, I think he must have been permanent personnel down there. But he said, "If you want, you can stay here through the war. I can get you a job as permanent personnel and you could be working here in the office." "No," I said, "I want to go lots farther than this."

So I turned him down. And then we were slated to be in formation and that's where we got our basic training. We were hup-two-three-four, you know.

Mark: A lot of marching around?

Pinkerton: Yeah.

Mark: Did you have any weapons training in the Air Force?

Pinkerton: They didn't even give us a broomstick. [laughs] Much less a gun. We got to march. I remember one time I was, I was just enjoying it. This is great fun marching like this. I kind of enjoyed it. I must have had a smile on my face. The sergeant said, "Wipe that smile off your face, soldier. This is serious business."

Mark: Was the discipline really tough? Did anyone get beaten up? Or just yelling, screaming?

Pinkerton: Well, I don't think so. I thought it was, I took it in stride. Meals were good.

Mark: What sort of men were in this unit? Did they come all different parts of the country? Socio-economic backgrounds. Where they -- I'm interested in the social composition of the men in training.

Pinkerton: You know, I kind of felt right at home with the guys. I think that many of them had had some college education. I ended up with some guys that hadn't. Later on in the war I think they were taking guys that didn't. But I think by and large, in the bunch that I was with, were, they swore like hell. I didn't know how to swear even when I got in.

Mark: You learn during the service I tell you.

Pinkerton: You know that. They were all, they weren't really goof offs. They were out to get going, get in part of the action.

Mark: Any sort of regional distinctions that you noticed? Southern guys still fighting the Civil War? Sometimes the guys have mentioned--

Pinkerton: Yeah.

Mark: Now Pinkerton of Congregational background, of New England ancestry I take it?

Pinkerton: Yeah.

Mark: Did you have any relatives back east or anything, were you familiar with that sort of area?

Pinkerton: I didn't know about it, no. Just from Wisconsin.

Mark: I see.

Pinkerton: Yeah. You see, on both sides of my family they came across with William the Conqueror from France. The Bramholz and the Pinkertons. So, I'm really a WASP.

Mark: How about Old Yankee?

Pinkerton: Yeah. Well, to begin with there were some Southern fellows in there. But fellows from Pennsylvania, a lot of us from Wisconsin, though, because somehow that contingent went down there.

Mark: I was wondering, did they come in clumps? Or was it a good mixture? A lot of guys seem to have very different experiences some times.

Pinkerton: Yeah. I know there was one fellow from Pennsylvania that I got to know pretty well. He used to call me "Grapefruit" because I always had grapefruit for breakfast. It's a habit, you know. Some from Oklahoma. When we got into the class with turrets out in Denver -- see these were guys who'd been through high school and part way into college.

Mark: Such as yourself?

Pinkerton: Yeah. It was good schooling out there. I enjoyed their company.

Mark: At Lowery? Now, after basic training you went to Lowery to learn how to work the turrets?

Pinkerton: Yeah. I would take care of them. But, you know, while we were there in Jefferson Barracks they must have figured out -- a fellow by the name of Sanders and myself were candidates for going to turret school. He was kind of a general maintenance man and he was from Janesville, Wisconsin. And so one noon they pulled us, well, I guess about 11:00 in the morning, said, "You guys get your barracks bags and fill them up and be over here across the field by 1:00." We didn't have any idea what it was for. And we got there, what it was, "Well, you guys are qualified to be going to turret school." And so they had about probably 20 of us that came from around Jefferson Barracks there that were going to do that. But they had an outbreak of meningitis. So they said, "Well, you're going to be quarantined in these barracks here. You'll eat after everybody else is done. We'll give you a kind of tapered down shot of

meningitis for two weeks and then ship you off to school.” And I remember hearing about Russ Garver. I don’t know if you’ve heard of Garver Feed Company here in Madison. But he was, they were rich and he was the only son and he was down there and he had shipped out a week before or something like that. And they had to put him off the train half way between Jefferson Barracks and Denver. He had meningitis and he died of it. You know, I think there must have been some cases like that where they figured, well, let’s try this other slightly immunization business. When we got up to Denver there were a few guys who had turned in with jaundice. There were some in the barracks for two weeks, didn’t really do anything. Just going to meals, I read the arms manual and stuff.

Mark: And, so, gun turret school -- there are different kinds of airplanes. Were you trained on a specific plane, like a B-24 or something like that? Or is it all pretty general?

Pinkerton: We learned about the Sperry turret, Sperry bomb site.

Mark: Which is a different airplane?

Pinkerton: Well, I know the B-17s had them, of course, but, and there was the Martin turret.

Mark: I wish they could shut that thing off. [phone announcement over PA]

Pinkerton: The Martins had a turret, too. I think it was in the B-25s, the B-26s, and we learned about that, too.

Mark: This training at Lowery lasted how long?

Pinkerton: It was an eight week course. And after we graduated there was no fooling around. They shipped us right off to, well, some guys went east that were going to Germany and we went west to Tucson, Arizona. It was Monthan Field there. And I think some guys, it was Monthan go on east to Germany, too. In the Navy, I guess. Yeah. That was an enjoyable course. We went to school at -- I think we got there about -- we didn’t get out until about 10:00 at night. We must have been going to school in the afternoon and evening class. They had another class that was before us in the morning. They were shuffling guys through as fast as they could.

Mark: Um, you went to Davis-Monthan and where did you depart for overseas from?

Pinkerton: From Davis-Monthan.

Mark: You flew somewhere?

Pinkerton: Yeah. Well, you know I got down there at Davis-Monthan -- I think I was the only guy out of the class that went there -- and they had an armament shack there. And they had about eight guys in there and old "Pop" Jenks was the sergeant that was in charge of it there. And here we learned all about the mechanics of the turrets but we didn't learn a darn thing about the guns. The caliber fifties that went in. And so, well I said I've got know about these things, too. And they had a map that you could pull down that had all the parts of the caliber fifty there and I think that's how come I got to go on this next cadre that went over there, overseas. 'Cause the other guys had been there in the armored shop lots longer than I had. Two, three, four months some of them. About two days I had been there and I pulled down this map and put a caliber fifty out on the bench and watched the map and tore it all down in parts and put it all back together again. I did that once. In the afternoon "Pop" Jenks came in and I said, "Hey, I want you to check me out on this caliber fifty. I know all about it." I didn't know how to shoot this yet but I knew how to do it though. So I said, "You watch me." So I laid it down there and took out everything and named the parts and everything and put it all back together. And he says, "Wow, that's great. We just got a call for somebody to ..." and by that time all the rest of the guys were there, too. He said we got a call that we need somebody to be in charge of the turrets of a six squadron, six airplane provisional squad that was going overseas. I kind of looked around the room to see if anybody else was going to volunteer. I'm just new there. I didn't want to beat anybody out. But nobody said anything. I said, "Well, why don't you take me? I can do it." Okay. So, yeah, here I was a PFC, couldn't even draw, you had to be a first-three grader in order to, how was that? You had to be a first-three grader to do it. Anyhow, I didn't get the first-three grade wages until I got to Hawaii. But, see, that was in the last of May then, 1942. We got over there to Hickam Field in Hawaii, lived in those old barracks that had been shot up by the Japs just a few months before. Screens were out, bullet holes all over. See we were there for darn near a month.

Mark: I was going to ask how long you were in Hawaii. Were you just sort of hanging around waiting to go somewhere?

Pinkerton: Well, our airplanes were involved in the Battle of Midway which was about ...

Mark: Right around that time.

Pinkerton: I think about the 6th of June. Yeah. Yeah, I know. I used to go over there and see the patrol boats at night and walk all over the island. We'd be out there doing surfing. I know that five or six of us got caught one night in a blackout. They had blackouts over there. By that time I had figured out a shortcut. We went through a hanger to get back to our barracks and guys were

stumbling all over 'cause they had tires laying all over. You couldn't see anything. But I had good night vision. And Harris said, "Well, Pinky. You're not falling down. How come?" "Well," I said, "I see where these things are." So he said, "Well, let's form a line." So I was, they'd follow me around wherever I went and miss these things.

Mark: Did you get a good look at the harbor? It's only a couple of months after the attack. I imagine there's still a lot of wreckage and sunken ships and all that sort of thing around at Pearl Harbor.

Pinkerton: Nope, I really didn't get to look at it. I went out one night patrol with them in a little patrol, PT boat there. But after then I couldn't do that every night. I tell you, I think, see I went over there twice in an airplane. But I think it was this first time, no it wasn't, it was the second. That's another story. But see our airplanes were involved in the Battle of Midway. But apparently they didn't get shot up and they had somebody else taking care of the turrets. I suppose, it was something about them, a lot on the field. I never got out on the field to be part of the action there. But our airplanes were part of the first bunch that did skip-bombing in the Battle of Midway. Do you know what skip-bombing is?

Mark: Explain it to me. I'm rusty.

Pinkerton: Well, see we didn't have bombs that were built to float. The ones they had those bombardiers would drop on the ground. And somebody developed the idea, here the B-17s could come in low, right at a ship, dangerous as hell, let the bomb go and she'd skip along the water like a stone, would plow into a ship. It worked. [laughs] I think we got two or three ships like that.

Mark: And so you eventually got your planes. B-17s you said.

Pinkerton: Yeah, I was the guy that was in charge of six turrets of the six airplanes from Davis-Monthan Field way back into Australia. Into Charleville.

Mark: Charleville?

Pinkerton: Charleville.

Mark: I'm not sure where that is. It's up in the north somewhere I take it.

Pinkerton: I say, it's west of Brisbane. Brisbane is about half way up the coast from Sidney, up to Queensland up there. And it's back in a ways.

Mark: I see. And you got to Australia when? July?

Pinkerton: Yeah, probably. Maybe late June. And we were there at Charleville for, oh, not more than a couple of weeks I wouldn't think. One day they got a bug in their head that the Japs were going to come down and bomb that base. The Japs were making headway up through ...

Mark: The Coral Sea was up there. And New Guinea.

Pinkerton: They got as far as Daily Waters in northern Australia, too. And, well, they weren't there in Daily Waters but they were bombing it. Somebody figured it out that they were going to come down and bomb our base there in Charleville. So they said, "Get these planes out of here. Let's save them." So we took them and got in them and flew westward about three, four hours and we go the word it was all clear, that nothing happened, we came back. So that was our first war scare from the Japs.

Mark: So, you were at Charleville at this station for how long?

Pinkerton: A couple of weeks.

Mark: A couple of weeks? That was it?

Pinkerton: They didn't have anything to take care of us with, you know. And they must have commandeered some verandas of some of the places there. I remember they had army cots. They'd give us four blankets and flying suits to sleep with at night. Two underneath you and two above. The chickens would be around there waking us up [laughs]. I mean, it was a rural area, you know. Farm area. But they were only, it was about six times. Well, there were 60-70 guys all together. So they could take care of us. I forget how we were fed. I do remember those nights sleeping on those cots out in the open on all these verandas.

