Frank Bernick oral history interview

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World War II – Pacific Theater; Cold War

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Abstract: Frank Bernick discusses his service in the Army during World War II and subsequent work in the Central Intelligence Agency Counterintelligence Corps. He relays how his prior training in military horseback procedures made him an outlier among enlisted and drafted men. After outlining his first months of training at Fort Riley and Fort Ord, Bernick summarizes his service overseas, from Bombay, India, to the Chinese mountain route evacuating Japanese civilians. He talks about several challenges of the Asia-Pacific theater, including poor nutrition, unsafe terrain, and cultural tensions with allied Chinese units. Bernick also emphasizes his dissatisfaction with the post-World War II industrial boom, which facilitated his decision to re-enlist during the Cold War. He talks about the importance of maintaining national security operations, including investigations into potential spies and devising strong documentation for United States operators. Bernick expresses hope that today's generation will find an appropriate specialty for military service in the event of another world war.

Transcript Notes:

Transcriber:	Cinebar Productions
Abstract by:	Aaron Rodriguez, VWM Volunteer

Interview Transcript:

Interviewer: First thing is, spell your name, last name first.

Bernick: B-E-R-N-I-C-K, Bernick, first name, Frank.

Interviewer: Okay, then do branch of service rank serial number.

Bernick: United States Army in World War Two. I was a sergeant. I got out for approximately two and a half years. I went back in and spent 22 years total. Retired as a chief warrant officer. My serial number in World War Two was 37698211. My serial number is a warrant officer was W2212922.

Interviewer: Let's start at the very beginning. When you joined up, tell me why you went in, why the Army, what your parents said, what was going on at the time, sort of that whole story of joining up?

Bernick: Yeah. I went to a military school in New Mexico, Roswell, New Mexico... New Mexico Military Institute. I was in my second year of college when I turned 18, but I was given a year's deferment in order to finish school. I finished, graduated in June, probably, about third June 3rd, 1945, and I was drafted June 9th, 1945. I was drafted and I went immediately to Fort Riley, Kansas, basic training in the horse cavalry. The reason I probably went to horse cavalry was, the school I went to was a cavalry school. It was the only one in the United States, although Culver, in Culver, Indiana, had a kind of a show regiment with horses. But we we trained regular tactics on horseback.

The horse cavalry, they said, “Yeah, sure… and did you sharpen Custer's arrows, too?” No, it was a regular, like infantry training, only instead of walking you, you rode horseback. And it, as I recall, was about 12 weeks basic training. I mean, they had people there. I remember a kid from New York, he'd never seen a horse in his life. I mean; to put him on horseback, it was quite an experience. Then they had a kid from Minnesota who was a farmer, and I mean, he would, he would ride a horse like he was driving a team of mules. Giddy up, giddy up. And it I mean; it was a conglomeration of a lot of people. I was the guy; I was the only one that

had any semblance of training on a horse. I mean, at least knew how to saddle and unsaddle and, and groom and bridle and so on and so forth.

Interviewer: And that was 12 weeks.

Bernick: 12 weeks, yeah.

Interviewer: And where, where was that?

Bernick: Fort Riley, Kansas. That was the home of the First Cavalry Division, the original First Cavalry Division.

Interviewer: Then when you got through, where did you go?

Bernick: When I got through, there was a leave of absence reported to Fort Ord, California, and took a lot of infantry training out there. And finally on December the 19th, 1945, went down to San Pedro, California, and had got on aboard, a ship to Dizzy Gillespie's sendoff orchestra and to unknown whereabouts. 33 days later, we ended up in Bombay, India. And from there, we drove a, rode a small, narrow gauge train all the way across India to Calcutta, and then, went up to the province of Assam in northern India and took jungle training in that area. And then, went into central Burma at that, yeah, central Burma and relieved Merrill's Marauders, who had been over there originally. And at that, time the British had coming up from Lashio in the south, and they said, we'll take over, you can go home. But there wasn't time for us to go home. So, what do you do with a small, reinforced regiment of primarily infantry people? So, we all went to Kunming, flew over the Hump, Himalaya mountains… landed in Kunming, which was the main central supply depot for the Chinese army, and for, well, part of it was for Chiang Kai Shek's Flying Tigers. And we sat there and a lot of people, they went to the ordnance, or they went to the quartermaster or some went to the medics. And so, what do you do with cavalry people? So, one day they came and said, “Okay, all you cavalry guys...”. And there were about, I guess about 12 or 15 of us. And we were told to go up to a certain point and pick up a herd of Chinese ponies, and which we did and took them, oh, approximately 25, 30km down the road and turned them over to a Chinese, Chinese army.

