

**EI-1467**

**BIRTHDATE: 11/12/1925**

**INTERVIEW DATE: 9/11/2007**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 81**

**RUNNING TIME: 109:25**

**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD.**

**RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE**

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**PORTUGAL, 1940**

**AGE: 14**

**SHIP: NEA HELLIS]**

**PORT: LISBON**

**RESIDENCES:**

**PORTUGAL: CONTENÇAS DE BAIXO**

**US: NEW BEDFORD, MA**

LEVINE: Today is September the eleventh, the year 2007. I'm here in the Ellis Island Studio with Reginald Pinto who came here as a fourteen year old, from Portugal, in 1940. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. If we could start, please, by you saying your birth date.

PINTO: 11/12/25.

LEVINE: Okay and where were you born?

PINTO: In Portugal, but in a small village in the center of the country in a -- a -- called Contenças de Baixo.

LEVINE: Could you spell that please?

PINTO: Yes. C-O-N-T-E-N-C-A-S and then separately D-E and B-A-X -- B-A-I-S-X-O.

LEVINE: Okay and say it again.

PINTO: Contencás de Baiso. But the C, it's got a cedilla underneath to become a c.

LEVINE: Contenc--.

PINTO: Contencas de Baixo, which is in the – in the district of Mangualdo, the nearest city. And the – the in Beira Alta, the province of Beira Alta.

LEVINE: Province?

PINTO: B-E-I-R – Beira Alta. Yeah, Alta -- Alta's normal.

LEVINE: And how do you spell the district?

PINTO: The district: M-A-N-G-U-A-L-D-O. Mangualdo.

LEVINE: G-U-A---

PINTO: L-D-O.

LEVINE: Okay, I see.

PINTO: In Portuguese, all the letters have value. It's not like Spanish where half of the---some of the letters are silent. (Laughs)

LEVINE: I see.

PINTO: You skip over. In Portuguese, G-U, Mangualdo, everything sound as a sound.

LEVINE: Okay well now, so a province is bigger than a district---

PINTO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: And a district is bigger than a city---

PINTO: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay, and so on.

PINTO: Actually there's a village and then that belongs to a parish. There go --that's the next they had – next thing. And then so many parishes belong to the district. And actually it's the cous —called council: *Conselho*. And then the district is actually the big city, which is usually, in that case, was the capital of the province for me.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. Oh, great, so you were in the center of the country of Portugal.

PINTO: In the heart of the country, which – which is actually--the province was shaped like a heart, even. It's not anymore. They re-district everything now, but at that time it was called the heart of the country.

LEVINE: Did you--?

PINTO: And---

LEVINE: I'm sorry.

PINTO: It was also---it's also the center of learning for the whole country, which is still today---has the second oldest university in the world: the University of Coimbra, which is in Beira Alta.

LEVINE: How do you spell Coimbra?

PINTO: Coimbra. C-O-I-M-B-R-A. C-O---

LEVINE: I-M-B---

PINTO: B-R-A. C-O-I-M-B-R-A. Coimbra.

LEVINE: Well, okay, now did you spend all of the time before you left Portugal in the same village?

PINTO: No. ---This is where, I think, where some of this fits in.

LEVINE: Okay.

PINTO: My father was born in Portugal, himself.

LEVINE: What was his name?

PINTO: Sidafim.

LEVINE: Spell that please.

PINTO: Serafim.

LEVINE: Oh.

PINTO: S-E-R-A-F-I-M. Okay, but my grandparents, his parents, took him to Brazil when he was a baby, because they---they were established there. They had three hotels, they owned or something. So my father grew up in Brazil, but when he was twenty years old, as a good citizen of Portugal, he felt obligated to present himself for military duty, which was mandatory. Still is today. So, he went to Portugal, that he had not been to all---most of his life. And he presented himself in--- to the military, to serve and they rejected him. They said, no, he had TB and, "You're going to die soon, so we don't want you." They rejected him. Cause he died, he was almost ninety years old. Never had TB, but (laughs) in those days the doctors made those decisions. And what happened is he stayed in Portugal for a while and during that time he married my mother.

LEVINE: And what was her name?

PINTO: Her name was Maria Deo Linda Ignacio Figaredo . That was he maiden name.