Mark: So, from there you went to New Guinea or did you go somewhere else in Australia?

Pinkerton: Then we went north to Moreva. And Moreva was kind of, well, it's like our Green Bay area. It's a thumb. It just sticks up there from Australia. Queensland there. It's back kind of up in the mountains above Queensland back up from the ocean. And we were there, good lord, we must have been there from July, August, September, October, November, December. We must have been there almost six months.

Mark: And so you, at this station, you were able to participate in the first American campaigns of the war? Oona or Coral Sea, perhaps?

Pinkerton: Well, then our airplanes were bombing Rabaul. They were bombing the northern coast of New Guinea. And they may even have been bombing a port in Morsby to begin with. The Japs were always in there too to carry that thing out. I think, yeah, we must have been bombing, I know one time after I'd been there two or three months, they were short of a ball turret gunner so they'd say, "Well, you know how to run one." I'd say, "Well, sure." And so we bombed Rabaul that night. And that was a long mission.

Mark: With you in the ball turret.

Pinkerton: Me in the ball turret, yeah. Got up to New Guinea, you know, and I was trying these guns to make sure everything worked and so forth 'cause we never had much chance to fly in them. [laughs] So I figured I've got to get used to this thing. And, apparently, somebody else was checking their guns and fired one shot and I must have fired one shot into the hills there. It's kind of a pretty primitive runway we had there and later on somebody said, "You know, Pinky, one more shot and that would have been signal for an air alert." He says, he was out there, he watched me and he says, "I watched these guys." And the guys were the engineers and stuff that were there. They heard the first shot and then they heard the second shot which is totally random. And they were like this, ready to run. Somebody said this was no place for nobody!

Mark: But you didn't go on any missions, did you?

Pinkerton: Just one.

Mark: So, when it came to actually, when it came to getting the planes in the combat, as the gun turret maintenance guy, what was your role? What did you do? How did combat operations affect your daily work? Did you come back shot up? Was it just maintenance?

Pinkerton: Some of them came back, we'd have to put new domes on them. Sometimes replaced the whole turret. But mostly it was just kind of bugs that went wrong. We eventually got a fellow by the name of Brewer and we had a tech sergeant there who was old Army man. I mean, he was a goat if you ask me. But Brewer and I kind of ran the shop. We had another guy with us there. So Brewer liked to work on the bomb sites. And he was good at it. And, of course, we always had to be taking them out and checking to see that everything was in balance and all that stuff. And then you had to go out there to see that the turrets ran and that the guns, we had more problems with the charging of the guns. You had to pull back on the hand charger lever them that way and make sure that the guns were, the armament guys cleaned the guns but we had to make sure that everything was working in the turret. That the motors worked right. And take the bomb sites out, the gun sites, I mean, the gun sites out. Check them in the shop. And it was hard, too. You know

they said don't let a lot of dust get in these things. Well, hell, here you are overseas, you know, with a tent to work in. No screens, no nothing. How do you keep the dust out of them? But Brewer was good at that. He didn't care about going out in the field and working on other parts and so we divided our work up like that. The tech order called for six or seven people to be on the turret maintenance staff. Well, let's see, there were three or four of us there but that's about all we ever had. And, how was that? Brewer got sick later on in the game. And he left, went back to the States, I think. So I had the gun sites and the turret to take care of. But every once in awhile a gunner would come along that couldn't fly anymore or had got his 50 missions in or didn't want to fly and got to know me and they said, "Well, you know, could I work with you on the turrets" And I said, "Sure, I'll show you how." And so from that it kind of developed that I'd get ex-gunners and they never did get any replacements who had been through the turret school. But I know the other squadrons did, they had five or six.

Mark: Did these guys work out well?

Pinkerton: Yeah, I could show them what to do. I didn't know the term then but -- the term was "If it aint broke, don't fix it" -- and, but I watched some of the other guys from the other squadrons. They'd haul their four, five guys down through the line and they'd be monkeying with the turrets all the time, fixing and stuff. We'd make our inspections and if they're all right, we'd leave them alone, be ready to go. And when the airplanes were taking off we were always right there 'cause the gunners were supposed to go in there and check out everything, you know, go through their own flight check. And if there's any problem, why they'd holler for us and we'd get in there and fix it up, find out about it. By and large, there wasn't any problem. We had them in good shape. And then they come back shot up -- I know once in awhile there in New Guinea, why I had crews out there and our guys would be out there working until 3:00, 4:00 in the morning. We'd get these gasoline engines out there, the mosquitoes would be biting us. But we never had an airplane in our squad that was on the red line for a lack of turret being able to go, which was, I think, one of the best records they had.

Mark: Now, on the B-17 there's an upper turret and then the ball turret.

Pinkerton: Four of them.

Mark: There are four of them?

Pinkerton: Yeah.

Mark: See, it shows how much I know. And you're responsible for all the turrets on an airplane?

Pinkerton: Twelve times four is forty-eight of them.

Mark: The ball turret is known as being the most particularly dangerous place to be. From your experience, having to fix that sort of thing, was that true? I mean, how were the Japanese air defenses? Did those guys seem to get it more than any of the other turrets?

Pinkerton: Well, you know. We worked with the B-17Ds, I think. There was B-17A, B, C and ones they had to begin with, at the beginning of the war, had a remote turret in the ball.

Mark: What do you mean a remote turret?

Pinkerton: Well, the gunner didn't actually get in it.

Mark: Oh, I see.

Pinkerton: He laid on his belly on the floor with another visual station and when he turned that station, turned it up and down and so forth, it was remote. And when he pulled the triggers, that's when the guns were supposed to fire. And they weren't worth a hoot. And the Japs soon caught on to it. They'd come up from the bottom of the airplanes and shoot them up. I wasn't in the outfit then. This is up in Jakarta, when the Japs hit Jakarta, and then they got so they couldn't do anything with it, they'd just sit there, they wouldn't run. So they figured out the idea of, they'd take these heavy guns out of them and put black sticks in them, and then the guy who was running the ball turret would sit there and kick it, make it look alive. I remember the story of, they had a factory representative come over there to Jakarta because it had been written up that the ball turret just goes round and round. And, so the factory representative, he come over there and he said, "Well, it's got to work. It worked back in Ohio back there when we built this thing there." And the same thing happened to him. You had a write up, you had a form like this to fill out about different things. And he used that whole form up just writing the words "ball turret, remote control turret, still goes round and round and round and round." So I guess they didn't, by the time I came over there in, with our B-17Ds I guess, we had the ones where you actually sat in them. Then later on when we got our B-24s we had the same turret. There's a friend of mine here in Madison who was a pilot over in Italy flying B-24s and, you know, one day he and I got in an argument about the retractable ball turrets. And I said, no there was no retractable ball turrets. We didn't have them. But he did. He had a picture of them. He showed me one flying, it was sucked up right into the gut of the airplane. So he had a B-17, B-24, I forget what model he had. But, anyhow, over there they had them so that they were retractable. Of course they got more speed that way. But you always had to be sure to crank,

get out of it, the gunner had to crank the guns down so that the opening to get into it would be faced right up. Then they could get into it, then they could hand-crank the turret into position so it could operate. An airplane came through here, I think last year or the year before, flying, restored B-24. Sure enough, all retractable mechanism was up there. And I know we never had that kind of stuff.

Mark: Do you think that's because they didn't allocate the resources to the Pacific that they did to Europe? Or is it just the way ...

Pinkerton: Oh, sure. They were losing 20 planes a day over there in Europe to our 1 a week. That's the way it looks to me like.

Mark: After, in Australia, up in the thumb as you said, I don't imagine it's too inhabited up there. I'm wondering what it was like, you know, on your off duty hours did you have contact with any Australians or monkeys or ...

Pinkerton: Oh, sure. I had a great time up there. About the second thing I did was to go look up an old car 'cause I'd always been used to having a car at hand and I bought an old Nash. It had been a nice four-door Nash, 1927. Imagine. This is 1944, '43, '42. Yeah. They had made it into a truck. Big old 21 inch wheels on it. I used that to get around the base to look at the turrets because we didn't have any, otherwise you had to haul your toolbox by hand. Later on we got a horse and tractor but then I'd take it into town. I could pull up into the same gas tanks they used to fill the airplanes up with, put gas in it. Hundred octane gas [laughs]. It ran, though. In the rainy season it would go past staff cars that were stuck in the mud. I could pull it out, big old wheels, you know. Take a bunch of guys into town and we'd go to dances. I used to watch the armament guys load the bombs. They'd get down there and they'd have to sweat like blazes cranking these 1,000 pound bombs up there. It was a slow job and I figured, well geeze we've got extra motors from these turrets here. Hook them up, hook them up with some pulleys, wrap that around a bomb and push the switch and it would just run it right up there. So in the process of making all those gears and pulleys and stuff, I got acquainted with the machinist in town. He had a nice little daughter but she was young, 15, but she was a good dancer and I used to go to Wednesday night dances with her. But his machine shop struck me as something out of the 1900s. But it was the only one I had to work with. So I finally got this thing ready for a test and that motor, we ran it until it was red hot and she wouldn't do the work. I just didn't have small enough gears to run her up like that. But, anyhow, I had a lot of fun trying it. And I think I got some of the other fellows interested in the fact that you could do some things and keep inventing things while you're over here. Making them better.

Mark: I get the impression that the Americans got along well with the Australians. That there wasn't any sort of tensions or anything. You know, the Americans in Britain, the saying was they were over paid, over sexed, and over here. Sometimes there were some problems. I don't get the impression that that was too much of a problem--

Pinkerton: I don't think our guys bothered the girls over there. They had these Wednesday night dances. They had spinach sandwiches for breaks. A piano and violin for an orchestra in some church building. But I think we were a pretty good bunch of guys. We didn't bother anything. Mostly we stayed in our camp. When they had something going on in town we'd go in there but we weren't obnoxious about it. I got my first look at a mango tree, the machinist had a great big one in his backyard. But it wasn't the mango season so I never got to eat one there. I did out in the Philippines, in New Guinea.

Mark: So, New Guinea. When did you get to New Guinea?

Pinkerton: Well, I--

Mark: You were actually based at an air base in New Guinea somewhere?

Pinkerton: Yeah. Seventeen miles, what it means is what 17 miles back inland from Port Moresby. They had like a two mile base, five mile base, eight mile base so with the big bombers, we were back at seventeen mile base. So I think, early in December they must have had an advanced echelon and I was on it to go up there and start hacking trees off, getting the ground ready to have more tents on it. So, yeah, our outfit, I think, got up there around mid-December 1942. 'Cause I remember for Christmas Day they had gone down and got us some decent food from Australia otherwise it was all this canned stuff. And we had laid out planks on top of barrels, old oil drums, and there was our Christmas meal spread out there. We had gone in the mess hall, stand up, no chairs, no mess hall was built yet. We had a great time eating our Christmas meal. I remember that. I should have gotten a picture but I didn't.