And when we got there, there was about a half a dozen Americans headed by a lieutenant and says, “Welcome to the Chinese army.” So, it turned out we were instructors in in light infantry weapons. The, the army was provided. the Chinese army was provided with Springfield ‘03 rifles, .30-caliber air cooled machine guns, 60-millimeter mortars and British, British, Sten guns, BARs. And so, we went around, and we gave demonstrations to the officers. The officers went out taught the sergeants with our supervision. And then, we went out with the sergeants, right into the field, and got down with the troops and said, “No, you don't aim at your fellow. Buddy, over here, there's the enemy out there. There's the target.” But anyway, it was, it was quite an experience. I mean, the Chinese are not exactly taken to army discipline too, too readily. So, the mission of this army, eventually they got the word, was to retake the city of Kweilin. Kweilin was quite famous during World War Two. It was the major east -west highway junction, excuse me, railway junction in central China. It was also, at that time, the supply depot for not only the Chinese army, but for Chiang Kai Shek's. I said, I'm sorry, the Flying Tigers. What was the general’s name? Chennault, Chennault. And the Japanese were coming west, and they knew it, but they waited too long and at the last minute they blew up the whole depot. I mean, just millions and millions of gallons of gasoline and, and supplies, trucks, ammunition, everything. There was a big congressional investigation took place about it, but the results of... I never heard what happened. I imagine there was some pretty severe reprimands.

But anyway, we got to the slight, I can't say mountain, but high hills, overlooking the city. And at that time, the war ended. And our little group with a battalion of this 94th Chinese Army were selected to be the occupational forces for Shanghai. So, we were flown into Shanghai as, quote, the conquering heroes. And I mean, it was a Chinese show. I mean, basically, we were just kind of along for the ride. And so, we arrived in Shanghai with without a job. And so, they said, “Would you like to go to up north to the province of Tientsin?” It was, was a big Japanese reserve base... or, “Would you like to go to Formosa, Taiwan?” Well, was Formosa then, is Taiwan now. And so. we decided, well, we've been in the mainland long enough. Let's try something different. So. we went down to Foochow and it's on the coast of Shanghai, below Shanghai, and met the 40th

Chinese Army, who marched a thousand miles in 40 days with complete equipment. I mean, dismantled howitzers and, and all the arms and ammunition and everything, and picked them up on LCIs and LSTs to take them to Formosa. We got out about, no, no more than two or three miles, and that's when the typhoon hit Okinawa. And even that far away, I mean, we were like little corks in a, in a bathtub. I mean, it was so, we turned around to the mouth of the Yellow River and sat there for a couple of days, and then, eventually took this contingent of troops down to. to Keelung, which was the northern port of Formosa. And there was a. I guess. about a platoon of Japanese waiting at the at the dock.

They completely disarmed themselves. They had all their guns and ammunition, and everything stored in warehouses. There was an officer in charge. who still had his saber. and the Chinese would not get off get off the ships until the Japanese left. I mean, they're not the bravest in the world. But. and anyway, they finally, they finally departed, and we got off. And what our mission there was, the decree was Japanese had owned Taiwan, Formosa for I think it was 52 years. And there were as many Japanese living in, in Taiwan as there were Taiwanese almost. And so, the decree was that every Japanese, regardless if they lived there 50 years or five days, had to be repatriated back to Japan. And they were given an allowance, both money and so many kilos of personal goods which were very about what you could carry in your arms. And there was a system set up where they were all boarded on ships and taken back to Japan, and we were down there… it took nine months to do that. And then we were flown back to… yes, I think we were, we were flown back to, to Shanghai. And by that time, we had enough points to go home. And we went home by by ship and landed in San Francisco and then to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where I was discharged July the 4th, 1946. I think I had the wrong date. I went in in 1944. I think I said ‘45. I meant June 44th. So, I was in just a little over two years, two years and a month.

Interviewer: You know, interesting. Would you talk to people, or do you go and see I was in the horse calvary and then I ended up in the CBI and then I went to China. You know, when I interviewed... we've done a lot of interviews and people sort of follow the pattern. Every now and then we get somebody who's way over there somewhere.

Bernick: That's, way over there, ended up way over here. You know, it was a, I mean, it wasn't the most glamorous or exciting, but it was different. It was a different career.

Interviewer: I mean, that's really amazing. At the beginning when you went into the horse cavalry, did people, I mean, did you and or other people look and say the days are limited? I mean, I mean, that's going away?