LEVINE: Could you spell that please?

PINTO: Deo Linda. The first name, Deo: D-E-O. Linda: L-I-N-D-A, which means God beautiful. Deo in Portuguese is God. And the – the rest of the names were family--the family names, which is tradition. You carry family names--sometimes four or five different names. But her name was Maria Deo Linda Ignacio Figueiredo, which was mother—my grandmother's name and my grandfather's name. They carry both.

LEVINE: I see.

PINTO: You know.

LEVINE: What was the Ignacio? Was your grandmother or grandfather?

PINTO: My grandmother's side.

LEVINE: And how do you spell that one?

PINTO: Well there's two ways. Actually I-G-N-A-C-I-O is the proper name, but a lot of times they just leave the G out and say Inacio without the G.

LEVINE: Okay, and how about your father's family name---her father's family name--- your mother's father's family name? She carried that too, right?

PINTO: Figueiredo?

LEVINE: Yeah, that one. How do you spell that?

PINTO: F-I-G-U-E-I-R-E-D-O.

LEVINE: Okay, and so it was typical in Portugal, for a child to carry, as a last name, as a surname, the mother's family name and then the father's?

PINTO: Right, the father's name would be in the last name, but the mother's name always fitted in sometime two or three names that were imbedded in the family would be in between. Which is, see, in my father's side of the family, my name is Reginald Pinto, but my grandfather's name was Pays, but my father chose to drop the Pays and carry the mother's name, while his brother chose to carry the father's name. (Laughs) It's a -- it sounds a little complicated, but let me tell you the reason, there's a very good reason for that, because in my mother's side they did the same thing. When they call people, friends and stuff, they usually use the last name and they say, "Hi, Pinto!" "Hi, Pays!" You know, that---being that way, the -- they differentiate -

- the brothers, the brothers usually differentiate but carrying a---separate name.

LEVINE: I see.

PINTO: But my father dropped the name Pays all together and when I came along he did – he didn't carry it with me. He—his name was Serafim Pinto Pays, but with me I don't have Pays in my name even though my grandparents are Pays.

LEVINE: I see, I see.

PINTO: So, that's the explanation, but what happened during the time my father was in Portugal, at that time he married my mother. Shortly after he married my mother, he came to the States. He didn't go back to Brazil, because his brother had migrated to the States. And he lived on Long Island, by the way, and he did – did that until he died. So, he came to the United States, leaving my mother expecting me, before I was born. So, then he made arrangements for my mother to join and I to joi-- after I was born, to join him here. This is where we have all the papers and priority, visas and everything from the Consulate to come and join my father. But, they notified my mother that everything was ready: you're on the priority list, you can go in the next three months or so whenever you're ready.

Then my mother got sick and she asked for an extension from the Consulate and that she had to send in---a medical certificate and everything to show that she was actually sick. That's what I have here. And the Consulate granted her an extension, so I think it was like four months or more. Then, the Consulate, after that period said, no news again, says, "Okay, we're ready any time you're ready to leave to join your husband and with your son. You can go anytime, because you're on a priority list of visas. And that

notice arrived about five days after my mother died. So, that's how come I stayed in Portugal, because then my father went back to straighten out the, you know, the legalities and all that stuff. He stayed for a little while and came back and left me with my grandparents, who raised me. You know, I was a baby, I was three years old.

LEVINE: I see. So, you might have gotten to this country in 1926, possibly. Is that when? When your mother was--?

PINTO: Uhh---no 19---let me see. In 19---well, 1939 was the second notice.

LEVINE: Oh, okay, so it was a while.

PINTO: She was sick for a while. They extended it, but the 1930, was the first notice that we could of come.

LEVINE: I see.

PINTO: I have it.

LEVINE: I see.

PINTO: The—from the American Consulate. Saying that, you know, you can go, and you know, go to the United States. And then she got sick and they -- she got extensions.

LEVINE: I see.

PINTO: She never got well. She died when I we--in 1939, they said, "It's time you went and here's---here permission to go and join your – your husband", but she had died about five days before this arrived, the second notice.

LEVINE: So, then you have memories of your mother.

PINTO: Oh, yes! Yes, I do.

LEVINE: How would you describe her? What kind of a lady was she?