Mark: So, you had to construct this air base in the middle of a jungle.

Pinkerton: Well, of course, the Seabees had been there and they laid out a half way runway. Runways are built on gravel and then they had these metal things laid over that. I don't know if you know about this.

Mark: I've seem film but I don't have any particular knowledge about it.

Pinkerton: The big sheets, they had holes in them. But they'd pack a runway down with gravel, run over it as best they could and then in order to keep the gravel own and give the airplanes something to work on so they wouldn't get bogged

down in the gravel of the runway, they'd have these heavy metal sheets with holes. It must have been probably 1 1/4 - 1 1/2 inch in diameter. And that worked very well, too. When the airplane would land, it would be brrrrttt, there would be rattling as they hit these metal sheets but it worked. And they had, the Infantry, you see, had gone on over the hump by the time we got there. But those guys dug foxholes that were deep, let me tell you. And us Air Force guys were supposed to learn how to build foxholes back in Rabaul and, you know, we built them about three feet deep. They build them about six feet, seven feet. I remember the first day that I got up there on advanced echelon, I kind of looked around to see where there was an Infantry foxhole and I spotted one down hillside there. And, sure enough, that night the air raid signal had come on and the Japs were air raiding and they said, "Where will we go?" I said, "I know where there's a foxhole. Come on, follow me." So I ran down there to this foxhole at 2:00 in the morning and it was dark and I was going to jump in with my left foot and hit bottom and drag my right foot in. But I didn't hit bottom. And my right foot was still hanging crossways across the foxhole. But the other guys didn't know that so the guys come climbing in on top of me and boy, that right knee of mine got really bent out of shape. Swelled up as big as a basketball almost. But we had no medical facilities at the time so I just kept working every day anyhow and hobbling around on it and in a couple of weeks it was okay again.

Mark: And so at this base, I assume your targets had moved farther towards Japan. I mean it was still Rabaul or the Philippines by this time?

Pinkerton: Yeah. No, it was still Rabaul. Yeah, damn it was still Rabaul.

Mark: I know they bombed the hell out that place. I was wondering, did you move just to get closer to Rabaul or were you going to get like Indonesia or the Philippines or something like that?

Pinkerton: Well, I think, you know -- you ask me what we're going to do. Well, all I was doing was doing the turret work. I don't know what the big guys were thinking. But as it worked out Rabaul was kind of a thorn in our side. We wanted to quiet that beast down. I guess the Navy did use it for a theater of operation. But we never used it for a place -- Truk Island was one we were after. That was on the way to Japan. And we sent out a lot of reconnaissance missions. I don't know where we got -- I know one time an airplane came back and we had to pull the navigator out of the nose turret. He was dead. I don't know that I really kept up with where the missions were going all the time. When they came back from a mission I suppose we knew at the time but I can't tell you now. But then we always had to check all the turrets when they came back. Check with the gunners to see how everything went. Was there anything wrong. And if so then we would write it in our own notebook and get it fixed by the time the next mission was coming up. That way we got to

know the gunners. I enjoyed that work. The only thing, we were always short of parts. And when we got to New Guinea I told the captain, I says, "You know, the tech supply, technical supply, they're still back there in Barraba." And I said, "I know they've got a whole bunch of parts there that we ought to have right up here with us." And the captain said, "Well, maybe we ought to figure out a way so you can go back and get them." So I did. They flew me back there. And I had all the parts loaded on an airplane, C-47, and loaded up there and then I took off for a week on vacation.

Mark: And where did you go?

Pinkerton: I bought a motorcycle for 150 pounds. An old Royal Infield. Damn near killed myself on it. 'Cause I thought well I'll go from where we were at Barraba was up in the highlands. To get down to the coast, you had to go down these narrow, hairpin turn roads from the mountains down into the plains there. And, you know, their roads there were narrow. One car at a time. An hour and a half one way and have the guy at the other end say, "Well, in an hour and a half you can go this way. We got all the cars down." So here I am going down this just gravel and I came to an outside, hairpin turn. And I couldn't downshift this thing. The damn gears got stuck and all of a sudden here I realized I was too close to the turn. I'd have to do something. So I got in an outside rut so I thought now I'll see if I can put the break on, get around on an inside rut going around this outside hairpin turn. I thought this isn't going to work. To hell with it. I'll just jump up and leave it run out from under me. Then I thought, you know I've got this great big B-4 bag [Air Force carrying bag] hanging down behind. I can't jump that high. I'm going to have to ride this thing around. So, I must have got it slowed down enough going around this turn and I looked over the edge there and I saw these great big 300 foot trees down there. They looked like shrubs. I thought oh, boy, that's a long ways to fall. So I got around the turn and I got the thing stopped. And I waited and finally a truck came along and I says I'm done riding this thing. So we threw it on the back of a flatbed truck and when I got down to the bottom I saw MPs down there. I said, "You guys want a good motorcycle? I just paid 150 pounds for it but you can have it." That was the end of my motorcycle riding over there so I had to bum around after -- getting into cabs, get back to the base and fly back up to New Guinea.

Mark: And that was your leave?

Pinkerton: Yeah, kind of.

Mark: So from New Guinea you went to the Island of Owi. How do you pronounce that, O-w-i?

Pinkerton: Well, don't know what I wrote there.

Mark: I'm not sure where this is. I've never heard of the place.

Pinkerton: Actually I think we went across -- see New Guinea has an island, a row of mountains running down through it called the "hump." And we went to Dobodura if I remember right, which is on the north side of New Guinea. And by that time we had a bunch of equipment and we were flying, we were supposed to load it into C-47s, and I, poor guy, I remember when they said okay, the armament stuff would be loaded into this C-47 over here and we want to know what the weight is. So we had stuff all boxed up, we'd been working for a week or so on it. Got it down there, put it in the C-47, called off for the manifest this box weighs so much, this box weighs so much. Loaded her up, three or four of us were supposed to ride in the C-47, get across this and we could unload it when we got to Dobodura. That poor pilot, he circled about four or five times trying to get height enough to cross the mountains. He couldn't make it. We were loaded too heavy, of course. I never saw a pilot so mad, and so burned up and so red faced as when he got out of that airplane. He said, "Don't you guys ever do this to me again." He says, "I want every bit of this stuff that's on here put on a scale. I want to know just how much is really on here." And I think it was at least twice as much as we said it had been. We had just guessed, of course. That was terrible. Yeah, we were at Dobodura for, I think we must have been there for not too long. I'd say maybe a month or two and then I think we went up the coast to Hollandia. But we flew missions, see we were always trying to get a little closer to the Japs so that our missions wouldn't have to be so long.

Mark: Well, on New Guinea I'm sure the social life of the Air Force Technical Sergeant or whatever was much different than it was in Australia.

Pinkerton: No towns, no taverns. We had, it was an officer's club eventually and, but we'd, I got pictures here of the natives there.

Mark: I was going to ask you if you had any contact with the native peoples at all.

Pinkerton: Well, I didn't. I had pictures of them. Other people had taken them but I didn't get to know any of them. But, you know, they had movies for us and once in awhile. I don't know that Bob Hope ever came to where we were. And some of the [unintelligible], we didn't get to see them I don't think.

Mark: Did you--

Pinkerton: No beer.

Mark: No beer?

Pinkerton: No beer. Once in a great while. We'd make, we got so we'd make, we'd get some dried figs and raisins and stuff and sugar and yeast -- some of the guys knew how to do that. And we watched it until it was getting ready to about put in the still. Pretty thick stuff, you know. And then we got to checking it out to see if it was ready for the still and that's as far as it ever got.

Mark: 'Cause you had to move on?

Pinkerton: No, we'd drink it up [laughs]. Big party night when it was ready.

Mark: I was curious about the natives 'cause in *The National Geographic* you can see there's the long lost tribe of New Guinea somewhere and they worship an airplane or something. I was curious to know if you had ever met any of the natives. Apparently, not.

Pinkerton: We'd see them walking by. And, you know, the girls would be, you know, and the fellows, would be pretty much naked. It didn't bother us. They seemed, about the time us Air Force guys got there they'd got used to us. And, of course, in the southern part of New Guinea, by Port Moresby, the Australians had been there. It wasn't all that strange to them I don't think. Guys used to kid, you know, the longer you've been here, you know, the lighter those skins are going to look to you.

Mark: I was just curious about, you came from Madison, Wisconsin -- western civilization. And you get into a remote area like this and see people living this sort of lifestyle, these conditions or whatever, how does a middle-class young American view people running around the jungle in loin cloths or whatever. Did it seem strange to you at the time? I mean this is before political correctness and all these kinds of things. How did it seem to you? In 1943?

Pinkerton: I knew about natives. It didn't bother me any. We were in the native jungles here and was—

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

Pinkerton: --Is the sounds of the birds in the morning. These exotic birds. Oh, I thought it was just great. They'd be calling to each other, back and forth. Birds that I had never heard before, you know. Didn't know what their name was. And here we were among all these wild trees and stuff.

Mark: You mean wild animals? Menace to the base?

Pinkerton: Didn't even see any alligators.

Mark: So--

Pinkerton: One thing we did have over there though. An airplane came back one time. It was shot up bad enough so apparently they couldn't get their landing gear down and all the crew bailed out. And they put it on automatic pilot and headed it out to the sea but something must have happened to it. It didn't go out to sea. Can you imagine? Here we were. Seventeen mile air base and, you know, there was our five squadrons, headquarters squadrons, and four squadrons of combat airplanes and B-26 squadrons in groups, the B-25 squadrons in groups and here's this airplane circling around the whole area like that from about 2:00 in the afternoon 'till about 4:30 or 5:00 at night. Every little bit lower. Where is this thing going to come down? That was a real sweat job.

Mark: Where did it come down finally?

Pinkerton: Well, finally, I guess if I was to say it hit southwest of us about, not over five or six miles I don't think. It crashed into a hillside there and burned. A big fire went up. We said, well who's over there? But apparently nobody was over there. That was really an afternoon. I won't forget that one.

Mark: I'm sure.

Pinkerton: I hadn't thought of that one until now.

Mark: I think I'm pretty much through with New Guinea. I think I had something I wanted to ask and maybe I'll come back to it. I've still ...

Pinkerton: I got malaria. I think, if I remember right, we moved up the coast.

Mark: I did make a note about disease here. You got malaria in New Guinea?