Bernick: I guess at the level I was at, I, you know, I had no knowledge, but I would imagine There was only to my knowledge, one organized cavalry unit that existed. And that was a pack outfit that was in Italy. And I think it **w**as, I think it was in Sicily. And what they did was, they used the horses, and mostly mules, as pack animals to carry ammunition up into the mountains and then bring the dead back. But that was the only organized cavalry unit that I knew of in World War Two. The training you got in horse cavalry was not that much different than, than an infantry, except, as I said, you rode instead of walked. The makeup of the unit was a little different. And the in other words, you didn't have a company, you had a troop. You didn't have a, you had, you had platoons. But there were there were four squads to a platoon where a rifle company had only three. So, the makeup was a little bit different. The nomenclature was a little bit different. But other than that, I mean, there was no problem of switching over to an infantry organization as far as, as the tactics were concerned.

Interviewer: Now, I guess the other one is that, I'm trying to think...

Bernick: And you looked a little different, because you wore boots instead of… they were really what they called almost like puttees. They were leather, inner on, on the inner, on the inner leg. and then lacing on the outside. with a strap over the foot. And the officers wore, wore regular riding boots.

Interviewer: You know, when you when you went in, you knew so much about horses. Did the other the other people sort of catch up a lot?

Bernick: Oh, yes. And they were, I mean, they were good. They had good instructors, a lot of ex-rodeo people or ranchers. And so, they knew the animals and they were,

they were slow… they were good In instructing because it was a, you know, a whole different ball game. As I said, some of these people, they never saw a horse before. And, and it took a little adjustment, but they caught on. They, they learned how to take care of the horse, to feed it, to curry it, groom it, to check the hooves for stones. And it didn't take long, but it was, that's, I think, this is one of the reasons why the, the training was a little longer than a normal normal. They had to go a little slower.

Interviewer: I get, I mean, I sort of laugh, and I ask this, because somebody look say, well, that's the Army. But you would think that they would try to get people that knew something about horses.

Bernick: Well, that is true. I mean, but this was, well, it wasn't at the end of the, end of the draft, but it was in June of 1944. So, most of the, quote, combat units had already been formed. I mean, like the First army and the first Cavalry. And, and we were, we were called combat replacements. We were to fill in. I mean, they went to, they're sent to the Far East and, and the islands to replace people in Corregidor and Guadalcanal and those... and then, in Europe, too. I mean, many, many were sent to Europe. But, but we were, we were not designed to, to go out as a unit. We were designed as combat replacements. That was our training primarily. So, we ran the gamut from, from machine guns to throwing grenades to, you know. And then, once you finish the basic training, then you went to, you know, as I said to another stage. We went to California, to Fort Ord, California, where we were trained strictly in infantry tactics. Other people went like to Fort Dix, the people that went to to Europe as combat ready, they were trained there. Excuse me. So, it was, we were in the replacement pool, so to speak.

Interviewer: Now, when you went down and got on board ship, did you sort of presume that you were going to go up into the island chain?

Bernick: I assumed that. I ended up in the Pacific, yes. No, the slightest idea that you would end up in the... only reason we thought we might not go to the islands... but yet, I mean, we had no idea of how fast the ship was going or what direction it was going, or what evasive tactics it was going, but after 25, 30 days, you figured,

I mean, when are we going to ever get off this thing? And so, that but that was why, because India is a long way away.

Interviewer: Yeah, I mean, it sort of, you go by the island, you go...

Bernick: We never saw any land.

Interviewer: When did you realize where you were?

Bernick: We went in, I guess, there was, yes, we laid off, if I remember correctly, we laid off port at night and came in the next morning. And on the loudspeaker, they say. "We're landing. We'll be landing this morning in Bombay, India." That was an experience. We'd been on board 33 days, and these people were, I mean, a lot of them were going, I mean, stir crazy. And once... they we were given liberty, as soon as we got, got on the got docked and people went out, and you never saw so many tattoos in your life. And there were these vendors standing on the dock and **t**hey, they had a knife about this long. This is without the blade. And they held it like this, and they flick it and they right in front of you. "Would you like to buy a knife, GI? Would you like to buy a knife?" And you were reaching for your pocket immediately before they stuck you. Nah, it wasn't quite that bad, but that was that was quite a popular souvenir, this knife that was offered. But anyway, people came back. I guess the MPs had a field, or shore patrol. I wouldn't say that, but I think after the first day, half the half the ship was in the brig. But we were there about two or three days before we got on this railway, which that was no, no seats. No, well, we had benches, but no bunks, and it took us ten days to go across India.

Interviewer: When they announce Bombay?

Bernick: Yeah, at least I'd heard of it. I was interested in geography as a kid. So, when…, but, some of them, "Bombay, what?"

Interviewer: What was Bombay like?