PINTO: Oh, very---the people in the village called my grandmother and my mother saints. Honest, this is not, I'm not, you know, making things up. They said that they were so good hearted that they would give anything away. And I watched as a kid, I saw my grandmother take her own clothes off and give it to a beggar that came through the village. You know, and she didn't have really anything else to replace it. She had to go and make up something, but she did that. I saw that. They were very good-hearted people, you know. I wish I was that good, but---

LEVINE: Did they try to teach you certain ways -- of values, certain ways of living?

PINTO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Can you remember any of the things they taught you?

PINTO: Oh, I'm writing a book on that now. My---I -- I grew up with my grand---my mother's parents. My grandfather was---went blind and my grandmother went---paralyzed on one side, so the two of them were both handicapped, and yet neither one of them could read or write. But, in the evening, when we got together around the hearth, she knew the Bible, for instance, from one end to the other. I-- I don't have any idea how she learned it, you know, but she did and she would keep teaching me about goodness, about Jesus, you know that kind of stuff. Now, and I want to say that our family background is Jewish. (Laughs) But, we have members of the family that

stayed with the religion and others that went, converted. In fact one of my ancestors is – is one of the founders of the oldest synagogue in New York: the Pinto. But, see, you know, we researched the family---

LEVINE: Oh! I know! I know the burial ground!

PINTO: That's right. So, we researched the family beginning, the name and all that kind of stuff---my wife did. She – she has all that. She was -- she's good at that stuff. So, you know, she – she knew so much and she had so much faith and her main thing was to teach me, to impart it. There was a time in Portugal, when the Fascists tried to take over. This goes back to 19--I don't know, 17 or just before that. And the Bibles were outlawed. Anybody that was found to have a Bible would be arrested and put in prison, you know. By that time, my uncle had bought a Bible and he gave it – he passed it on to me to read, and---but he said, "But make sure you keep it hidden." And he had a thing in the wall (laughs), a place where I had to put it, you know, so that I wouldn't be caught with it , because he went to serve in the military and he left it with me, you know. So, so many things like that happened along the way.

LEVINE: Now was your grandmother and your mother, were they Catholic? Or what religion were they practicing?

PINTO: Catholic.

LEVINE: Catholic.

PINTO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And so did you have, did you like go to church when you were very young?

PINTO: Oh, yes. When, I'm guessing about seven years old, you start going for -- to learn the prayers and stuff like that. You go to church, in fact at one time, for a good while, I was a -- a Boy Scout in the troop that was sponsored by the church, but it was run by the government. That's the way--. There's a bit -- you're a boy scout, but our scout leader was a sergeant in the army and, you know, his job was to train us some military stuff and in case of war -- in case of need, we'd become helpers of the military. That's the kind of training boy scouts got at that time. I don't know about now. But---so I was a boy scout in the church.

LEVINE: And were you a student? Did you go to a regular school, too?

PINTO: Oh, yes. Well, that's where some of this comes in too, because when my mother died, my father went there to straighten out the legalities. And I -- when I --I was a minor so they had to appoint a trustee for my estate, so I came out, we had lands I -- I -- I inherited a house and my father inherited other properties and so on. But, we split, I--I got half of the estate. And then, my father said, "Well, I have no way of taking care of him," so asked my grandparents to leave me there with them. So---then, well there was a time of the Depression, too, which -- which got involved in my coming to the States. But, I think we started---I started school when I was seven---six or seven. I think it was seven. Then, because I was in public school, he didn't want to interrupt my studies.

So every time he thought about me coming, he'd say, "Well, no, I'm going to wait until he finishes. I'm going to wait." And he waited until I graduated from the equivalent of high school, which I was eleven years old, the youngest ever graduated from my school and I was number one in my class too. So what happened, at that time, my uncle, who lived in the city, in Lisbon, a suburb of Lisbon, and I had two uncles there and they were financially well off. So, my uncle went and picked me up and said, "Now

you're coming to live with me in the city." So, I went to live with him. This was in, it had to be 1937, something like that. And, my uncle---he didn't tell me this until I was ready to leave for the States, you know. He said I received a letter from your professor from your school, from Beria Alta, he said you were first in your class. You got the highest---to graduate from the school there, at that point, you had to go to the college. College is the ones that gave you the exams. You had to pass all the tests to be---to graduate, and that was in the city. And so, I got the highest marks for the school. I was in the top of the school.