Pinkerton: I think so. Yeah, I'm sure I did. I think we moved up the coast from Dobodura to Hollandia, which is kind of going westward and northward, and I must have come down with malaria then. See I'd been over there all this time and all the guys were supposed to take atabrine every day. I never took it. Didn't believe in it. I know when I got back they sent me some, the veterans here sent me some kind of a thing about did I have a recurrent attack of malaria, which I never did. And I attributed it to the fact that they told us that the times when you're feeling worse are the times when these malaria bugs are in your bloodstream. And, of course in the hospital, we were taking atabrine, quinine, whatever it was. I suspect it was atabrine. And so they said you want to move your body around, not just lay there. Said you could get all the bugs out of your bloodstream but you had to work on them. So, the day I really felt the worst I thought, well, I'll go for a long walk and I hiked up way into the mountains up there and I get up there and found a nice cool stream. I thought,

oh, this is so nice on a hot day. I just took a nice cool bath in the stream and came back down again. But I attributed that day to the fact that I was never bothered anymore with malaria. And I think that they said, well, maybe, I forget if my records shows that they deducted 14 days from me or not because I was sick without having taken atabrine. But I don't think I cared.

Mark: Now, this bought with malaria was fairly common among Americans in the South Pacific.

Pinkerton: Yeah.

Mark: From your perspective, were there a lot of guys who got sick, in your view?

Pinkerton: Yeah, sure. There were guys who were taking atabrine every day but they had two or three different times that they were sick with malaria.

Mark: Was it just malaria? Or were there, berry-berry seems to be one of the other things, trench foot, things that might not affect an Air Force guy himself.

Pinkerton: It was just malaria. Later on, I think in Owi, Fitzgerald, well, he was always bothered with what we called the New Guinea crud and some of us, a lot of guys were. Well, you know, you're sweating so much of the time and if you eat a lot of salt you get it under your arms, between your legs and so forth. It's kind of itchy and stuff like that. So, not everybody got it. But, I never got it because I didn't eat much salt. Well, he did.

Mark: As you went up into the Philippines, to jump ahead a little bit, was malaria still a problem when you got there? Or were people pretty much used to it by then?

Pinkerton: They might have got a little malaria in Leyte. It was swampy and muddy. I missed part of that though. See, we went from Hollandia to Owi. Well, that was like an island aircraft carrier is what it was.

Mark: Now, where is that island? I don't know where that is.

Pinkerton: Well, it's in the middle of nowhere. It's northwest of New Guinea.

Mark: New Guinea -- in the Philippines?

Pinkerton: Yup. We kept moving that way. It was a pretty bare island. I think it must have been a coral reef because our tents were right on the edge of the ocean. And I know when the tide came in we had water in our tent floor. It was just a dirt floor maybe two or three inches high. And when the tide would go out then it was nice. When you wanted to go swimming you walked across about

150 yards of pretty cutting coral reef to get out where the water was deep enough to swim in. So the only way you could get out there was to wear an old pair of tennis shoes to keep your feet from being all sliced to pieces. But the water was a problem there. Because you could only get fresh water for a short time out of a well and then it would begin to get brackish. So you had to keep drilling new wells.

Mark: Were there any--

Pinkerton: That was in Owi that I, I snuck along on one mission en route to Hollandia. And ground men weren't supposed to go on missions. But I went anyhow and when I come back the crew said, "you know, Captain Noise is looking for you Pinky." So I figured, well, when we come to slide into revetment, spin the airplane around, I'll jump out. You guys just have to make up a story that I wasn't with you. So Captain Noise was watching every airplane that came in to revetment. Where is this guy, you know. So I was able to jump off and get on the revetment and get on the other side of it. And sure enough our turret people were coming around there in our fort support tractor there and I jumped onto it. I came round in revetment just as though I'd been around there all the time and he says, "Where have you been?" I says, "Well, I was over seeing my friend Howie Fisch over in this other outfit. I just got back." He never knew the difference.

Mark: Got away with that one.

Pinkerton: But we were flying some very short missions out of Owi.

Mark: You were going to the Philippines by now? Is that were--

Pinkerton: No, still in Owi.

Mark: No, I'm saying where were the targets that you knew of? 'Cause you have passed the ball. I've got the map in my head and you're passing the ball.

Pinkerton: I guess they went to Iwo Jima.

Mark: That's a minor point.

Pinkerton: They might have been flying up into southern Luzon, Leyte. It's like I said, it doesn't stick in my head where all they were going. But wherever it was they'd be back in a couple of hours. And so the bombs were loaded with the armament ready to drop otherwise, on a long mission, they didn't disarm the bombs. They didn't pull the wire out of them. That always had to be done by someone who'd go around in the bomb bays and pull them out. So, here, they were already to explode. And I had it lined up with the support crew that I

would fly along on one of these short missions with them. They had an extra flying suit in there for me. One of our gunners had a problem charging his guns and I had to work with him a little extra to show him how. He didn't know how to do it, I guess. He was doing it wrong. And so I lost time. And so Jesse Fulton and I were sitting in our jeep at the edge of the runway and here's Captain Noise across the way and I thought uh, oh, you'll just have to go without me 'cause he'll see me get in the airplane. Well, as luck would have it, Ford's airplane didn't make it. It was a pretty short runway and you almost had to be in the air before you got to the runway otherwise you'd drop down and be in the ocean. And so he tried to bounce the airplane and somehow in bouncing it the thing swerved on him and he went around to the left like that. And the only guy that lived out of that was the co-pilot who was thrown out of the window. I know there were some guys that were in the, the gunners were back there and they got out of the bomb bay doors and they were kind of crawling away on their hands and knees when the bombs went off. It just like petrified them there in that crawling motion. God, it was terrible. Wow. I looked at Jesse Fulton and I said, "You know, I'm not going to try to go on any more missions that I don't belong on."

Mark: After witnessing that?

Pinkerton: Yup. That was too close.

Mark: I had a question -- oh, on Owi, were you familiar with the term "rock happy?" That's a term some vets of the South Pacific use? Apparently not.

Pinkerton: I don't think so.

Mark: This is even, perhaps even more remote than New Guinea was? I mean, you're on a little island and there's you guys and probably not even any natives.

Pinkerton: No natives that I know of. Yeah. I went home on furlough from Owi.

Mark: Home to--

Pinkerton: To Madison.

Mark: --the United States. So, you must have been based there quite awhile then.

Pinkerton: No, not too long. But they come out with a memorandum that said, you know, if you've been over here "x" number of months why you can sign up to go home on furlough for 30 days. But then you'll come back at the bottom of the rotation list.

Mark: I see.

Pinkerton: You start all over again. I figure, well, what have I got to lose? We're going to be here for the next ten years anyhow. So I signed up. And I was the first guy to sign up. I said, boy that's for me. I'll take 30 days. I'll take a chance on after. The rest of them were kind of hesitant about it. But then a few days later this Goldbrick I told you about, he signed up. And so as the list came out they said well, Fritz goes but you don't. Gee, I raised holy hell about that. I went to see the captain. I say, "What is this? Here we are fighting for democracy. You said the first guy who signed up went and now you're letting this guy go." As it turned out we both went. By this time our turrets weren't having much trouble.

Mark: All the bugs had been worked out of them.

Pinkerton: Well, they weren't being shot up much either. The Japs knew better than to tangle with us. But our tail gunner said that they wished that they had more ammunition because sometimes they ran out. So I spent about, well I spent a good week figuring out how we could get another set of ammunition for the side of the airplane and track it all the way through into the turret and make it work with booster motors. And I know when I finally got it ready to do, I put it together, I worked day and night for about 48 hours. Took it up for a test out, boy, it worked beautiful. Came down I was just pooped out. And they said, "Pinkerton, you're on KP tomorrow morning." 'Cause I had said to another guy that was a corporal, he was always bitching about being on KP, well, I said, "Clinton, next time you're on KP, let me know and I'll pull it for you." Well, that was the day.

Mark: The last time you, see volunteering can get you in trouble.

Pinkerton: Well, we had fresh chicken. One of the few times that we had fresh chicken there. Get all we want to eat. So, what was so wrong about that?

Mark: So, the Philippines, it had to be '45 by the time you got to the Philippines?

Pinkerton: Yup. Yeah, I went home. I was home for Thanksgiving.

Mark: Oh yeah. I meant to ask, what was your trip like back to the States? I mean, how had things changed in Madison or not changed, whatever the case may be?

Pinkerton: Well, we flew to Hawaii and then from Hawaii we flew to San Francisco. Of course the first thing a bunch of us did was to get drunk and be put in the slammer by the MPs. Then get on the train and ride west, or eastward to Madison. I must have told my dad that I was, I couldn't tell him when I was

going to get there, so he must have been meeting trains for the last three days before I got there.

Mark: This was over on West Wash, I take it?

Pinkerton: No, unh unh. It was toward King Street. The Northwestern train came in there. And there was a football game going on that weekend. And a bunch of people were drinking and stuff. I was going to go out and party with some of them. So I get off the train and there's my dad. He said, "Well, coming home?" I said, "No, I'm going to party with these guys here." "No," he says, "you're not. You're coming home." See, I was about three sheets to the wind at that time.

Mark: Well, it was probably cold for a guy who was running around the jungles. Thanksgiving.

Pinkerton: Yeah, it was cold. Quite a change. But I was dressed for it I guess. Heavy overcoat. But I know I got home. It was just my dad and mother. My sisters were already, one of them was married, the other was out going to college, left home. Well, there wasn't a heck of a lot going on in town. There was some dances that I tried to go to and spend some time in the taverns. I didn't really get to meet anybody there. I'd get home about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning and sleep 'till 10:00 and go over and help my dad with the apartments a little bit once in awhile. Then get together with our family get-togethers.

Mark: That's nice relaxing time.

Pinkerton: Yeah, it was good to be home.

Mark: Well, there was rationing going on at this time. Some of the civilians were, you know, couldn't get all the things they wanted to. But as someone stuck out in New Guinea, did you notice the rationing at all? Did things seem plentiful to you? Did you think the civilians were complaining too much. Or just not give it a thought?

Pinkerton: Well, I remember one time that we had been painting in one of the apartments and we always cleaned our brushes out with gasoline 'cause it was cheaper than turpentine. I figure we had lots of it. So, I was out in the backyard which is a gravel yard there and well, I guess I was not very frugal in the use of the gasoline to clean the brushes out with and my dad says, "You know. Be careful with that stuff. It's hard to get." "Oh, hell," I said, "we've got all kinds of it over there." Which we did have, you know 'cause I always used to open up the gas petcock from the airplane and let it drip on a bunch of six-packs of beer to cool. It worked very well. So, yeah, it was hard for them to get gas. I don't know that we were short of any particular food though.

Maybe he and my mother had been stocking up on food so that they would have enough when they come home. I didn't hear anybody really griping that much.

Mark: The reason I ask, a few, not many but some, veterans will complain that they didn't feel that the civilians appreciated the sacrifices they were making. It doesn't seem to have been an issue for you.

Pinkerton: Well, to me it was all one great big adventure. I didn't really consider it as sacrifice, I guess, in the first place.

Mark: Yeah. Okay, so 30 days back home, you had a nice holiday with your family. Went back to the South Pacific then.