Bernick: Oh, it's amazing. India, well, India is probably, and I am told it hasn't changed much, it was one of the filthiest places I've ever been in my life. Bombay was, I mean, it, well, any building was beautiful, but it's a beautiful city, beautiful buildings, but the streets are filthy. You've never seen so much poverty in your life. The, the beggars and, and misformed cripples, and it's just terrible. Then, we got to Calcutta, and they don't call that the "Black Hole" for nothing. I mean, that has got to be the dregs of the earth. It is the filthiest place I've ever been in my life. And 99% of the people are beggars. And they say it hasn't changed much. I've talked to people who've come back over the last few years, and they said maybe the, the poverty is not quite as heavy. I mean, there's not that many beggars on the street. There's still a tremendous amount, but not like it was in those days.

Interviewer: Now, tell me about crossing India on that narrow gauge railway.

Bernick: Well, we weren't exactly given top priority. So, every time a train came by, we went off the siding. And, and we, we lived on K-ration and C-rations, and they were told, you know, you can't eat this, you can't eat that. But Bananas was a big, big seller and we bought a lot of bananas and that was that was very safe. And but, it was just a narrow gauge, plain wooden cars with, with little windows. And one day we stayed practically off track for, well, we were on a track, but we were off the main, main artery. I think, it was almost all day. I mean, for what reason? We don't know. But, but anyway, we., we finally got there. Yeah. Now when it was not only the, our little group in the cavalry, but this ship was filled with people coming from all over the United States to get aboard ship. In other words, they were all the combat replacements for, for Merrill's Marauders. Merrill's marauders disbanded. And Mars Task Force was formed. It was already formed before we got there by previous replacements like us. So, we actually joined the Mars. The Marauders, they, they were sent home, when they were replaced by Mars Task. Force.

Interviewer: Now, from, from Calcutta, how did you...

Bernick: We went directly north by truck up to the Province of Assam. And that was a major US military installation training site, primarily jungle training. Had a very

large hospital there for, took care of the wounded that came out of Burma. Also, that was the area, the beginning supply area, for a trucking company that that drove over the Himalaya mountains. They call it.

Interviewer: So, the road had been built...

Bernick: Yeah, right. Something Trail... Stilwell, Stilwell Trail… no, but anyway, and the trucking company was all manned by, by, by blacks. And they did all the driving and amazing. I mean, and their accident rate was very, very low, but they could drive, holy mackerel. And some of these roads left a lot to be desired. They were narrow, very bumpy, and they were crisscrossed because it was so steep. There was one came down one mountain, had 21, 21 crossovers, I think. So, and they, they put the, they put the pedal to the metal. I mean, they did it so, so often that they knew what they were doing.

Interviewer: Now, when did you arrive?

Bernick: Let's see... December, it was mid-January, I'd say, somewhere... no, end of January, when we finally got to, when we finally got to Burma. Yeah, it was 33 days. We left the 19th of December. So, that would be 20th January. And, and, you know, by the time, yeah, probably, the first week, two weeks of February is when we actually got to Burma. And I think I was there about two months, three months. And we were just at the tail end of any skirmishes at all. As I say, the British took over. And we were flown into to Kunming, which is on the, on the. Burma China. Border over the Hump. And we sat there for, seemed like forever, but it probably two or three months before they finally found this little trek up the up the mountains with the ponies… also, one mule. I had a mule. I don't know where they found the mule, but anyway, he was a big, stubborn, clumsy. Mules are usually very, very sure footed, but this… breeding got crossed somewhere, I think. But anyway, we were going across this narrow wooden bridge floating on a small lake, and my mule stumbled. And I had my BAR on my pack and he had, oh, probably about at least three sacks of grain on the pack, also. And he went off the side and he went down. And I dived after him and I got a hold of the pack, but he just kept on going down, down, down. And I thought, I better let loose. And he never came up. I mean, you know, horses can swim and but he never came up.

I didn't realize there was that much weight on him, but he just never... we never saw him.

Interviewer: What was Burma like?

Bernick: Burma is, I mean, you see the jungle, the picture of the movies of the jungles and the Pacific. It's very dense, very dense. We were in no cities at all in, in Burma. We ran across a little village. I'm using the term loosely, because I don't think there were more than a dozen thatched huts in the place. But so, I can't tell you much about the cities, because I never saw any. But it's dense, dense, jungle… hot tropical, high humidity. I never saw any of the natives, except that, and that was from a distance and this small, small village.

Interviewer: At this point, what did you miss most?

Bernick: What did I what?

Interviewer: Miss most?