And, so he wrote my uncle and said, "Do not let him waste his brain. Make sure that he continues his studies." So, my uncle, right away, started making arrangements for me to go to the university. And he had everything all set. He was going to pay for it and everything. That – and -- he wasn't asking my father for any money, but he asked my father permission to send me to the university. He said, you know, at my age he didn't want to---he didn't have the right to do it really. So, my father said, "No, I've been waiting long enough for him to finish school. This is the time when if he's going to study any more, he's going to do it here with me, in the United States." So, my father is also re-married just before that (laughs), in 1940, you know. So now he was re-married, and he wanted me here with him.

LEVINE: Now was this your father's brother, or your mother's brother?

PINTO: My broth—my mother's brother.

LEVINE: Okay.

PINTO: Okay. My father's brother was here in Long Island.

LEVINE: Okay.

PINTO: He came before my father even, you know. So, this is the way it happened. I -- at that point I was going to go to school. I would have been a doctor if I stayed there; because that -- that was a medical school I was going to. And--  
-But, I came to the States instead to be my f-- I was happy to come and be with my father. We always---we always communicated. He'd send me a picture now and then and we wrote back in forth. When I started learning to read and write, he'd write me and he would send some support. You know, I had income over there, because of my property, but he would send some money as he was able to---buy him a suit or, you know, tell my -- my guardian to buy things for me.

LEVINE: I see. What was your father doing for work in this country while you were still over in Portugal?

PINTO: In this country, he was a weaver. Eav—ea -- he was a very advanced---he'd weave things like linings for -- for caskets and stuff with gold trim and very fancy kind of weaving. He was a weaver here.

LEVINE: Was he a weaver there before that, do you know?

PINTO: No. In -- in Rio Janeiro, in Brazil, he was a chef in one of my grandfather's hotels and he was very good at it. In fact, he's got published stuff that he, you know, of his own recipes and things like that. He was also a -- a sort of a linguist. He learned Hebrew. He was -- he was considered an authority on ancient Egyptian history. He was so involved in -- in that he belonged to a society called the Rosicrucians. I don't know if you've ever heard of them.

LEVINE: I've heard of them. Yes.

PINTO: That delved into ancient Egyptian history. And he could also read (of course, he knew English and Portuguese.) -- he could also read Japanese. He learned that.

LEVINE: Now was he religious?

PINTO: Not too much. You know he stayed with the religion but he would not go to church every week or anything like that.

LEVINE: Was he Catholic? Or was he--

PINTO: He was Catholic.

LEVINE: He was Catholic, too.

PINTO: He was Catholic also.

LEVINE: Now when you think about the period of time in Portugal, is there anything that you regret or missed when you got here that was part of your life there?

PINTO: I think, I don't know. I missed-- there were certain things for a while that I was still attached to in Portugal, you know, for a while. Things--- I had to go to school here as soon as I arrived, practically. I was fourteen, so I had to go to school. And in school, this was in New Bedford, Massachusetts--- New Bedford had a very unique way of teaching foreign students. Now when I arrived here I didn't know a word of English. I knew nothing. I was going to study that at the university, but I never got to it. But in New Bedford, they had what they called an un-graded room in the schools, and that's where they put all the foreign students in the city, in that one room. And I was one of -- there were like five or six Portuguese, several Polish, two Chinese,

some French; we were all put in this room. And the teacher was also an immigrant, from England, and she couldn't speak any other language.

That was the purpose. The purpose was called the ungraded room, so that we were forced to learn English. I mean it was really pushed on us. And as you progressed, and learned enough, the teacher would decide, well okay you're---you can handle the fifth grade, so she'd move the student to each grade as they progressed. So, in my case, I was there for a while and, but I was also---my father was also teaching me at home. And I was g-- also going to night school. I wanted to learn in the worst way. (Laughs) So, I progressed pretty quick. Then one day, she says, "Well, Reggie," she says, "Well, I'm going to put you in the fifth grade. Your -- your -- you can handle that." So, they---she put me in the fifth grade.

