

Interviewee: Lindsey, Charles
Interviewer: Jack Sigler
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Sigler: Good morning, Mr. Lindsey.

Lindsey: Good morning.

Sigler: You understand that this interview is being recorded?

Lindsey: I do.

Sigler: Okay. Why don't we start out with where you were before you joined the service and how you got in.

Lindsey: My first military service was in 1939. I was a high school student. I had high school ROTC, which is Reserve Officer Training Corps. So I started in '39. In June of '39, they had a program where I could go to training one month, because of high school ROTC, and become familiar with all the weapons of World War I. I went to Fort Logan, Colorado. Went by train, and I spent the month in weapons training.

Sigler: That was which fort?

Lindsey: Fort Logan, Colorado. It's near Denver; it's no longer in existence today. So I did fire every weapon of World War I infantry type in that particular thing. And I got my first military pay of \$25 for that month's tour. I went back home, finished high school, and that would be 1942. I graduated in June, decided I'd go out and work. The war had started by that time. I went to Pueblo, Colorado, the beginning of June 1942 to Pueblo airbase to work. It was a supply depot. The thing was, that materials were so critically short that I literally went bankrupt (not enough work). I got good pay for the days I worked, but I could work a half a day or a quarter of a day, a rainy day I didn't work. Since the airbase is fifty miles from Cañon City, my home, why, I had hotel bills, restaurant ... and I literally went broke.

Sigler: You were working for the government at that point?

Lindsey: Well, a contractor. A group of us were talking at work ... "Look, we're going to go to war anyway," and they'd just raised the pay to \$50 a month for a private – or it was in the offing. Fine. I went down and joined the Army Air Force in Pueblo, Colorado. My mother took me there. My uncle and father had discussed it with me, since they were both active in World

War I; the felt I couldn't stay out of service. So it was basically a family agreement, and I was bankrupt, anyway, because I couldn't work all the time.

I was sent then back to Fort Logan, Colorado, from Cañon City, where I had done my other training (ROTC). At Fort Logan I didn't stay too long. Basically I got uniforms; that's why I went there. I got summer and winter uniforms and was shipped into the Shepherd Air Force base, Texas.

Sigler: When you enlisted, you were able to pick your branch of service?

Lindsey: I could pick the branch of service. I asked to be aircraft engine mechanic. A service where I wasn't line infantry. I knew enough about that, that the casualties were very great, and this influenced my decision. I went to Shepherd Field, Texas, and the only field there was a drill field. They hadn't got it fit for airplanes and they didn't have enough airplanes to take there. Since I had enough military training, I could drill troops. After all, the ROTC is the high school military class; I didn't want that, so I didn't let on that I could drill troops. And the Air Force come around and sent me to Love Field, Dallas, Texas. I was probably at Sheppard Field the greater part of a month. There I was sent to the Dallas School of Aviation, which was a civilian contractor. Had a contract with the government to teach mechanics – would-be mechanics. That was a blitz course – three months. It was very good. I had a background in automobile engines, and I could apply that readily to aircraft engines, so I come out fairly high in the class. It made old-timers mad – kids seventeen, eighteen years old ... they're in their thirties, they're draftees, and I could show them up in class. So I didn't do myself any favors by being number two in the class in graduation.

From that, I was shipped to Chanute Field, Illinois, for additional training in aircraft accessories [??]. I was there ... we did see German engines; we considered them to be better and we were making a comparison. They had shipped in. So at Chanute I specialized in magnetos and hydromatic propellers. In other words, the propeller situation was not really taken care of at Dallas. This was the engine itself. Air-cooled, liquid-cooled ...

Sigler: The whole range of engines used by the Air Force.

Lindsey: Yes. At Chanute, this was accessories. Superchargers – I'd never seen a supercharger before. Depending on the aircraft (which I'll get into later), they could have a two-speed internal supercharger or they could have an external supercharger which turned six times ... crank shaft ratio, and eight turbo [??] supercharger. I'll get into that as we get into the airplanes that we had at the time. In 1943, early in the spring, I was shipped to Kerns [??] Field, Utah, from Illinois, a repo depot for overseas shipment.

Sigler: What was the base in Utah?

Lindsey: Kerns Field. Again, Kerns Field had no airplanes; it was a drill field. This was a holding area. It had two sections. One section was for the inductees that had just come in the service; the other section was holding for people going overseas. I was in the overseas category.

I was there a couple months. Actually, shipping was hard to come by, and in that time we hadn't built enough ships to talk about yet, to take care of the military need. American industry should be really praised, because of my twenty years service, seeing what other countries had, what other countries done, the colossal building that was available in America was number one in winning the war, as far as I'm concerned. I then left ... and it was rather funny – I left San Francisco port of embarkation on a ship that had been captured off of South America. A captured ship that was turned over to the American government by the British. Remember the pocket battleship in Montevideo? Well, it was a supply ship out at sea and they captured it. It was a rather modern ship; it was built probably in '38 or '39. Anyway, it did receive some damage from the Brits when they took it, so it was sent to a shipyard on the West Coast of the United States and there it was converted to a troop transport.