Pinkerton: Went back to San Francisco, caught a hell of a cold. Turned in the hospital for a few days. Then when I got over that, we had westerly winds that were blowing at us. Finally, it must have calmed down enough so that we thought we could fly planes to Hawaii. I know I was on an airplane and we flew about at least three hours, maybe four, towards Hawaii. We weren't making very much headway and we turned around and in one hour we were back at the base.

Mark: That's a pretty stiff wind.

Pinkerton: That was stiff. But eventually I got back to Hawaii. And that was the time the airplane that I rode on was a guy that was ferrying it over, still a new airplane that he was working with, and you're supposed to fly them pretty rich. Instead of landing there at Hickam Field where we're supposed to land, we landed on the eastern-most island and half way up the runway the airplane ran out of gas. I thought, well, that's cutting it pretty close. When I got back then our outfit had moved to Leyte. What a mud hole that was.

Mark: Was it the worst accommodations you had yet, do you think?

Pinkerton: Yeah.

Mark: It was something you commented on that didn't comment on [unintelligible].

Pinkerton: Yeah. We had to build, well, we had to walk through swamp and stuff to get from the mess hall to where our tents were and so forth. I had an accordion that I picked up in Barraba. Built a box for it and when I finally found that it had been set out in the rain -- it must have had rain, rain, rain -- the one time I was gone there. And so the keyboard looked like a rollercoaster. I threw that one away. It was really soaked. But going into the city of Leyte, was it [unintelligible], maybe Leyte. But that was my first introduction to brothels.

Mark: Is that right? It's what the Philippines are famous for. Or were. I guess there are no bases there any more. Well, this brings up dealing with the peoples of the Philippines and how they got along with the Americans. How were relations between the Americans and Filipinos?

Pinkerton: I think they were glad to see us. I didn't get any bad reactions from them. I got to know a family when we got to Clark Field. We weren't at Leyte very long, then we moved up to Clark Field.

Mark: Was that any different? Pretty much the same sort of--

Pinkerton: No, it was nice living up there. Of course, it was an old base, you know. It was dry and it was sunshiny by that time. And I found out that the Japs had a motor pool and that they had brought a lot of vehicles in before they were chased out. So I said that would be interesting. I'm going to go back up there and get me a car, if I have to fix it up. Well, I ended up with a three-wheeled weapons carrier, Jap weapons carrier. Harley Davidson weapons carrier. Horrible thing. But I had to drag it back home 'cause it didn't run. The wheels were all there and everything else was steerable on it. I went back and got another one so I had one for spare parts. But the magnetos didn't work on them. I found out that I could make it work by using a 24 volt battery. Just hook the two terminals on the weak part of the battery, on 6 volt. When that got worn out then I'd hook it to 12 volt, then up to 18 volt, and finally after 24 volt wore off then I'd go and get another battery [laughs]. But I used that then, of course, to get around the base with our tools and so forth. I'd go into town then. 'Cause I could haul people in the back-end of it.

Mark: You were a popular guy, huh?

Pinkerton: Well, yeah. We had a lot of fun that way. So I get to know the Solun family there. I know they had a little guy -- what the hell was his name? He would come up to me, we'd go up there and have supper with them once in awhile, and he swore up and down I think to himself, if I talk slow enough to him he will understand me. So he'd speak real slow. This little guy was only five years old, you know. I thought that was pretty cute, too. Like, you know, he took his shoes off. You'd walk up this flight of stairs to get up 'cause they're all built on stilts, and at night time why you'd -- see those guys had, you couldn't leave anything in a motorcycle because they'd swipe it out. At one time I had a nice clean shirt that I had under the seat and came back to get it and it was gone. But they had evening parties and these little red lanterns around, people would play their guitars and sing "Shooting to the Moon" what were some of these other songs, and we'd sing. We knew them, too. They were songs that the Americans knew. And we'd get rice and fried chicken around there, at restaurants. And after being there a couple of weeks I saw

how the officers were getting nice tents with floors on them and doors and stuff, and screened in. I thought, hey, this is pretty good. Us enlisted men, we just had plain old tents, you know. And, so, I said to our bomb site guys and our turrets guys, I said, "You know," I said, "we can get that." 'Cause I had figured out that up at Baguio the ships come in and they have a lot of lumber that they unload, we can use for ballast. We could make all kinds of stuff out of that. We could get screening. So one of the other guys, he got himself about three bottles of whiskey so we could bribe ourselves past the guards up there and we got a six-by-six truck from the motor pool and the only stipulation there was, you know, you can't leave until the crew's all come back 'cause the crews by this time were bombing Japan. So when they come back and the trucks are refueled and stuff, well, you can get it but you've got to be back here by 5:00 in the morning so the crews can go out again. So, you know, it didn't give us a lot of time to go up to Baguio, get loaded and come back. I drove the truck up there. We had five of us with us. I know one time it was dusk and, see I'd drive on the left-hand side of the road, and there was a caribou in front of us pulling a wagon. A caribou is like a very gentle cow. It's their burden of beast over there. Well, he was pulling this cartilla. And coming towards us was a jeep. And here we had, I had it floored, 55 miles an hour, 50, whatever. Fast as this thing would go. And I said, now is this jeep going to get past us in time so that I can cut around and pass up this cartilla? And I had it figured out in my mind that, yeah, I think this will work. Then the thought occurred to me, what if that guy is pulling a trailer? And so I thought, I can't go quite yet. And sure enough, he's pulling a trailer. I said, uh oh, here goes that cartilla and their caribou.

Mark: In the ditch or whatever.

Pinkerton: But I missed them. It was close. But I'll never forget that. I don't want to be that close again. We used -- Goodland was the guy who knew about liquor so he could talk to the guards. Where were we going? Well, we wanted to get in there and get some lumber and stuff. They'd let us by. 'Cause we didn't have a pass, we didn't have nothing, you know. I think we used up all three bottles of liquor getting our stuff loaded. But when we got there we loaded the truck full of lumber. I don't think we lost any of it on the way back. Another fellow drove on the way back.

Mark: And you had some nice quarters afterwards.

Pinkerton: Oh, yeah. I may have a picture of that tent. But we built it on a hillside and I built in a photo lab down in the bottom which could be a darkroom and I'd get pictures from all kinds of guys around there and the negatives and so forth and they'd bring them in and I'd develop them and keep some of them. Of course, I took some myself. We had it screened in. We had quite a setup. We liked that.

Mark: Now, in the Philippines, you had more of the amenities of the things you get accustomed to as an American. Did you have more access to alcohol? It sounds like it. You were able to get a couple bottles of whiskey and that sort of thing. You mentioned the brothels and these kinds of things. Did you black market -- were you able to get a good steak and all these kinds of things? I mean that was, after having come out of New Guinea, Owi -- to come to the Philippines, a place where you could get things like this.

Pinkerton: Well, when we got to -- I don't think, I forget what it was in Leyte, they could go in there and get a meal once in awhile but it was so crummy I didn't like to go in there. But in Clark Field, when you got up there they had revived a old Philippine old beer plant, brewery. And, you see, they were turning out the beer -- it was green. The guys were drinking it and slugging it down. I couldn't stand it. So, they had these water tanks that the Army had, like a trailer but it was tanks so that you could carry water in it but they would fill this thing up with this beer from this green brewery, green beer, bring it back to camp and you'd wind up with your mess cup there and everybody got one mess cup full. After you'd been around once you could go around again if there was any left. So the guys thought this is just great. I never did understand about that green beer.

Mark: You say green. I'm not sure I understand.

Pinkerton: Well, it hadn't had a chance to age, you know.

Mark: Oh, it was brand new. I see.

Pinkerton: Yeah. It really hadn't fermented. It was drinking it up, the guys just drank it. You used to hear stories about guys drinking this coconut stuff. I don't think it was, you know, any of our guys, but I heard stories about it.

Mark: Coconut liquor or something?

Pinkerton: Yeah. You see--

Mark: If liquor is actually the term you even use for such a thing?

Pinkerton: Drilled a hole in the whole coconut when there was still a lot of juice inside and try to get it to ferment. Well, hell, guys poured gasoline in there, too. And then, you know, it would do stuff. They'd get it out, they'd drink it and they'd go blind. Dummies.

Mark: That sounds very dangerous.

Pinkerton: It was.

Mark: Did, in trying to get drunk or whatever, did this sort of thing start to effect operations? Or is it just good clean fun?

Pinkerton: Well, I don't think they got enough of it to bother them. Didn't have that much. They could get a drink of beer, you know, once a week whenever the truck would come around with it. But actually the officers who had to fly the airplanes, they got better stuff than that I imagine. They had markets where you could go and buy fresh stuff and I remember that I'd go in there and I'd get mangos, papayas, 25 centavos apiece. I'd get a whole bunch of them and bring them back to camp. Let the other guys have some. Then we could go to mess hall, I'd have mangos and chicken or fresh meat or whatever they had and we got so we could go to Mabalacat to a restaurant. Did a nice rice meal. It took them forever to get their chicken out. I swear they had to go out and kill them first. One guy, what the hell was his name, not Haler but another guy, it got to be 11:00 at night. We'd all done eating and ready to go back to base and he'd say, "You know, I'd like to have another of that." Good lord. So we'd wait, it would be 1:00 before we could get done eating that because they had to go out and find another chicken and kill it, and cook it. So we got so we'd say to him, if we ever went in there again, we'd say, "Listen, are you going with one or with two. Make up your mind now."

Mark: Did the Americans get along well with the Filipinos or were the Americans respectful of the Filipino culture? Were there tensions between them? In Vietnam there was the "G" word, a common term that they would use to describe Vietnamese.

Pinkerton: Gooks?

Mark: Yeah. Was there much of that in the Philippines. After all, we were all fighting the Japanese. It was a different situation but, you know, to get at some of the [unintelligible] at the time.

Pinkerton: I don't think, I don't really think so. I got in the rice business there. These people that I got to know there. They said, "You know, it's rice time. We can go up in the fields out there and buy rice and bring it down and sell it for more money." We'd get these big 50 pound sacks of cabanas full of rice. So, we did. I went up there with these guys. Of course, I footed the bill. They knew I had the money. They didn't have any money. I think we bought five or six of them like that and took them back to -- Tacloban was the Filipino town when we lived there. Mabalacat was were we got our meals once in awhile when we went into town. And he put them under his porch. I said, "Why don't we bring them down to Manilla and sell them?" "No," he said, "the price isn't right yet." Well, sure as hell, the time came for me to go home.

The rotation list came up. And what happened was that I'd been over there 36 months. When I went on furlough they said I would start at the bottom of the rotation list. But then they changed the rules and they went by the point system. And if you'd been over there in active combat for "x" number of months, so the guys that were in my outfit that had been with me all the time, they went back only a month before I did 'cause I lost that month or a month and a half, whatever it was, going back to the States. So I never did get to see the rest of that rice deal. [laughs]

Mark: Anything else on the Philippines?