They had--- in those days they had A and B sessions, you know. So, I was -- went into the fifth grade at the end of the second session, so at the end I was promoted to sixth grade. Now, we had a period of vacation, and when I came back I went into the sixth grade. In the sixth grade, the teacher--- I was there two week and the teacher would put stuff on the board and everything sh-- whether it's spelling, English, anything, math or anything, I knew all those subjects except language. The language was my thing I concentrated on. And, so, I got hundreds on everything for two weeks, so she came to me and says, "Reggie, you don't belong in my class. You're supposed to know nothing about the subjects I'm teaching. This is a new year and you're getting these marks, so I'm going to move you up to seventh grade." So, she brought me up to the principle and the principle listened to her and says, "Oh, okay, we'll see if he belongs in the seventh grade."

They locked me in a room, an empty room, give me all these test papers to fill out. And the test papers were in math and they were in composition, spelling, some in geometry even, that kind of stuff. Things that would fit into

the seventh grade. Well I filled -- an hour later they come and open (they locked the door on me) An hour later they come and open the door and collect all the paperwork. Says, "You go back to Miss Black's. We'll let you know." I think it was the next day, or the day after, they grabbed me, move me in the seventh grade. And it turns out, I---I think it wa -- at eighty-nine, or something like that, for average. So, I was in the seventh grade for a little while and then I went to the eighth grade! (Laughs) But in the seventh grade, and in the eighth grade, is where I started realizing how backward, I still believe that today, that we are in teaching our children, because I had to teach the teachers how to do things right.

You know, this is---it's a funny feeling, but the teachers would be putting stuff on the board---some kind of problem, and I'd have the answer before she'd finish. I'd have my paper and I'd turn it in. And she'd look at and says, "Yeah that's the answer, but how did you arrive at it?" She didn't know how I did it. So, I had to teach them the way they teach in Europe. And it's not just in Portugal. It's all the countries in Europe teach different---teach to arrive at the answer, to convert things, actually to any math problem you convert to decimals right at the beginning and you arrive at the answer , you know. So I had to teach them (Laughs) how I did it. But they were -- they were committed to teach everything in fractions and stuff like that, you know, which is the way they were taught and the way they were teaching their students and they're still doing it today. And it surprises me that they haven't caught on to more advanced ways of teaching the children. And the same way, I have friends who are in bilingual education, they're teaching it in school, and we have these big heavy discussions about how they're retarding---they're actually harming the children that they're teaching by keeping them from learning English faster. You know, they're retarding their assimilation to the country and they don't see it, well 'cause it's a job.

LEVINE: (laughs) Well if we could back up for a minute. When you left, did you want to stay? Did you want to stay in Portugal when your father called for you? Or what was---?

PINTO: No.

LEVINE: There were pushes and pulls I guess.

PINTO: Well my reaction, my uncle says, well your father wants you with him in the United States, so you're going. I accepted that. I always wanted to join him anyway, "But," he says, "Were going to make the arrangements. There shouldn't be any problem with joining you, because, you know, he wants you there." Shortly after my father came, probably within five years or so after he was here, he became an American citizen. OK? Now my uncle made all the arrangements for me to come and says well, "Tomorrow we'll go and pay the---pay for flight on the American--- Pan-American clipper, which made daily fli---daily flights between Lisbon and New York. And we checked on it. Took twenty-three hours to fly from Lisbon to New York. And one would arrive and the other one would leave every day, you know, they had two.

So, (blows nose) ---excuse me. So, I said, "No, I don't want to fly. I want to go by ship." That was my choice. I said, "I'm Portuguese. See you can't fly. You gotta go by ship." You know, that affinity to the sea. And he said, "No, but the submarines are sinking the ships back all over the place." Because this was 1940. The Germans had the whole Atlantic covered with their submarines. There were a lot of ships being sunk. So, I told him, I says, "Look, if I have to die at sea, it's my destiny, but I want to have an ocean voyage." So, I chose to come by sea. Now the ship that I came on, at that time, was all---I think three, maybe three--- (Lisbon by the way was the outlet for the United States). All of Europe was in the war, but not Lisbon. Lisbon was the main port that was still open, because they never got involved in the

war. And, so, whether it was by plane or by ship, these marine ocean liners operated out of Lisbon, between Lisbon and New York.