It was the first time I had seen a large diesel engine. It was powered by diesel engines. It took us fifteen days to go to Hawaii because we had no military escort. We were by ourselves; it was fast and we did a zig-zag course. We got into cold weather. I don't know how close to Alaska we came. Anyway, I arrived at Pearl Harbor in about June of '43. I was assigned to the 19th Fighter Squadron. A little history on 19th Fighter Squadron. This is where some of the trouble I had first began. 19th Fighter Squadron had been formed in the Philippines in 1920, three years before I was born. They gave their older airplanes, by government decree before Pearl Harbor, to the Filipinos. These were fabric covered, slow planes. They were ... incidentally, at that particular stage of the game you could tell the age of the plane because of its designation. So they were built sometime in the mid-'30s for the American air force. But again, they were not really up to date. So when I got to 19th Fighter Squadron, we had P-40s. They were all metal planes. All right. But there was one catch. The reason the squadron come back to Pearl Harbor was the P-40 basically had an Rolls Royce engine. Allison engines turned up short and it was a replacement for the Allison engine ... I'll tell you why the Allison turned up short. You know what a PT boat is? They take four Allison engines. Aircraft engines. So Packard motorcar company had a contract before America's entry into the war with Rolls-Royce, a British manufacturer. Packard was so efficient the English couldn't build the air frames fast enough to use the entire output of Rolls-Royce engines. So our P-40s had Rolls-Royce engines in them. We had a problem. The American wrench wouldn't fit the Rolls-Royce engine. The contract called for it to be in the Wentworth system. So you carried two toolboxes. Since they were at Pearl Harbor at the time, they also had P-40s but they lost them all at Wheeler Field. This is before my time, just a little history on 19th Fighter. Two of them survived because they were not on the island; don't know just exactly what they were doing, but they were over on the big island when Pearl Harbor was hit and Wheeler Field was set on fire. At the time I joined 19th Fighter, we were at Barber's Point, which was a Navy base. Our factory rep from Packard – we called him Packard Smith ... Packard Smith, he'd come up to me and said, "We're glad to see you" and so forth and so on. I said, "What are your school training? You realize these boys don't know depot maintenance?" And they're in their thirties – they'd been in the Air Force all that time. I said, "Why?" Well, before the war depot maintenance was done by civilians, regardless of where – in the Philippines, on Oahu, which is in the Hawaiian Islands ... and so forth and so on. And he said ... he asked me my education and so on and I told him. He said, "Boy, we need you." He said, "You're going to have a hard time here." I said, "Why?" He said, "You're a young man."

“What do you mean by that?” “You don’t fit the stereotype.” I didn’t know what a stereotype was. I learned later as an officer; this is the beginning of the bitterness [??] that come out. Anyway, there were twelve of us in the same category I was. We had not met before. They had attended different aircraft maintenance schools in the States. There was no promotions. There couldn’t be because promotions for a regular volunteer outfit was already filled by these career airmen. So I didn’t understand that and I didn’t understand it too well till I become an officer. So I was never promoted till an act of Congress late in the war and because of the time in the combat zone ... I did have corporal. But I didn’t know about it.

Sigler: So you actually spent the entire war with the 19th?

Lindsey: Correct. That is correct.

Sigler: As part of an over complement TOE (Table of Organization and Equipment)?

Lindsey: Yes. Now, in Hawaii we were engaged in pilot training. In other words, these fly-boys that we got, that came through to us, were trained in the States but they weren’t trained to bomb on water. And our casualties was that they would spin into the ocean. We put an oil slick on the water and have them bomb it offshore. They couldn’t judge it ...

Sigler: Depth perception problems?

Lindsey: Depth perception ... to the best as I know, the depth perception problems with new pilots. Also the P-40 was a fairly fast plane for its day and age. It turned out, before the war was over, it was kind of slow. But I don’t know what the casualty rate was, but we were receiving casualties. But it was pilot-type casualties that did not make the grade in bombing the oil slicks that were there. I didn’t know it at the time, but there was two other squadrons on the island, and when we saw our first combat, those two other squadrons joined us. I was in Hawaii about a year, and we changed every few months. We had to move to a different part of the island – we didn’t know why. What they were doing was trying to see basically what was the absolute minimum that you needed to operate, and the reason for this was we had ... you know what a tug is for an aircraft?

Sigler: No.

Lindsey: It had a Chrysler engine in it, four wheels, and we’d tow aircraft back and forth. Little tugs.

Sigler: One of those little tugs you see on airports even today.