Pinkerton: Not that I can think about.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

Pinkerton: Baguio was the place where the officers went for rest and recreation. I guess the enlisted men did, too when they want to put in furlough. Well, I learned a little bit of Tagalog. [says where are you going in Tagalog], where are you going?

Mark: But you picked up some German. Perhaps you have a knack for picking up tongues. I don't know. Was it necessary to learn Tagalog? Did a lot of guys do it? Or was that just an interest of yours.

Pinkerton: Yeah. I got a fella mad at me one time 'cause I had used a good word that had two meanings.

Mark: You have to watch out for that.

Pinkerton: I know it. It meant either "you're crazy" or "you're a son of a bitch." [says the word], that was the word. And I yelled it out at some Filipino who was passing and, boy, he got sore. He was going to come back and do me in, you know.

Mark: Here is the "ugly American" right here.

Pinkerton: Yeah, right. I could kid with them. I rode on their buses, you know. And they had these balut. A balut is a fertilized egg that apparently sold for more money than unfertilized egg. And they'd take and draw a pencil line two ways around them. Once around the middle and once around from north to south. And that's when I got acquainted with that. I was on this little bus going to Manilla, loaded with Filipinos. You've maybe seen pictures of them, people still hanging out the ends, you know. Little, bitty buses. Of course, they're smaller people, you know. They didn't get that big.

Mark: Now, one more thing about the Philippines. The Japanese had just left. There were places in the Philippines where the Japanese still were. Did you see much evidence of the Japanese occupation? Did the people talk about it much? Did you see wasted fields? Wasted towns? Those kinds of things? From what you could tell, was the Japanese occupation particularly harsh?

Pinkerton: They had a plant over there called a “kamotee” and apparently the people over there, it’s like a little sweet potato as near as I could figure out. But the Filipinos figured it was only fit for pigs to eat. But when the Japs were there, that’s all they had to eat was these “kamotees.” Of course, they had their fresh stuff, you know. They cooked stuff all the time, some rice. So, I didn’t get it that the Filipinos that were there were starved when the Japs were there. As far as buildings is concerned, you know, they weren’t wrecked. Clark Field was there yet. They hadn’t wrecked that. The poor guys out in Bataan. That was another story, I guess. I didn’t get down there.

Mark: Okay. Where are we on this tape. We’ve got some time yet. So, they switched over to a point system.

Pinkerton: Yeah.

Mark: And all of a sudden in the daily mail your orders came to say you’re going home. This is before the nuclear attack?

Pinkerton: Yeah. This was in July, yeah, of ‘45.

Mark: Do you recall your reaction? Everyone’s seen M*A*S*H and I hate to bring in movie and TV images to these kinds of things but, you know, Hawkeye gets his orders or whatever and they’re waiving them around and they’re all happy to be going home. I’m trying to imagine the scene. What people are talking about, what you think when you are reading this piece of paper.

Pinkerton: I must have been just dumb struck. But I must have heard about the changes in the rules before then. What did I do? I figured, gee, there’s hardly even time to write home to tell them I’ll be home but I must have done that. It looks like my 36 months total here is coming up. And there were quite, I don’t know, I must have been over there a little longer than some guys but there were some of us that were going, from our outfit that were going, and we flew back down to a port in New Guinea -- I think it was Hollandia -- to wait for a boat. Of course, these guys, a lot of them partied at night places the night before we were going to leave. And these guys were ...

Mark: Getting ready to leave the Philippines.

Pinkerton: Yeah, before we were going to leave the base there. So these guys, about half of them were pretty well stewed up yet by the time we got on the airplane in the morning. I swear that I saved us from getting blown up.

Mark: How's that.

Pinkerton: Because when those B-24s take off, there's a lot of gasoline in the air. And that's not when you want to have a spark. And here we were just loaded to the gills with guys in the bomb bays and round with the side gunners and so forth. And I remember the catwalk there, I was sitting on the catwalk, and Daily was standing next to me. Daily was a, he was a flight, he was an engineer that took care of the engines. He had a bunch of guys that he was in charge of. For the life of me I don't know why he didn't know any better than that but he was still drunk. And here he is getting out a cigarette and he's going to light it with a lighter. Aghhh, lordy. And I was standing next to him. So I took the cigarette out of his mouth and then he put the lighter back in his pocket and then he wanted his cigarette back. So I figured, well, I'll give it back to him but for god's sake don't light it. Sure as hell, he pulled his lighter out again. And I took the cigarette out of his mouth. Now, I forget whether it was twice or three times. I doubled up my fist 'cause you couldn't hear, there's too much noise. No sense in saying anything so I was going to make a sign that, you know, once more and I was going to let you have it here. Boy, he was a little bit heavier than I was but not much. And so, then he didn't do that anymore. Later on in the flight when he came to he came to me and he said, "Oh, Pinky, thank you. You saved my life." Saved your life, saved all of us lives.

Mark: I'd like to take a little break if I could.

Pinkerton: Sure.

Mark: Sorry about that delay. I've got a couple more wartime questions before I move on to some postwar things. I just want to make it clear, when you switched from the B-17s to the B-24s, where were you when you switched planes? Do you recall?

Pinkerton: Lindbergh came over there. And Lindbergh says, "You know, you guys can fly these things farther than you think you can." A way to lean out the gasoline, and so forth. And he actually came over there and he flew them. Flew on some missions.

Mark: Charles Lindbergh.

Pinkerton: Yeah. You can put more weight on them than you've been carrying, too. Heavier bombs, farther. They didn't believe him at first. He said, "Yeah, these are capable of doing it."

Mark: I would associate the B-17 with Europe and the B-24s with the Pacific. I know there were B-17s in the Pacific early.

Pinkerton: Oh, sure.

Mark: I was just curious as to that switch over. We discussed malaria and other sources of medical problems and then the subject of brothels came up. I was curious if venereal disease was a problem ...

Pinkerton: Not much.

Mark: --among the troops.

Pinkerton: They gave us, huh, I'd had some kind of a pill that you took for a couple of weeks. Nothing to it.

Mark: Now, the condom. Were you issued these things and you know what they were?

Pinkerton: Oh, yeah.

Mark: I mean, I've seen Army-issued condoms.

Pinkerton: Oh, sure.

Mark: It's controversial today. I'm wondering, you were provided with these things and told what?

Pinkerton: Provided what?

Mark: You were given these things. You were issued these things. What were you told? Did anyone have problems with this? I mean, at least it's not giving them out in schools, it's giving them out to young GIs.

Pinkerton: Well, it certainly was no problem. I don't even remember it was a problem so how we got them. Beats me. I don't remember it. We got them, yes.

Mark: And fighting for democracy. This was something that you mentioned one time. And World War II veterans will mention this sometimes, too. What, in a wartime situation, did you, how shall I say, for instance, what was your view or those around you, of the war? Was it, did you really think of it as a war for

democracy or were you fighting for yourselves? Were you fighting fascism? Or doing your duty? How did you perceive of the war and what made you volunteer? Endure these conditions? What do you think your fellow airmen, I don't know if you use that term by World War II, what made them serve and fight?

Pinkerton: Well, I think the Jap attack on Pearl Harbor was a fire that we all lived with. And, you know, the Germans, what they were doing over there. We didn't know a lot about it but I don't think, we didn't know anything about what they were doing at Auschwitz or anything like that. But we knew enough about what the Japs were doing. Of course, we'd get propaganda all the time. So we knew that dictatorship was not what we wanted. And a democracy treated people fairly. And if they said they were going to do something, then you did it. You didn't give special preference to somebody. That's what I think I had in mind about that.

Mark: I see.

Pinkerton: My idea of democracy was it was the fairest way to live. I know on the Island of Owi I picked up a book about world federalism. I thought, hey, that's the way to go. Eventually we'll solve this problem by having a world government like we have United States government over the 48 states. And so that's what I was kind of looking forward to, eventually coming up. That's why I'm a member of the world federalist yet today.

Mark: Now, was this common among, I mean, you seem to have sort of an ideologic [unintelligible] that I don't know that a lot of other guys did.

Pinkerton: No.

Mark: Was this common among your fellow airmen?

Pinkerton: I don't think they thought that far.

Mark: That's kind of what I'm looking at. Okay, so we're going home now. You went, you got on a boat?

Pinkerton: Yeah.

Mark: You did get on a boat? And went to San Francisco or Hawaii or someplace like that? Now, if you would describe your voyage back to Madison. When you got discharged? And where you went, etc.

Pinkerton: Well, from Hollandia we got on this Dutch freighter. It was not meant to have a whole bunch of GIs on it. And so most of them were sleeping down in the

hold down there. Pretty stuffy. And I found a spot up on “hoop deck” about 4-by-4. See a “hoop deck” and you dare not sleep or roll off or you’ll fall about 15 feet. But there were squalls that we ran into. Two or three a night. Sometimes three or four. And it would rain. But the temperature was pretty nice because, you know, this was in July and August. So I just take my blanket and I’d go down and stand in a doorway until the rain quit and I’d go back up there and go to sleep. I thought, this is the time, I had a bible, this is the time when I can read through this thing. I’m going to be on this thing long enough. So I, I think I almost read through the bible once. We got past Hawaii, by a couple of days, and the order came to turn around. Where were we on that? Anyhow, on the boat, “Now hear this.” and they told us about this bomb that had been dropped on Hiroshima. One bomb had blown up the whole damn city. I turned to the guy next to me and I says, “You know, the stories are getting bigger and bigger all the time.”

Mark: You didn’t believe it.

Pinkerton: I didn’t believe it. I don’t know if we knew it was an atom bomb or not but it was the “A-bomb.” But somewhere along the line the Japs must have sued for peace about the time that we were just past Hawaii and here we had the whole west coast as I find out later, just lined up with ships. They didn’t want any more ships coming in there. So we turned around at Hawaii and restocked ‘cause we’d been living on kidney beans and oatmeal for the last two days. I don’t know now the hell they figured, well, I guess they figured we could last until we got to the west coast. But this way we were going to go down through Panama--

Mark: I see.

Pinkerton: --and come up around New York, so we needed to be restocked.

Mark: Yeah, I see. Now, what was this ship voyage like? As I recall, this was your first long voyage on a ship.

Pinkerton: Yeah, it was.

Mark: You flew everywhere. And was there seasickness? How were the accommodations? Officer versus enlisted? And what was the mood?