Bernick: Miss? Oh, boy. That's a good question... miss most? Oh, you always miss home. You know, your friends and your family. I... the variety of food, I would think, you would miss most. We had a tremendous amount of K-rations, C rations. That's understandable. But when we were with the Chinese army, it was rice and chicken. I mean, that was it. And we had chicken. The Chinese soldiers, that's all they had, was rice. Once in a while they'd get some greens and, probably, stuff that looked like kale, maybe, a form of spinach. And they mix that with their rice and gruel. But we, we'd try to get out and get buy chickens and eggs. We had eggs. And my Chinese was very limited, but I knew how to ask for eggs. I knew how to *Wǒ xiǎng yào yīxiē zhǔfèi de lěngshuǐ*, I want some cold boiled water. And so, the variety of food, I think, was very, very limiting. Taiwan was better. We had a regular kind of a mess hall there and we were flown in provisions from, from Shanghai. And so, that, that was… and we lived in, in houses. And it was, we took over a, a, a private girl's school and lived in a compound. But in Burma and in China, it was pretty, pretty remote. That's what I missed the most, variety of food, I suppose.

Interviewer: What was it like flying over the Hump?

Bernick: It was C-47s, and a lot of times they'd have the doors, would be open, because they didn't have the doors on it. They would supply, supply ships. They dumped the stuff out. But it was I don't remember whether ours was open or not. But, but it was, you couldn't see much. There were very small windows in those C-47s, and you sat on benches, you didn't sit in... it was, if I remember correctly, it was cold. That I remember that. It didn't seem like there was much heat in it, plane. But, of **c**ourse, it probably wasn't as cold as it appeared. But coming out of the jungle, it had a ten degree drop in temperature, was a lot. We heard stories and I'm sure they were true. The Chinese have no regard for, for death at all. But they hauled these, bring these Chinese soldiers over in the... there were also contingent of Chinese troops in Burma, too, fighting. And they flew them in and out. But they, they did fly them over. And they say sometimes these planes had open, open doors and, you know, they'd be standing out there looking and somebody go push them out. No, they think that would be very funny, very funny. And we were on the trail when, with the Chinese army, when they were headed for Kweilin after the training session. And at night, they'd get the, the, the belts of ammunition, and they'd pull out all the armor piercing and the ball ammunition and stick in tracers. And they hold the gun up and they go, *pew*. And they thought that was pretty high class watching those tracers go out. It was a pretty loosey goosey outfit, believe me. But discipline, I mean, sergeant had life and death over, over his troops. I saw a sergeant kill a guy, not being able to keep up.

Interviewer: So, you get over the Hump land in China. How did you find China?

Bernick: Interesting, to say the least. Interesting. Different. Different. I was there, it was still early enough where I saw, fairly very common, the women with the bound feet. Their feet are bound at birth. And they never grow much, much bigger than that. And they're all wrapped very tightly in cloth material. And there was a reason for that, and I don't recall what it is, but. I'm sure some of your viewers probably know, but I just don't remember. But very, very superstitious people, very superstitious. I remember one time we were more or less settled here in this small compound for a while. And the there was a tremendous, well, to them, it

was a tremendous, it was during the rice planting season and there was a shortage of rain and very, very dry. And rice will not grow without water. So, they got the all the villagers together and they got the fake dragons out and they marched all the way up to the top of the, the small mountain to a temple and to give sacrifices that, that it would start raining. And it worked. I mean, it rained, and it rained and it rained. And they went back up to the temple and said, "Please stop." But this was the year of the, I think it's every seven, seven, nine years in China, it was up until a certain period, probably not anymore, but the year of the plague. And many, many of the, of the village would have green boughs attached to the door that would keep out the evil spirits that brought the plague. Very, very, very, well, they don't consider it superstitious, but to us, it was.

Interviewer: But what was the day-to-day living there for that?

Bernick: Day-to-day living, you know, is, is, is pretty pristine, pretty primitive. They're wants are simple and they are simple. I mean, there are three bowls of rice a day. They waste nothing. I mean, they... fish is a big commodity and they… head fins, everything, I mean, they cook it all, and eat it all. Same with the chicken. They don't, they don't debone a chicken. They chop all the bones up with, along with the chicken, and eat everything. Chicken and fish are probably, some pork… that's fairly rare. Beef is kind of an unknown. I'm talking, about interior China, now. And you get out on the coast, the major cities are, I mean, it's as modern and up to date as any place in the world. But it's the difference of night and day from the interior of China to the. **c**oastal regions of Shanghai and, and Foochow, Canton, in those areas there. It's just...

Interviewer: How close to the end of the war was.

Bernick: The war ended in August 45, I think it was, As I recall. And so, I was, I was in China until the war ended. And then, about, maybe a month, six weeks more, before I went to Formosa, to Taiwan. So, all my time was, during the war, in China, and after the war, it would have been in Formosa. Formosa was, I was in the capital of of Taipei those days was called Taihoku, the Japanese name. It was bombed to a certain degree. It wasn't leveled, but you could see a lot of bomb damage. The primary use of, of Formosa in the war was prisoner of war camps.