Lindsey: Yes, yes, but these were a little smaller. We also had a halftrack. The halftrack was a little larger, but it was a tracked vehicle like a tank. This we did use, and when we did move, sometimes the airfield we were using, boy, was sandy, sometimes it was hard surface.

Anyway, to make a long story short, before combat my last station with the squadron on the island was at the officers' golf course at Hickam Field. We put ... engineers got a little training there, too ... we put mats ... you know what a mat is? For aircraft?

Sigler: You mean the temporary runway?

Lindsey: Temporary runway made out of steel and so on. And that give practice to them and to us. Now we did do a little combat, but we did not go down as a unit in the Mariannas island in the Pacific. Since I didn't go, I won't mention those because I wasn't part of it.

Sigler: But part of the squadron was deployed?

Lindsey: Well, a very small part of the three squadrons was deployed temporarily. This was to give them a little training. It was in the Marshall - Gilbert group. So the first combat that we had ...

Sigler: Were you still flying P-40s at this time?

Lindsey: Still P-40Ds. The reason ... the P40A had a long snoot on it; it did not have as many machine guns as the P-40D, which were six .50 caliber machine guns in the wings, outboard of the propeller. We then loaded up at Pearl Harbor and it took us a month. We had to wait for the invasion fleet, and we were offshore all this time, out of communication and what have you.

[some comments about preparatory notes not transcribed]

We pulled in for the invasion of Saipan. Our aircraft was loaded on Navy flattops that had been built after the war started. We changed the landing gear a little bit. We did not have catapulted hooks on them, but on the landing gear itself the steam catapult could be connected to these P-40s and they could be catapulted off the deck of a flattop but they could not land on a flattop. There was no way to stop them and the deck was too long. So our squadron got off in real good shape.

Sigler: Flying off the ...

Lindsey: Aircraft carriers, yes.

Sigler: Were the pilots trained for carrier takeoff?

Lindsey: That was the first time they had did carrier takeoff. In Hawaii, they did practice short takeoffs, but they didn't have catapults. What they did, they locked the brakes with their feet, run the engine supposedly to the firewall – in other words, this is 3,200 rpm – release the brakes and take off and pull it up as fast as they could. Of course, this wouldn't work on a flattop; it was shorter. The internal supercharger, its ratio was six times crankshaft speed. So we give them full supercharge and they did take off. And then they landed on the island D+2. The

Japanese weren't exactly driven off and we did take ground fire when they landed. Now, I wasn't physically present at that instance in time. I'll tell you where I was at later. So the first thing we had to do ... or the squadron had to do was patch some of the holes. You know, you didn't want holes coming through – it slowed you down. And since I was so low in rank, the ship that I pulled in on, I had to help unload the hold. It carried aircraft ordinance equipment, some of the engineers' equipment, and other people. But the biggest item on the manifest was .50 caliber ammunition for our aircraft. Also aviation gasoline in 55-gallon drums. We had auxiliary equipment to pump into the aircraft. Then after the USS *Dashing Wave* was unloaded, I got transferred to another ship to help unload the cargo hold. I spent the first fifteen days at sea watching them fight at night. I worked twelve on and twelve off with the crews. I don't know why I ended up in number three hold, but we had certain holds that we worked in on these ships that we had to unload. Don't ask me why – it just worked out that way. After fifteen days I could come ashore and went up to the airfield where we had the aircraft ... the fighting was still pretty heavy. I've got to say this – while we was there, we didn't know it at the time, but the navy aircraft carrier task force would come in and blanket the island before we would land, and this would take out the Japanese ... there was a lot of damage at the airfields from the navy bombers. But the surrounding islands they hadn't hit; the navy didn't dare stay too long in any one place because we didn't know what the Japanese air force would do. The Battle of Midway had already been fought and we lost carriers, as did the Japanese.

Sigler: Well, this was a couple years after Midway, wasn't it?

Lindsey: Oh, yes. But the thing is, we didn't have ... what I'm trying to stress ... the number of baby flattops, enough aircraft carriers to put them onto too many islands and so forth and so on. I don't know, maybe I should mention here and then pick it up a little later ... do you know the Jimmy Doolittle raid? The suicide raid?

Sigler: Well, pretty much.

Lindsey: All right. It was really of benefit, but we didn't know it until after the war. See, I was in Japan. I did twenty years but not in the Air Force. I went to the Signal Corps, what had happened and we couldn't understand it and I didn't know this first hand – after things had quieted down, I'd gone over to the Army. They had B-25s with a .75mm cannon in the nose, and they went on flight tests, one of them and I asked them if I could go. Of course, I didn't get permission from my unit commander, but you did a lot of things that you didn't ask permission. Being a private, you had nothing to lose. I said, "I'd like to go on one of your missions with you." "Oh, you can't do that, but we do a test hop and we can show you. Grab a seat on this B-25." And I did. We went up and we went to some of the other islands, but we were pretty high altitude. You could see ground fire – this was all daytime.