Pinkerton: I think we were all enlisted men, really. They had, you know, MPs there to see that we behaved ourselves. And at night there would be no smoking. The smoking lamp would be out. Somebody had given me a cigar and I figured I could smoke this thing and I said, “Look, I’ve got a blackout cigar that I’m smoking here.” It was burning up the side. I thought it was great and when I take a puff off it I could cover it up, you know. Sure as hell I forgot all about

it and I flicked it. Whoosh! Red sparks all over [laughs]. In nothing flat one of the guys who was up on the bridge came down and nabbed me. I was put in the brig for three days. As luck would have it, there were two more guys, too, that -- there was one guy in the back there that they were playing cards back there. And you know how you absent-mindedly flick a cigarette lighter, they caught him for that. And I think that they also caught a guard that was there that hadn't stopped that. So here we were on bread and water for three days up in the nose of the ship. That's fun to ride up there. While you're sitting there, they've got a toilet and that's about it. You've got three bunks. But that old Dutch freighter would go up and then the waves would come down and then "foom" she'd shake like that, you know. You didn't feel it when you were back in the main part of the ship. But right up at the nose you felt every one. They'd get us out and march us around the ship for a little exercise a couple of times a day, you know, and the other guys would get a big kick out of seeing these three guys that were doing time in the brig. Yeah, I had a lot of adventures.

Mark: I see.

Pinkerton: Went through Panama. That was good.

Mark: Panama Canal. Landed in New York then?

Pinkerton: Yup. Passed the Statue of Liberty.

Mark: I'm sure you've seen the films and coming through the, going past the Statue of Liberty and the ticker tape parades and the whole business. I'm wondering if you could describe what it was like coming in. Was it eventful? Uneventful?

Pinkerton: Uneventful. Yeah. I think they'd already had their ticker tape business, you know. By this time, when did we get there? Good Lord, first of September or something like that. The war was over and everybody had celebrated. And then we were put in, I don't remember the name of the camp, but I think it was in New Jersey once we got on a train. That's where our discharge papers came from.

Mark: And you were free and clear. Discharged. That was it.

Pinkerton: Yeah, gave us \$300.

Mark: Got your ruptured duck thing sewn on your uniform and a train ticket home, I suppose.

Pinkerton: Yeah, why did we stop in Chicago? I don't know if they would have put us there at Fort Sheridan to be discharged? Now, that might be. I don't even remember that. I'll bet you that's it.

Mark: You were discharged at Fort Sheridan?

Pinkerton: Yeah, I think so. But I remember having a taste in my mouth. I wanted some spare ribs and sour kraut. And I ate at some restaurant there in Chicago and I was disappointed. [laughs]

Mark: It wasn't as good as you remembered?

Pinkerton: No. [laughs]

Mark: I see.

Pinkerton: Maybe it just wasn't as good period.

Mark: That could be, too. So, you got back to Madison like in September, October 1945?

Pinkerton: Discharged September 9. Probably got back to Madison around the 10th.

Mark: Oh, I wanted to go back to this atom bomb thing. This is the subject of controversy among veterans and historians today. They're having trouble ...

Pinkerton: Yeah, they are.

Mark: Now, I'm interested in your perspective on the bomb. I mean, as a World War II veteran, do you think it saved your life? Do you think it was unnecessary? Have you thought much about it up until now? Do you think much about it now at all?

Pinkerton: Yeah, I do.

Mark: If you don't mind.

Pinkerton: Well, I guess I'm on the fence on that. As a some kind of a peacenik I did think that it probably was a terrible thing to have done. But as I got more and more information on it that the Japs really didn't sue for peace, then you hear from these fellas that were around at different prison camps, how the Japs were getting to mass rape them. Kill them all. And how our bombings over there really hadn't seemed to make a dent in them. They weren't ready to give up and if we'd have had to invade them, you know, if we hadn't used it, there would have been this invasion. They'd have had all kinds of time to kill the

other prisoners and stuff. And, you know, I saw a picture just the other day how Nagasaki had been rebuilt. I think it was a million people or whatever it was. So, I'm not going to fault Truman. It's part of war.

Mark: Okay.

Pinkerton: Is that an answer for you?

Mark: It's a great answer actually. I mean, you can only speak for yourself. And that's all I ask.

Pinkerton: I tell you another thing.

Mark: Okay.

Pinkerton: This business of trying to be friendly with the Japs. You know, you see some of these pictures, these guys say how "I'd never be friends with them" and I've got a brother-in-law who says never buy anything from Japan. Well, hell, I've driven two Japanese cars. I don't hold that against them. I think the way to do it in the world is to go on. What happened, happened. Let's see if we can be friends from here on out. If the Japs are beating us at our own manufacturing game, it's partly our own transitivity for not keeping up with the latest way to do things. But they're going to get hooked up on their own "petards" some day because they're so stuck in the mud that they have to run everything from the top down and when they try to really get a democracy going over there it you're better safe. So that Nagasaki, I mean the Toyotas, Mitsubishi's and so forth, aren't running everything. There's going to be some turmoil over there. They're going to have to give the high school kids a little more freedom. We do have something going for us that beats them and they have something going for them that beats us. And the more we can work it together, the more it will come out, I think.

Mark: In your mind, there's no lingering hostility towards the Japanese. You've--

Pinkerton: Not for me.

Mark: --got no trouble letting it go?

Pinkerton: Yeah. I think that, I used to hear stories about how some of our people in Hawaii top echelon, understood that the Japs were about to attack us. They moved a whole bunch of oil and gasoline from the regular storage tanks out into another place that they had fixed up, that was camouflaged. So the Japs bombed the hell out of this old gas field here and nothing happened. Nothing but water in there. And I've always felt that in a way, Pearl Harbor wasn't that much of a surprise to some people who really knew what was going on.

But nevertheless, it was an attack and it was them trying to say, well, we're going to be king of the hill down here in the South Pacific, or southwest Pacific.

Mark: As you were talking, I thought of one other question. I don't mean to change gears so abruptly. Are you familiar with the term "chicken shit?"

Pinkerton: [Laughter]

Mark: You seem to be a free spirit. I'm wondering if you would define that term for me. Tell me what you think it means and some experiences you had with it.

Pinkerton: Well, it's somebody pulling rank on some damn little thing that didn't amount to a hill of beans. Just to make out that he, we didn't have any "she's" over there, could do that and it had to be his way. Or being overly concerned with small details that didn't matter just to give somebody a hard time. That's "chicken shit."

Mark: Was there a lot of it?

Pinkerton: I didn't think it was all that, I heard guys complaining about it but it's nothing that I saw happen too much.

Mark: I see. There was no one telling you to cut your hair, shine your shoes. And when you're at a, Owi Island and that sort of thing, it isn't that important. No one's really harassing you about that sort of thing?

Pinkerton: I think it was at Hollandia that our guys with the turret section we figured well hell, you know, it's a lot easier for us if we have our tent down here by the line instead of way back up there where all the rest of them were. And so we lived right down there by the line. And, see, each morning if the planes were going to get up, a different guy had to be up to check the turrets. And if it wasn't your turn to get up, you slept right through the airplanes warming up. Twelve B-24s all warming up with their 48 engines going, you know. And if it was your turn, you got up. I mean that was one example of the freedom that we had. Nobody told us to go and cut our hair when it got too long. But our clothes that we wore were just barely a pair of shorts, you know. No hat. We didn't have to wear-- **[Master Tape cuts off. Five second gap in User copy of Tape 2, Side B]**

Mark: You're a member of an elite club here. The two tape club.

Pinkerton: Oh, really.

Mark: I think we're back. Yeah. Okay, so post-war things. By the time you got back to Madison, you're 23 or so.

Pinkerton: Let's see. I was 25 then.

Mark: Yeah. As a young discharged veteran who needs to get his life back on track, what were your priorities? Did you want to get to school? Did you want to get a job? What did you want to do in your post-service career?

Pinkerton: Well, I wanted to finish college and go on to law school. But I wasn't really sure about law school. I had two and a half years in college. I had about a year and a half to go. There was the GI Bill, we all knew about that. I got back too late to get into the fall semester. But we had enough work to do around our apartments and some more apartments to remodel and cob, fix up and so forth. So I think I got back into school in January.

Mark: That would be January '46?

Pinkerton: Yeah. January '46. And it was nice, you know. The government -- signed the papers and the government paid the tuition, books.

Mark: So you did use the GI Bill?

Pinkerton: Oh, yeah.

Mark: Did it cover all your expenses?

Pinkerton: Yeah, sure. Sixty-five dollars a month. Yeah.

Mark: I paid \$500 per semester for dissertator fee. I can't imagine.

Pinkerton: Well, I think the fee then if you had to pay was about \$50 a semester for tuition.

Mark: That's regular undergraduate tuition.

Pinkerton: Yeah. But I lived at home yet so it was no big deal for me. And I worked part-time with our apartments yet and still went to school. But there were other guys that lived way out by Badger Village. And these guys would have to get up, you know, 5:30 in the morning, get on a bus and ride all the way into town. Go back at night, be there all day long. They had it rough.

Mark: You had been in school here before the war and then after the war. So, I'd be interested in your comments on how the campus had changed. I supposed the biggest change would be that after the war there were a lot of veterans.

Pinkerton: Oh, yeah. Lots of veterans. A lot of us. Yeah. Eager to learn, eager to learn. Classes were crowded of course.

Mark: How was classroom discipline? With all these battle-hardened veterans was it harder for the professor to be the ward of the classroom as perhaps they were prior to that?

Pinkerton: I don't think so. Not in my experience. I know -- I had gotten interested in chemistry, biochemistry, agriculture and growing crops. So that was the first thing I did was to take those kinds of courses some more. And then got into law school. Law school was just full of guys. Just all wanted to be lawyers and so forth. I was never sure if I really wanted to be one or not but my dad was pushing me to be that way.

Mark: And you eventually did apparently.

Pinkerton: Yeah, I did. Graduated, practiced a little bit, then quit. Won cases I thought I shouldn't have won.

Mark: About the GI Bill, you mentioned that everyone knew about it. How did you find out about the GI Bill? How was this sort of information disseminated?

Pinkerton: I got letters here from the Veterans Administration telling me all about what could be done and so forth. And I had some other correspondence. I tried to see if my knee could be helped out with anything. It always bothered me if I got down on my knees or something. Finally, eventually I outgrew it. But they had written me about a concern about my malaria and in these letters then they probably explained thoroughly about what the GI Bill was and how to work it.

Mark: What about on campus? I've seen photographs of the veterans Quonset hut. It was near the library, where the library is today; it wasn't there then.

Pinkerton: And Camp Randall had then. Filled up. Down there at the end of Johnson Street.

Mark: So veterans had no problem getting advice on how to use the GI Bill or whatever the case may be.

Pinkerton: Yeah, it was great.

Mark: Now, there were other parts to the GI Bill as well. There was the educational provision, unemployment provision, housing loans and all sorts of things. Did you use any other federal or for that matter state veterans benefits or was it

just the GI Bill that you used? Did you finance a home with a GI loan, for example?

Pinkerton: Yeah, but I had friends who did. That worked very well. Sure. Yeah, do that once. And they were very happy to do it. I got a couple of vehicles on the veterans preference.

Mark: What kind of vehicles?