The place was loaded with prisoners of war, of prisoners... American and Dutch, Australian. And we, we saw the camps. And when we got there, the prisoners had been liberated already. But, but it is, it was a sad day in, into the Taiwanese when, when the Chinese came in. They liked the Japanese, I mean, the Japanese had modernized the whole, the whole island, every hamlet. I mean, even had headhunters out in the hills in Formosa, even in those days. But they all had electricity, wide boulevards, beautiful roads, big schools. I mean, it was well-run, well-run machine.

Interviewer: That was all Japanese.

Bernick: It was under the Japanese, right.

Interviewer: When did you first hear that we had dropped the atom bomb?

Bernick: We had radios and that's, we heard it on the radio, probably, it probably could have been the same day. But again, I can't, I don't know for sure. No more than a day later, you know. And. you know, it was because. I mean, at least to me, I mean, I was a young kid from Iowa. I mean, what did I know about atomic bombs? I mean, I don't even know how to spell it, let alone what it was. But we, I mean, it was described as really devastating. And obviously, the results, it certainly was. But it, it was such an unknown that it, probably, didn't mean that much to us as it, as it would now.

Interviewer: How about V-J Day when that finally filtered through the radio? What was the reaction?

Bernick: Well, V-J Day in, in China, that was the same... oh, yeah, oh, that was great news. I mean, that was, that was exciting. That I can understand, because that means I was going to go home. I mean, not right away, but at least the end was, was in sight. So, that was that was good. But. I was I was still out in the middle of China, then.

Interviewer: Any kind of celebration?

Bernick: Yeah. I mean, our... beer was fairly common. Not much American beer, but Chinese beer. But we all the trucks in Burma and China were running on alcohol. So, we used to mix the alcohol with grapefruit juice and that was our, that was our, our cocktail for the, for the, for the day. I mean, you had to be careful, but that... get, get the mixture to out of whack. But it was... I don't know why they did that, but all the, not even diesel, it was all the trucks were running on pure grain alcohol. I mean, this is American trucks.

Interviewer: With the war over, how long was it before you went to Formosa?

Bernick: Well, as I say, as soon as the war was over within two or three days, we were... a plane came in and picked us up and we were flown into Shanghai. And I guess we were in Shanghai, no more than a month, if that, when they said, "Take your choice, go to Tientsin or go to Formosa." And so, we chose Formosa.

Interviewer: And what was Shanghai like at this point?

Bernick: Shanghai was the most fantastic city I've ever been in my life. It was not bombed, or certainly wasn't... some of the port areas were bombed. But it had, Shanghai was made up of districts. You had your, your Russian district, your German district, Eastern European District... a Jewish, big Jewish district. In that they fled Germany before the Hitler persecution and went to Shanghai. The police were Gurkhas, Indians from India, primarily, big turbans. And instead of a gun, they were carrying a knife about this long. But quite a few cars there, but primarily rickshaw and bicycles. But fabulous restaurants, big nightclubs, beautiful women of all nationality, race. It was a conglomerate of every nationality known to man, was in Shanghai, and they all lived in more or less their own district.

Interviewer: So, you could literally go eat German food.

Bernick: Oh, yeah, right. Yes. Right. And the city was open. I mean, there was no restrictions that were you know, this was off limits or that was. Yeah, it was unfortunate that I didn't have more money, because I could have come home a rich man. I mean, things were so cheap. I mean, beautiful antiques and, and**,** and jewelry and... but, you know, and the people were poor after the war. They were

they were selling, like in Germany, people sold all their possessions in order to get food. They were probably not as, as devastated in Shanghai, because primarily all those people were rich to begin with. Otherwise, they couldn't have got there. So, I think in that case, they were much better off than, say, the Germans or probably the Japanese. But, and to my knowledge, there was... the Japanese were not particularly cruel to the people in Shanghai. They stole them blind; I mean, we went into a place called Medhurst Apartments was a fancy, fancy prior to the war apartment house. And we went in and there wasn't a stick of furniture in the place. And most of the bathrooms had been disassembled and taken, taken back to Japan, I guess, except on the top floor. And I think it was, I'm guessing, but I think it was about ten, ten stories, ten, 12. The dining room was still there with all the lovely accouterments and everything, the chairs and the white linen tablecloths. And of course, we were eating our C-rations, mostly. Although we did get we did get some Samaritan supplies in. And we did eat well and they supplemented with local with local food. So, we ate extremely well in this luxurious penthouse dining room. But we slept on, I guess, we had army cots. I don't think we had to sleep on the floor. But there are no chairs, no rugs, no nothing.