Sigler: When was this exactly?

Lindsey: This was when I was on Saipan. And this is when we had secured the islands ...

Sigler: I see; it was after the fighting had ended.

Lindsey: No – after the big fighting ended there.

Sigler: I asked exactly when because that .75mm cannon mounted in the B-25 – I thought that came much later in history.

Lindsey: It was probably in 1944. They had the ... Marines had them, the army didn't.

Sigler: Oh, were the Marines the first to develop that?

Lindsey: No, Army, Air Force, and Navy co-sponsored them. That's what I understand. This would be sometime in the 1944-45. Anyway, I went up and saw this ground fire coming up, but it wasn't coming up high enough, and I asked the crew and so on, and we talked back and forth. Remember, I'm a private and I talked to a couple of commissioned officers in the Navy to take me up. He said, "Well, look down there. Isn't that a funny looking airplane?" "Yeah, it does look funny." Wasn't an airplane at all – it's one of those decoys that both sides used during the war, and they were firing, you know, on it. They said, "You notice that airfield that it's on?" "Yeah." "Did you notice we didn't get any Japanese aircraft coming up to bother us?" "Yeah, true." You know, something to think about, and I bring it out. Anyway, the flight was over; it didn't last too long. It was close.

Then I made an acquaintance which I'll talk about. We called him "Crankshaft." He was a captain. The Japanese were coming over on Saipan after we got in, and at night ... they didn't come in the daytime. And they would drop a parachute flare. We didn't quite understand why, and so on. Our maintenance people had taken, before the night fighters arrived to give us assistance ... anyway, we took the armor out behind the pilot ... now we had P-47s, the early models. We'd gotten new airplanes. We'd take the armor plate out behind the pilot – it weighed 1,000 pounds. In other words, we lightened the aircraft. We took it off ... it had carried eight .50 caliber machine guns and we took out all but two, one on each wing. And we probably took off somewhere between 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of weight, so that when it took off, it'd literally stand on its nose as it pulled up. It had a high rate of climb after all that weight was taken off. The purpose was we wanted to shoot down the Japanese photographic plane that was taking the pictures of us. That was his purpose. Now we only did that to one airplane in each squadron. It was usually the commanding officer, so we had a major that turned lieutenant colonel shortly after that. We were a little unsuccessful in doing it ... we'd get up there and chase them off, but we never shot one down. After all, they was probably 35,000 feet. The Japanese made good camera equipment and so on before the war, and were taking pictures. Anyway, because of that we got our first night fighter squadron. It was a light bomber. They dubbed them, when they turned fighters, as P-70s. This now made four squadrons in the group rather than three. We had one night fighter squadron and three day fighter squadrons. I got friendly with one of the pilots there. They had new mechanics, it was all new to them, and he had a little trouble. His throttles didn't quite meet right. Well, the thing is if the boys had been trained that well, these mechanics, they could have fixed them. Anyway, he pulled it down to the end of the runway and I adjusted

the governor on one of the engines – I forgot which one it was – that’s all it took. Took me about as long to tell you as it took me to do it. I said, “Well, say, how about taking me up; I’d like to see what happens.” _____[??] “Sure, jump aboard.” So I had my first ride in a night fighter just for a short period of time. Actually it was dusk.

Now, the night fighter: it had a pilot, copilot, and it had two radar operators. Now we were beginning to use radar to detect aircraft and so on. This was the first time I had seen this electronic equipment.

Sigler: Okay. And its designation was P-?

Lindsey: We called them P-70s, but I don’t remember what the bomber number was of that. It was a bomber converted to a night fighter.

Sigler and Lindsey: [discussion of various well-known wartime events and equipment not transcribed]

Lindsey: But anyway, to go on, I met several people of interest on the island which I’ll tell you what they were because when I went back in the service years later, they featured in my life; they helped me along. We had one of the P-38s that ... I don’t know, we listed it as pilot error at the findings. Being in maintenance ... oh, incidentally, as soon as the fighting had kind of quieted down on the island, we did continuous round-the-clock maintenance and I happened to be in charge of the auxiliary engines that furnished the night lights to do night maintenance with. That’s the biggest thing that I had done. So I basically was off in the daytime. Of course, I had to sleep in the daytime. You know, every twenty-five hours we had to do maintenance on Anyway, we’re back to this P-38 which was new to our flyers. And we had a longer range. Some of the islands, the archipelagos that we hit, you know ... I have four combat stars because of the islands ... because of our flyers going out from World War II. I don’t know just exactly what happened to the P-38 engine. Anyway, it took off on a mission; it didn’t quite make it. The right engine failed and on takeoff it was loaded pretty heavy with hardware – wartime bombs, ammunition, what have you. But it lit in our bomb dump. And it went off, of course. And we pretty well destroyed all that. We lost a lot of our ammunition and bombs and what have you. And everybody that wasn’t working ... that wasn’t really that busy ... ran down there. My sergeant says, “Even though you’re off duty, you stay here.” He says, “You don’t know what’s going to happen down there.” Well, we lost our doctor who was a civilian doctor in Indianapolis before the war, very good doc and we all liked him. Now I got dengue fever four times while I was on the islands, which is another story, but it grieved me to lose the doctor. That doctor brought me through, and others, too. But it landed in the bomb dump. Bomb dump went off and we pulled the wreckage out and looked. We think the pilot created an error. When you shove the throttles forward, if you shove them too fast ... on the Allison engine they didn’t have backfire screens to protect them but Rolls Royce engines did, and he was used to flying a Rolls Royce engine. It backfired; it blew the intake manifold off the engine. That’s why the engine quit, and of course it was pumping fuel all that time, so it was on fire. It exploded. Of course it killed him and it killed several other people there. Now the bomb disposal officer was a captain or major, I