Pinkerton: Well, one was a Chevrolet, two door. Built in 1942. It was a staff car used here in the States. But down in Illinois, what was it? I think it was Champaign, I forget just where it was down there, but they had a whole slew of them stacked up there and because a person was **[End of Tape 2, Side B User copy]** a veteran they could go down there and they could look through the cars and they could say well, I'd like this car here and sign up for it and then go back home again. You really didn't have a chance to run them, just had to look at them. And they had a price on them I guess. Then eventually they'd write you a letter and say well, you have been granted a chance to buy this car. Come down and you buy it. And I may have gone down there and bought another 3/4 ton truck and I bought a 3/4 ton trailer.

Mark: Did you use these for your business?

Pinkerton: Yeah. For the apartments. We had an old wood trailer that was coming apart. I don't know how my dad made it go through the war.

Mark: And so this is federal surplus property that veterans had first dibs on essentially.

Pinkerton: Yeah. It was nice.

Mark: In your opinion, did it help you get resettled, this was an economic advantage to you? Big one, small one?

Pinkerton: Cars were hard to get. You bet it was a big help.

Mark: On campus there were several veterans clubs or groups -- the Legionnaires, there was the, you'd see on campus all different kinds of groups. Did you get involved in any sort of ...

Pinkerton: No, I was trying to get through school and I didn't figure that, well, I just never did. I had since been in groups when the kids that were over there in Vietnam had been in the group and been helped a lot with the Veterans Administration here, Vets House.

Mark: You were involved with the Vets House and that sort of thing?

Pinkerton: No, I was involved with a study group.

Mark: I see.

Pinkerton: What the hell was his name? He told them halfway through the Vietnam War he didn't want to be in the war anymore. I think he'd come back and he was discharged with kind of a dishonorable discharge.

Mark: You don't mean here in town?

Pinkerton: Yeah. But I think they finally got that straightened around so that it's an honorable discharge now.

Mark: I'll ask some questions about Vietnam in a little bit. Let's cover some World War II things here first.

Pinkerton: Okay.

Mark: Well, speaking of Vietnam vets, we all watched publicly as the Vietnam vets had, some of them had trouble getting reestablished back into society. They had problems being accepted by society, their benefits didn't always seem to match up to other kinds of things. The psychological problems. People didn't talk about that much but they had them. Looking back and without reading the Vietnam experience into your own, did you have any sorts of troubles resettling back into civilian society? Did you feel accepted? Did you have nightmares?

Pinkerton: No. I was in a little different category than most of the guys. Nobody told me that they thought I had done a stupid thing by going to war. They thought it was just great. And, even my dad, as much as he was kind of against the beating up on the Germans and Japs, he couldn't say very much either. I think we all had a good feeling that over there we had done something good. We were welcomed back home. I know that, before I went over there I was a real strict health student -- no smoking, no swearing -- and I know my dad, I overheard him telling somebody here after I got back, "You know, he's not the same boy that went over there." I suppose that was true of a lot of us. Smoking, some drinking, some wild life. Yeah. I probably wasn't all that settled down. It probably disturbed my whole psyche to some extent.

Mark: Did you, eventually you did get settled it seems. How long do you think it took you to settle down, as you describe it?

Pinkerton: Well, it probably took me years really to figure out who I was. I think I'm just a slow learner. It didn't take most guys that long.

Mark: On the data sheet I had you fill out -- I don't want to -- if it's not related to your war experiences, I don't want to delve into it but you mentioned that you had a brief marriage right after the war. That's fairly common among veterans. Again, if it's not part of your military experience, I'm not going to pry, but do you think this had to do with the sort of unsettledness you mentioned?

Pinkerton: It may have, yeah. Yup. A summer romance. I was married, I think, in July and divorced in September. [laughs]

Mark: 'Cause after war divorce rates shoot up and then go back down to normal. I was just wondering if this was part of that phenomenon?

Pinkerton: What the hell. A guy meets a girl in summer school, you know, and get married right before the summer school ended. It's stupid. Didn't have a chance to check anything out and take time to see if you really mesh. I was 27 then when I got married. I didn't get married again until I was 31. Married a nice girl. We're still married.

Mark: Okay, we can come back to your experiences and the Vietnam War now. Like into the '50s and '60s, did you ever join any sort of groups? You mentioned World Federalists. Now, that's not exactly a veterans' group necessarily. Did you join any sort of veterans' clubs or anything?

Pinkerton: No. I was busy moving houses and trying to get our family started, making a living.

Mark: I see.

Pinkerton: In the '60s, you know, they had all these marches and stuff.

Mark: In Madison, here.

Pinkerton: Yeah. And, you know, our First Congregational Church had a bunch of guys that were absolutely against the war.

Mark: And about where is this time ways? Is this like '65, '66, really early in the conflict?

Pinkerton: Yeah. When did we get into that? We got in there about '64 I think, or '63, and of course it got worse and worse and worse and worse, you know. I went to work for the State of Wisconsin in 1962 and so here I'm finally coming

along and I still had the apartment business that I developed, moving buildings and so forth, so I was busy working two jobs. A good job and three quarters. And so I must say I really didn't get all excited about it. I had figured that we were getting sucked into something we really had no business getting sucked in. What the hell are we doing way over there? But I didn't figure there was much I could do about it so I let it go.

Mark: This group that you mentioned, this support group or study group as you described it, when did you get involved with that? And if you could describe that for me a little bit more.

Pinkerton: Oh, that was in the 1970s; '71, '72, in there. And I'd become interested in Edgar Cayce. I don't know if you've ever heard of him.

Mark: That name doesn't sound familiar.

Pinkerton: My wife got me interested in him. Did you ever read the book "Bridey Murphy?"

Mark: No.

Pinkerton: I'm trying to make it real quick here. Edgar Cayce died in 1945, January of '45. But for 20 years before then he had given readings for people who had come to him wanting to know, you might say it's the last grasp of their life, could he say something, tell them how to get better, keep on living. Having been to many doctors and the doctors had kind of given up on them. And he would go to, he'd like -- this sounds so kooky I know -- but he would lay down on this couch that he had, with people around, broad daylight, 11:00 in the morning, and he'd kind of go into this meditative sleep state. And have somebody, here's the name of somebody, didn't even need to be in the room. They were half way across the world. And give him the person's name, address, and the person wanted to know how they got sick, what they could do about it. So, sure enough, he could tell them. And as it's explained, his subconscious mind was in contact with the subconscious mind of the person who wanted the reading. Well, that kind of got me interested in a whole other sphere of life; what is this all about. Talk about spirit and soul. So I got interested in that. Well, Cayce had developed with a group of people a course on search for God. And I thought, now, this is an interesting thing. Here he has the whole course laid out here, study groups all over the United States were studying it and applying the principles in their daily life and learning to change from being real bastards into being somehow considerate and loving with a concept of how we really do relate to our Creative Source of life. And, so, this is the study group I was in and helped you get started and so forth. So this young, Dick Cosmos was in there, too. He's the guy that--

Mark: With the discharge problem?

Pinkerton: Yeah, he had already left San Francisco and come to Madison and was associated with the Vets House here. As to how he came to come to the group, I couldn't tell you. He must have seen some of our advertisements or something.

Mark: Now during the Vietnam War, as a World War II veteran yourself, Vietnam divided America. It divided veterans, too. There were some veterans who protested the war, there were some who protested for the war. I'm wondering if the war had any sort of impact on your thinking at all. I mean, sometimes the World War II vets will say is, "I went when my country called. Why don't these kids go?" etc., etc. You once described yourself as a peacenik, I think was your term.

Pinkerton: Talk about a guy on the fence, you know!

Mark: Yeah, it sounds like you might have some ambivalent feelings here so I'm--

Pinkerton: Well, figure it out. Our son was born in 1953. And see when he was 17 it was 1970 and he got a high number. And I really think that I wouldn't have discouraged him from going. Himself, he didn't care anything about going. He might have gone to Canada for all I know. But I guess if I look at it correctly I had to say well, you know, it's probably not the worse thing to be in the war and I wouldn't have gone a lot out of the way to have him not go. But believe me, he was happy to get a high number. That wasn't in his thinking.

Mark: Have you attended any reunions? Have you been in contact with some of the men you served with in the war?

Pinkerton: Yeah, the 43rd Bomb Group wrote me a letter and I've thought several times about going. Contacted them and they wanted to know if I had any pictures of the war, which I've sent them. And they've met. I've heard from them almost every year. But, they have a roster of everybody who's been there and everybody who's on the roster and so forth. And most of them you see are officers I think. I don't [unintelligible] on them. Once in awhile there's an enlisted man that happened to be from 64th that I knew. So I figured, well, I'll go down and there's a bunch of guys that I don't know anyhow. And my wife has food allergies so being with a bunch of people that are kind of partying and golfing and stuff -- I don't golf -- so I really had mixed feelings about going. It would be kind of nice to see some of them, different stories, but, so I correspond with them back and forth and gotten their annual letters. Come on down, we'll have a great time, and all that stuff. That's as far as I've gone.

Mark: You've exhausted my line of questioning. Is there anything, do you think I've forgotten anything parenthetically, you want to add?

Pinkerton: Well, I think that being in the service really was a good thing for broadening myself out, in ways that I don't think would have happened otherwise. I think it's a good thing for guys to get together. They don't have to go out where they're going to kill people and be in such a raucous situation as all that. This business of taking guys when they're 18 and they're out of high school and they don't really know what they want to do with their life and put them in some kind of a government corps where they live in barracks and where they experience meeting other people, under a kind of disciplined life. I think that's a good idea. I'd encourage that to happen. Well, I don't suppose you want me to lecture you on the value of the United Nations of World Federalists. We'll let that one go.

Mark: We've got to stay focused on the wartime experiences. But I would be curious to know if your war experiences led you to that sort of thinking? I mean, did the war impact on that? Would you have gone that route anyway or having been in a war and having seen people try to kill each other, did that impact on your thinking and lead you in that direction?

Pinkerton: Probably so. Now here's an experience I didn't tell you about. Like this time I told you when they were short of a ball turret gunner and I rode along then from Barraba in Australia to New Guinea in a long flight over Rabaul. And there were lots of airplanes. We were probably in the middle somewhere. The idea was we were supposed to streak the hell out of the runway after we had dropped our bombs. I finally figured out that our bombs had been dropped. I had trouble with the intercom that we had. It was cutting in and cutting out again. So here we are pretty close to the runway, low, and I had this little Jap truck in my gun sites and they were putt-putting across the runway to put out some fire that was already lit by some previous airplanes and I thought well that's kind of stupid. Here we are giving them an air raid and they're running across the airplane, well, that's really fearless on their part. And I think this truck was a kind of an open truck with no top on the cab part of it there. God, I could have just blown those guys to smithereens I just couldn't pull the trigger. Couldn't do it. So, you know, that may be partly the way I'm built.

Mark: I see.

Pinkerton: I guess I thought well hell, those guys could be me. I identified with them.

[PA announcement in background]

Mark: On that note I want to thank you for stopping in today.

Pinkerton: Sure. It was very productive. I appreciate it very much.

[End of Interview]