

Janis Kozlowski: When you were stationed in Alaska, did you keep in touch with your family and did they know where you were?

Paul Polink: Well, really, my parents were illiterate. And I ... you know, people didn't have telephones like they do now. I would write home every couple weeks, but I never usually got any response, because there was nobody at home to write. And ... but, I got the local newspaper all the time when I was in the service and I kept up pretty much with what was going on in my hometown.

Janis Kozlowski: So, you had an idea of what was happening in other theaters of the war at the time from the newspaper?

Paul Polink: Oh yes, yes.

Janis Kozlowski: But you probably didn't know anything about what was happening with your brothers, specifically?

Paul Polink: No. I just had to hope and pray.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah. Yeah.

Paul Polink: My brother that was on Okinawa went in with the first wave of the Marine Corps, and ... he was quite fortunate, because he had a number of close calls. And every once in a while, I'd get a letter from him and of course, they would ride me about playing baseball and having fun in the summertime.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle] You probably wished he was up there with you.

Paul Polink: Oh, yes.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle]

Paul Polink: Yeah. Well, later on, we did play together.

Janis Kozlowski: How much older was he than you?

Paul Polink: I had a brother that was in the third Air Force in the states - he was two years older than me. Then, my brother on Okinawa, was four years older than me. And my other brother was ... he was drafted in 1941 when they first started drafting - he was a little older. And then I had a younger brother who was not in; well he was in the service about six months, so he ... before, and that was five of us, that were in service at the same time.

Janis Kozlowski: And later on, when you all got back, did you ever sit down and talk with each other about your different experiences in the war?

Paul Polink: Yes we did. And it was quite interesting. About ... I was going to write a book about - my brothers are all deceased at this point - and I mean, although I ... I know a lot about what happened to them, we, in their discussions. And I have my brother's medals and whatever, that he earned in World War II. And his squadron always had a ... a reunion. And my brother and his wife were killed in an automobile crash – they were coming home from Florida. And I was invited to one of their reunions, and ... and I met a lot of his buddies, and whatever, when we had that at Nashville, Tennessee. And, so I felt kind of warm about what he was ... you know, what he was involved with.

Janis Kozlowski: Um-Hum. Yeah, it sounds like that would make a wonderful story about the, all the five of you serving in World War II.

Paul Polink: Yes it would. I just never did it. My daughter keeps bugging me - she says, "You're not too old to do it now." I, I guess I'm not, but ... I don't think I'll do it now.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle] Well, maybe she'll at least have your interview when we're finished here today, and she'll have that to remember stories about you.

Paul Polink: Well, maybe she will.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah [Chuckle]. Were there any particular experiences that you had during World War II that were, were memorable?

Paul Polink: I ... I don't remember much, except the 54th was the first time I had a permanent home, like, in the service. Because, most of my time had been spent in training - I went from the B-24, to the gunnery school, which I was not at very long. And, but ... the 54th was my great experience. And I was quite happy in that squadron and, with my duties that were there - it was fascinating to fly to all of those different islands and see how the other half lived, and.... But, I really don't have any great memories of, of things that happened to me, or whatever. So, it was exciting, yet there was nothing out of the ordinary that I really remember.