don't know which, but I met him in Washington DC after the war is why I'm bringing this out. And we talked about it. He knew who I was at the time because I helped clean up his bomb dump getting that airplane out of there.

Oh, before we left Saipan, the Philippines were invaded. And eleven or twelve, I can't remember the exact number, of DC-3s ... they were filled with litter patients ... come through on their way back to the United States. These were the airborne corps that landed that the Japanese caught them and slaughtered them right and left. These were people that weren't really expected to live. They were in real bad shape and could not really be taken care of as well in our field hospitals, so they were being flown back. Well, they landed on the island ... of course, the crews were there. So we jumped in By this time we had tractor trailers that carry about 10,000 gallons of gas on each one of them and it was powered by an engine. So we hurried up our four squadrons. Each squadron had three of these big trucks, so we each serviced the twelve planes. We took a plane and we got them serviced in a short period of time and they took off. I didn't know ... I knew that they were going to the States, but it was years later I found they went to Fort Lewis, Washington, to Letterman Army Hospital.

Sigler: These were the ...

Lindsey: Paratroopers from the Philippines.

Sigler: [some non-relevant conversation not transcribed].

Lindsey: I met some of the people later ... he turned into a minister. He was a sergeant in the parachute outfit and when I met him as a civilian, he was a minister and we talked about old wartimes and so forth and so on. Well, it come time and we hit these various archipelagos around, you know, like Saipan and the Mariannas, Guam was in it and so on. There was other islands. It was 200 mile away from us, so you see we had to fly. We also had lost planes. We got new planes ...

Sigler: This time it was mostly P-38s?

Lindsey: No, we only had six of them. And those were basically on loan to us from some other air force. We needed something to carry more fuel and go further than the planes we had. Anyway, we were then equipped with new planes. These were P-47s ... they were air-cooled engines and not liquid-cooled engines. We did have some problems with liquid-cooled engines with overheating in the tropics. Not bad, but when you got in a dogfight and you're pulling all out on an engine, they would overheat. But usually the pilots, if they were well trained, they could ... heck, the combat only lasted about fifteen minutes. That was maximum. You were usually out of ammunition and so on. But the engines were pretty hot. Now we lost a lot of planes. Why? Here we go. Now, I've got to give credit to the American navy. We'd fly to a target. We had to have good weather. If the wind changed, we'd run out of fuel and we dropped the planes in the ocean. And when this happened, of course ... when I first got into the Air Force, not all planes had radios in them. If they did, it was morse code that you had to use that was very

cumbersome for the pilot. Now we've quit the morse code and they're all voice activated radios. And then the squadron commander had three different radios in his and it was the only plane, but we had radios in every one of our fighter planes. So they would radio in and they knew. They dropped the plane in the water because they ran out of fuel. In 99 cases out of 100, there was a navy flying boat either in the air or on the water where they dropped the plane. So we were able to save the pilot. The Japanese did not do it, and they run out of trained pilots because they didn't even carry parachutes. I don't know how many planes we did lose, but anyway, we got P-47Ds and later 47Ns and we were getting ready for a move. And that basically was cancelled. I thought we were going to another archipelago. But anyway, to make a long story short, we did lose planes and then we were reequipped before we left with P-47Ns. Now we left immediately after we got those planes for Okinawa. We were in Okinawa. You know, Ernie Pyle's island that he died on? That's where we ended up with fighter command. We were Seventh Air Force, the smallest Air Force ... and that's the first time I knew I was the Seventh Air Force, because we operated as individuals, more or less. Anyway, we had these N models. Now an N weighed more – an ordinary -47 weighed about 7 tons on takeoff. They carried ... the thing is, the wing had been changed on the N model. It was the same Pratt and Whitney air-cooled eighteen cylinder engine that was in the older models. They carry a turbo ... had an internal supercharger. Now they had made a mistake on some of them – they weren't supposed to be two-speed internal superchargers. So we had a few with internal superchargers that was two-speed – without turbo the crankshaft ratio and on 11 to 1 crankshaft ratio and still had a turbo supercharger on a P-47. I think we had three or four out of twenty-five. A squadron was listed as twenty-five. But since we were at the end of the supply line when we got into combat, we carried thirty-two. Some of them were in crates yet. But we always keep twenty-five on the line. But as I said, rear end of the supply line. _____[??] back ... and I kind of got ahead of myself ...