Interviewer: So, 30 days there and now to Formosa.

Bernick: And then, to Formosa, right. And then, that was with another Chinese army. The 40th Chinese Army came from Canton, and they were down there to in charge of the repatriation of the Japanese back to Japan. It took, took about eight or nine months, total. There's a lot of Japanese. I don't know how many ships.

Interviewer: So, that happened to the Japanese that had lived there a long time.

Bernick: Yeah, it was a sad day for them, too. I mean, this was their home. They were born there in most cases, many of them. And this was home to them. Some of the older people. Well, I'm sure many of them have gone back to. Japan to visit, probably relatives and so on and so forth. But, but basically, this was home. I mean, they had owned shops and businesses. And they, they ran the country. I mean, they were they were in charge. It was a Japanese possession.

Interviewer: After Formosa.

Bernick: Back to Shanghai and then home. And I was discharged in July, July the 5th, as I recall, no. July 5th or sixth, I forgot which. And went back to school at the University of Iowa and got disenchanted. It was crowded. A lot of times you didn't, you had, your instructor was a microphone, because of the, all of the big influx. And Iowa was a very small school, still is small school. But and I'd be very truthful, I wasn't applying myself as I should. And so, I decided to go back in the Army, and I went back, I went back as private, PFC, maybe, and I enlisted for intelligence. So, I was in the Counterintelligence Corps for the rest of my.20 years.

Interviewer: No kidding?

Bernick: Yeah. I was a spy, spy for the Army.

Interviewer: That's great. I mean, it's always intriguing. What are some of the things that you did that, I mean, that boggle your mind that when you were in intelligence?

Bernick: Well, my, my, my, intelligence was limited primarily. Well, I started out doing background investigations. Certain people had to have clearances, because they were dealing with secret, top secret clearances. And, you know, you start out basically, yes, you need a clearance major or private or colonel, whoever. You fill out this 20 page form. I don't think it was 20 pages, but it was a lot. And then, this is sent to an intelligence organization. There, there were many of them throughout the United States, all of them in the major army headquarters, which there were six… six Army headquarters. Presidio of San Francisco was the sixth. Chicago was the fifth, San Antonio was the fourth. But anyway, they were sent there. And all the information about, about you, for example, that you were applying, was extracted. In other words, you went to school in Houston, Texas, and you graduated from University of Texas in Austin. So, that portion was taken out and sent to the Houston office, to the Austin office. Your school background was checked.

Now, they had, you had an FBI check that your name and, and address and Social Security number and all that, was sent to FBI headquarters **i**n Washington**,** DC. They did an FBI check. Then they had a local, what they call a local check. Every place that you lived up until the time you completed that form was checked… your Houston, your Austin. If you lived someplace else in Texas or regardless of where you lived, the local police were checked. Now, you listed a half a dozen, probably four or five, I think it was four or five, character references. Every one of those people were checked, regardless of what was in Texas or in Alaska. Every one of those were checked. And then, you would ask, "Well, do you know of anyone else that knows him?" "Oh, "yeah. Mary Jones was a good friend," or so on. So, then you went and talked to Mary Jones. So, you know, you filtered it all down. So, you got this all done, and you packaged it up and you wrote in and said, "Mr. Jones meets all the criteria for, for a top secret clearance." And you send that back to whoever, whoever asks for it. That's basically it. That's how background investigations are run.

Then you have your more sophisticated, your counterintelligence cases where, for example, there was a master sergeant in Paris who they felt certain was giving... he worked in the message center where all the paperwork and the traffic came in. And they thought he was making copies of some of these papers. Well, they couldn't quite prove it, but anyway, they had to get him out of there. He happened to be married to a Czech. The man was black. And so, they transferred him out and transferred him to a place in New Jersey, which was the, that's the signal headquarters for, for for the Army. And he was sent to a, to an organization. In the meantime, we selected a young black fella and changed his background, his records, and, and he had been intelligence trained. And we sent him to join that outfit. We got him assigned to this sergeant in order to get close to him. The only problem was he got too close. The sergeant had a daughter by a previous marriage that was living... our man fell in love with the daughter and got her pregnant. But anyway, make a long story short, they caught him, and they convicted him. And it was because of the woman, the Czech. She turned him. She, she had recruited him to, to sell**,** to sell out. I mean, that's the, that's kind of a basic. But what I my last part of my intelligence career was, I made up covers for people. I changed their changed, their background. Changed their records. In some cases, we had an intelligence unit instead of calling them the, the 115th Counterintelligence Unit, I

faked all the records and made it the 37th Mess Kit Repair Battalion there, or, you know. Many of it is shelved. The services, they want their intelligence information yesterday.