Sigler: Let me turn the tape over.

End side A, tape 1

Sigler: We were talking about the new P-47N models that you had acquired.

Lindsey: We had learned a lot during this particular time now. I'm still on Saipan. I didn't bring it up. The production in California making baby tankers and so on ... we used to pull a tanker up and we could drain a tanker in less than a week. Now I bring it up there because this will change. Now we're up on Okinawa and we could drain a tanker because of the increase in the Air Force ... remember, 8th Air Force came over to help us out. So 7th, 8th, and 20th Air Force was sort of together. We could drain a full tanker of aviation fuel in about twenty-four hours.

Sigler: How much was that?

Lindsey: 100,000 gallons, I believe, or it could have even been more. I don't know. Depending again on the tanker. But remember, a P-47 used almost 147 gallons - 150 gallons on

takeoff, basically, and they didn't cruise less than 110 or 115 gallons an hour of gasoline, and they'd stay airborne twelve hours. This was a new wing, P-47N wing. Also, we weighed more with these new planes. We had twenty-six 30" rockets attached to them and they were good to go after Japanese shipping. And so we were involved in that. Most of the P-47N models that I saw of 7th Air Force did carry these rockets. Now 8th Air Force when they come over, that was the largest Air Force of any during the war and they really dwarfed us ... made us look like dwarfs when they arrived in there. Their bomber fleet was bigger. They were on Okinawa, we were on I.E. [sic] Shima four mile across the bay. I was told, and I believe it was good, that we could put bombers or fighters in the air at 5,000 and keep them there – over Japan. Day or night. Now, to get back to this story on the airfields in the Pacific. The advantage that the Doolittle raid had, Japanese pulled back airplanes to Japan. These planes now were right at 3½ to 4 years old. This is what flyers met going over Japan. It forced Japan to pull a large part of its air force back, so you can't say that the Doolittle raid didn't accomplish something. It accomplished a lot because this is why we didn't need these planes in the islands at the time we were fighting.

Sigler: Because they'd pulled them back for homeland defense.

Lindsey: Right. But now since they were on the last legs of the war, they threw them in. And we had a couple of Japanese land on our airfield. Gosh, they were college students trained in the United States and spoke as good English as you and I did. But they were chained in the cockpit; they had no parachutes, nothing. So we had to watch out, we couldn't tell if a plane, whether it was coming down to shoot us or whether he was coming down to surrender. The Japanese basically didn't surrender. Only ones that surrendered that I know of or had anything to do with were educated here in America and knew America ... graduated from our universities and colleges.

Sigler: And they'd actually fly the aircraft and land.

Lindsey: And land. Yes. But they was few and far between. Just a handful of them. But we thought that was something. A Japanese soldier never gave up; he'd commit Hari Kari or suicide. If he run out of ammunition, he'd tie a bayonet on to a cane pole and come after you in his final charges, to die for the emperor. This is something that we didn't understand then. It shows up later in our ... in southeast Asia. I did go to Vietnam; I did not go to Korea. But I'll tell you that as we go on.

So the war basically ended while I was upon I.E. [sic] Shima. Anyway, the Japanese ...

Sigler: What island were you on?

Lindsey: I.E. [sic] Shima – eight mile across the bay from Okinawa. The island Ernie Pyle died on. Well, I got to see the Ernie Pyle grave while I was there. I got in D-day + four or five. Again, being low in rank, I stayed out in the harbor and unloaded cargo ships before I came ashore. Wasn't my idea, but that's the way it goes.

Anyway, we got to see the Japanese civilian government representatives come down to

talk about these terms, and they then were on our island. So we sort of quit flying and so on. But we were ... you know, we didn't know whether they were going to surrender or not ...

Sigler: These were Japanese troops still active on the island?

Lindsey: No, no, these were Japanese government ... they come down to talk about the Japan surrender. And all of us ... we were told, "Get these planes up and load them for bear." Guess what we did? We flew over China, so we were told. The Russians – we were afraid of the Russians. So we were pulling around the clock flight for a while, while peace was being talked with the Japanese, wondering what the Russians were going to do. Now, as far as I know, there was no combat between the two. We were watching them and we thought by scuttlebutt – you know, that's rumor – I use the navy term for it – that Russia was thinking of some Chinese territory for her empire. So we were very skeptical that a peace was going to come off. This may have affected the ... our problems in Japan. You know, the atomic bomb would not have been dropped on Hiroshima if the Japanese hadn't vacillated so much. I'll agree with Truman, when he'd get them in there to talk, you know, they weren't ready ... the entire government wasn't really ready to surrender. The Japanese Emperor ... he was ready for surrender but his cabinet that he had governing Japan wasn't quite ready – it was split.

Sigler: Well, these Japanese officials that came down to the island to talk – was that before the atomic bomb had been dropped?

Lindsey: Yes.

Sigler: Because that's a very unknown bit of history.

Lindsey: Yeah, it hadn't been dropped yet. They were talking about it. See, it was almost a month and a half after they were there before the actual surrender in Tokyo Harbor, you know, when MacArthur went up. And the reason for it was, I think the Russians had a lot to do with it, the government didn't know what they were doing and we didn't know what we were really doing either. We flew fighter missions watching the Russians. We figured that maybe they were trying to grab property. We kind of recognized it, but it was never said too much about it. And I have to say *Stars and Stripes* never mentioned it. My parents told me that none of the newspapers in the States mentioned it, but we knew about it because our flyers went up and did reconnaissance. I guess what it was, it was so classified that my rank wouldn't know about it. But we knew that we were flying Anyway, about the times that the surrender went over, we were beginning to send people home. Since the non-commissioned officers ...

Sigler: Korea and north China, were they within range of your aircraft?

Lindsey: Of the P-47N; it wasn't in range of the earlier ones. We could stay airborne twelve hours in a N - we carried that much fuel. And they cruised off at about 170 mile an hour. Yeah, they had the range and they had the firepower. And they did not carry bombs or rockets.

They carried wing tanks and belly tanks because it was quite a distance.

Sigler: So it was essentially reconnaissance missions.

Lindsey: Reconnaissance. We wanted to know what the Russians were doing. They had no business down there, as far as we were concerned. Of course, that's getting into governments and politics I talked to my mother and sisters when I got home. They'd never heard about it. So I don't know how many people did know about it. But they were reconnaissance missions formed to see what they were doing.

Anyway, they signed the accords in Tokyo Bay. So then, boy, we were all ready to go home. Of course, everybody was. War was over. The non-commissioned officers in our squadron who had been with the unit, some of them in the Philippines came back to Pearl Harbor, they got a boat out for home. I don't know just where they went, but they were a long time in getting home by boat. Anyway, I was approached since I was in maintenance... "Hey, how about bringing war-weary bombers home?" You know, the bomber fleet. "What have you got in mind?" "Well, we know you're pretty well trained ..." and the old-timers have left and we got new people in from the States. Our top rank was filled up with people that were in school, teaching school and so on, and this was their first overseas duty.

Sigler: Brand new assignees.

Lindsey: Yes. Anyway, what do we have to do? Well, when we're going back home ... you know, the islands that we left and that we're familiar with don't have too much equipment on them. So we'll fill the bomb bay doors with flooring (dunnage) ... we'll fly, you know, ... so you've got something between you and the doors to put your feet on and then we can put fifteen enlisted men back there and they put a double crew flying on and I got back in the States in early November of '45. It took 2½ day to bring a bomber home to California.

Sigler: Where would they stop over? Honolulu?

Lindsey: No, sometimes they did, depending ... well, we had to make them stop in different places because the airfields ... they was bringing so many at one time that you'd overload a field. So we stopped in the Marianna Islands, which were very familiar to me because we had fought there first with Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and so on. We first went to Saipan – there wasn't anything there, we couldn't even get fuel for them. We didn't have much fuel in the tanks, so we went up to Guam and there we refueled them, give them a quick check, slept that night, crawled back in the bomber the next morning and ended up in California. I came into San Francisco and I don't remember the airfield. It was about forty mile out of San Francisco; it was an army Air Force field.

Of course, now this is November, and I've got nothing but a summer uniform. That's all I had in the tropics. And I had gained weight. The reason I'm telling you this is because you'll see in a minute. Now I had dengue fever. Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne insect that in the tropics. He has to bite you each time you get the fever, and I had it four times. It's not like

malaria – you get bit once and the rest of your life you’ll get malaria when your resistance goes down. So this was a different mosquito disease. We’d gotten a new recruit in who knew what a crop duster was. We didn’t know. And the army then had begun to issue DDT, you know, the powder? All right, this is the first time we saw DDT. We took a fighter plane and altered it a little bit. It didn’t hurt its combat capabilities because we could take it off, and we sprayed the islands with DDT and that ended my mosquito problems. And several islands had it. It didn’t make any difference – all the islands basically had it. So that’s one of the things that I didn’t really know where to put it; I put it toward the end because others began to use it, too. It got around the Pacific and by aerial spraying, it really helped. The medics were overloaded with malaria, particularly in the Philippines and up where we were at in central Pacific we had dengue. So I got home to the airbase in California. I had to come by train back to Fort Logan, Colorado, where I had been four years before. And I was home about a week before Thanksgiving and in Colorado.