I mean, it's not like the agency, where time is, is not of essence. The, but the military, be ir Army or Navy, doesn't make any difference, they want they want the intelligence, like right now. And they are not about to, well, there are a few exceptions. We had some people that went into deep cover on a long-range situation where, where… but you have to devise up kind of, fake the records, and, and give them a halfway, decent background that they can live with if they're fairly knowledgeable. We tried to keep everything as true to the fact as you can. When you start dealing with changing of names, that's bad enough. But when you start changing backgrounds and, and you're from Chicago and you've never been to Chicago in your life. That's a little tough.

Interviewer: I bet. It had to have been fascinating.

Bernick: It was interesting. I never lived in an Army post. Never wore a uniform. So, it was, I was just like a civilian, in essence.

Interviewer: Did people, at that point, know what you were doing?

Bernick: They knew I was in the Army. And, and the most, in my case, I'd say, I'm in Army intelligence. And so, that was, there was... very few people that, that could fake it. I mean, it's, it's amazing in Washington, DC, where I had three tours, excuse me, three tours in Washington, DC. And you get to know people and so on, and in conversation, "Where do you work?" "Well, I work for the government." "You say, oh, you work for CIA." That was their standard, we work for the government. But anyway. Things have opened up with a lot more there. In most cases, people admit that they work at CIA. There's a few that obviously, because of their job and so on, say they work for the Army, or work for State Department or work for somebody else, but...

Interviewer: When World War II started, your generation to step up to the bat. And everybody. Did what they had to do. I mean.

Bernick: That's right. Yeah, it was. It was… there was not much choice. I mean, you either volunteered or you were drafted. I mean, it wasn't... where in later years with the Vietnam and the Korea. There was a lot of, supposedly, people that didn't believe in the, in the conflicts and did everything possible to get out of it. But I think more so in Vietnam than in...

Interviewer: Why do you think your generation was so willing?

Bernick: Well. I guess there hadn't been a war for, what, 35, almost 40 years. So, it was kind of a new thing. Plus, even though we weren't invaded. I mean, in most part, Hawaii was a foreign country. To many Americans, I mean, they didn't... it wasn't a state then, but it was a territory. But it was close enough to home that it was, that you felt it was part of… and plus, look how many American sailors and airmen were killed in the in the Pearl Harbor invasion, bombing. So, in other words, it was a little bit like the Trade Center. I mean, we were hurt. And I mean, everybody, all of a sudden, says, we got to do something. And, well, we heard about the atrocities, both the Japanese and Germany, and that wasn't right. And Hitler wasn't right. And so, it was, I guess, a bad cliche, but a team effort. I mean, we got to pull together and, and turn the thing around. If not, do we want to live under that type of regime? I mean, I'm not saying it was going to happen, but it certainly was possible.

Interviewer: How did the experience change you?

Bernick: I grew up in a hurry, I think, maybe. Sometime, maybe not as much as I would like to, but it certainly opened my eyes to, to a lot of different situations. And opened my eyes to how to get along with people, how to adjust to unfavorable situations... that it's not always ice cream and apple pie. I mean, it's, I think, it was being able to adapt to, to, to change what the situation is, probably made the most, most impression on me, what impressed me. I don't feel I, you know, I saved the nation or, or was any way a hero, not, not, whatsoever. But. I mean, it was all... I was a little cog in the big gears or something, the big fish in the big pond. But I have no complaints. I enjoyed not only the war years, my military service, but the on the peace time. too. I didn't go... I went to Korea, but I went to Korea after the

war. Got, I was still in the army when Vietnam broke out, but I was either in, I was stationed in Frankfurt. Then, I had a tour in Washington. And I was about to be sent to Vietnam when I decided, enough's enough. I had at that point three teenage girls and I figured I didn't need to leave those home with my wife to manage, at least to help out a little bit. But I had. No complaints whatsoever of my military service. I enjoyed it tremendously, both the, the World War II years and the and the and the tour afterward.

Interviewer: If you had to tell the...

(Begin Part 2)

Interviewer: When all these tapes were edited together and sent out to the schools of Virginia, so those kids get live history, real history versus out of the books. If you could leave them with a message, what would it be?

Bernick: Well, I hope that there never is another war as major as World War II was. I mean, that was a major, major… well, all wars are terrible, but that was a major, major effort. But if it comes to be, I think it's your, it's your, it's your duty be you a boy or a girl. I mean, the girl doesn't have to bear arms, but there are many things that you can do on the home front to assist the war effort. But I think that you should not hesitate one bit to, to pull together to see that justice is done.

Interviewer: Perfect. Thank you very much.