Sigler: November of ‘45.

Lindsey: November of ‘45. And I ... oh, another thing I did, and I don’t know whether I did it in California or at Logan – I think mostly at Logan. Something told me ... we were given new uniforms ... they didn’t want us to go home in ragtag clothes, and they weren’t issuing winter ... it was winter, so they issued us summer uniforms. We were in summer uniforms. Uniforms that we had on, they replaced with new. Well, some of the guys said, “I’m not going to wear these clothes!” and they’d throw them away. So I went through these clothes, picked out my size, and I got six pair. I was just issued one pair to go home. They had kind of run out of my size to start with; I was supposed to have three pair, but other people ahead of me had them and there they were, in the barracks. So I took them home, and a very good thing I did. So I got home and I decided I would get me some civvies since I’d gained about twenty-five pounds and couldn’t get into my clothes. I went down to the local clothing store in Cañon City and this clerk happened to be a girl that graduated in the same class I was in, and she didn’t recognize me and I didn’t recognize her at first, either. Anyway, she gives me, “Don’t you know there’s a war on?” Well, I’ll tell you what. Because I was in a new uniform, people didn’t know I had just got home. I literally caught hell as a civilian at home because I hadn’t done my war duty. See, I was never drafted – I volunteered. That was rather odd.

Anyway, I couldn’t find a job again, so I matriculated in Kansas State for chemical engineering. The reason I went down there ... we had friends there and they had lost their air cadet program at that time. The colleges in Colorado still had military in school, so the colleges weren’t really accepting too many additional individuals in ‘46, January of ‘46. So I went to Kansas State for chemical engineering. Well, the first semester, didn’t do too bad. But the next semester I ran into trouble – a lot of trouble. The trouble was the college bookstore – that’s the only place you could get books – couldn’t get books. They weren’t being printed. The GI Bill. Now I’d never heard of the GI Bill. My mother and sisters (and I had four) was very active in the USO, you know, for the soldiers at home. And some of my sisters married soldiers, some of them had never gone overseas. They’d come into to Cañon City for rest and recuperation; Fort Carson, Colorado, was very close – the 10th Mountain division trained there, so the USO was

there. So through the USO is where I found the schools. They hadn't told me about what Congress had given us, so I found it as I became a civilian and through my sisters and their military boyfriends, and my mother. I got into Kansas State and went down there – that's the way I got there. I had tried the Colorado schools and they said they weren't accepting at the time – just a telephone call – because they had too many still in training from the military.

All right. I couldn't get books the next quarter. So our library there was open twenty-four hours a day. Being an out-of-stater, I think I was pushed out. Anyway, we drew lots. The regular ones there drew first and the out-of-staters drew second. I was at one o'clock in the morning. That meant that I had to go to the library because I couldn't get a book anywhere to study the second semester lessons. They just weren't available. And my first class was eight o'clock in the morning. So I ended up with a very bad case of stomach ulcers. Didn't take long for them to make me sick. I saw the college doctor and so on and he says, "Well, you got two choices. You want the cheap or the more expensive?" "Well, what's what?" "Basically you could have an operation for them." He suggested I take the cheap. Anyway, I don't know what it was, but it was very, very black and it was a liquid medicine. You can have all the milk you want to drink but you had to put this neutralizer in it. And you'd drop three drops in a cup of ... or glass of milk and you could have as much milk as long as you put these drops in that you want until you healed up. With that staring me in the face, I quit school. I waited till the semester was out and that was it. So I went up to my brother's ... brother-in-law ... who had served in Alaska, had his feet frozen in Alaska – he was line infantry ... to cultivate corn. He had 325 acres in cultivation, so I cut my teeth on a John Deere tractor. Now, that didn't last long. I cultivated it once and the next cultivation time we had a humongous rainstorm and there wasn't any corn left to cultivate. I had to go job hunting again. I went to Minneapolis. I could not find a job there – I stayed three days. And walking through Minneapolis, I didn't really know what to do ... I walked by the recruiting office. This would be in '48. I looked in and I saw a sergeant sitting there. That sergeant sure looked familiar to me, but I walked on down to the end of the street. You know, I couldn't place him. Sergeant. He come out of the recruiting office and he's looking down my way and I turn around and I'm looking at him. So we walked toward each other. He was the pilot, the night fighter pilot that I told you about, that now was a recruiting sergeant. And this was early in the morning. I was hungry and basically bankrupt. And all the services were represented. I met people that I met in the service, and man, did we have a really big go-around. Talking and so on. They bought my lunch and they were having troubles getting recruits, you know, at this particular time. I didn't want to go back in service, I told them. But by the end of the day, I let him sign me up. I stayed twenty years.

End transcription

[Post World War II military career not transcribed]