The Greek line was one of the big ones. The American Export line also, they had ships going back and forth from New York, you know, and to Lisbon and back and forth. It so happened the next one was the *Greek* ship was, you know, taking on passengers, so we signed up for to come on the *Nea Hellis*. I don't know what happened--- for sure, but somewhere along the line between Lisbon and New York, it had to be during the night because I didn't see it, a Greek ship had been sunk and Greece got involved in the war. It was attacked by Italy or something. And they had to pick up the merchant survivors---the merchant marine survivors from the Greek ship that was sunk, so we had a lot merchantmen, Greek merchantmen, on my ship when we arrived here, which is in another episode. On the trip, by government requirements, the ship's doctor had to be Portuguese that by law they required that there be a doctor if you have passengers coming out of Portugal and so on. And so I was sort of put in charge of the doctor on the ship, but I only saw him once, on the trip.

LEVINE: You mean he was supposed to watch after you?

PINTO: Yes, yes. He was supposed to watch out for me, because I was a minor, you know. And---but I only saw him once. He really didn't pay much attention, but I got to know some of the Greek sailors that were picked up. I don't know how we w-- they were picked up, but the rest of the voyage I got to know some of them. We'd go to the bar and they'd buy me soft drinks and things like that. And they liked to take care of the kid. (Laughs) You know, I was a kid, so---.

LEVINE: And you couldn't really speak very much?

PINTO: No. The Greek language is very close to Portuguese, but we get along, you know, with sign language and stuff.

LEVINE: Do you happen to know the name of the ship that got sunk? The Greek ship.

PINTO: No, no. I never found out. But I can tell you, though, that when we got here, all the Greek sailors, they had no papers whatsoever and they were interned here. They were not---with the rest of the people that were here. They were put in that cage: that -- the area with all the bars in the windows. They were there. As long as I was here, they were there, because we'd go out to play ball or something---we had like a one hour exercise period each day---and I'd go out and some of them would recognize me and shout at me from, you know---.

LEVINE: From the window?

PINTO: From the windows with the grate---with the bars like.

LEVINE: Woah. Why don't you say where you went when you went out for exercise?

PINTO: Well, we went out to the yard.

LEVINE: Which is where?

PINTO: Just outside of the main building.

LEVINE: Where the Wall of Honor is now?

PINTO: Yeah, where the Wall is now.

LEVINE: So Manhattan was like a backdrop?

PINTO: Oh, yeah! I could see the Statue of Liberty and Manhattan. And that's the thing. Every day we're looking at these sights, but we can't get any closer, you know. In a way it's—it's hard to say, because I don't want to be in any way detrimental about Ellis Island, but it's a prison---it was a prison.

LEVINE: Very true.

PINTO: You know, that's what we were.

LEVINE: Now with these Greek merchant seamen, they were being held together and why were they singled out to be kept apart? Do you know?

PINTO: Well, yes. Two things. For one thing they didn't have any papers. They lost everything they had. And another thing is that we were neutral, and the -- Greece had now got involved in the war, and as a neutral country you're supposed to intern people, you know, from a warring country. It's the same as---I was in the navy for four years and during the war and we would go to Northern Ireland. It was one of our bases. And my port was right on the river Doyle. One side is Northern Ireland, the other side is Erie. If you crossed over, and the police caught you, they wouldn't let you come back. You were interned there for the duration of the war, because they were not involved in the war, you know. That's the only two reasons that I know of.

LEVINE: So why don't you speak a little bit more about Ellis Island and your experience of it? Your impressions and your description of it?

PINTO: All my life -- all my life, I had never had any experience with any other religion or other peoples -- in other words. The only -- the only exposure that I had to other peoples was in 1940, Portugal had a big exposition in Lisbon, which included all the -- all the parts of Portugal, all the provinces and colonies and

so on, 'cause they had black people from Africa and New Guinea and Timor and all the different areas from Asia too and India, 'cause Portugal is all over the world. So, that time, I saw different kinds of peoples for the first time, but I had never experienced the things that I did, that I experienced here. By the way, let me get a -- back track a little bit. When we got into the -- into New York, in Greek ship, I think was in Brooklyn, everybody was packed up and everybody left. There was a Portuguese man that had---that I used to speak with, but he had gone back to visit his family---he was coming back. So as soon as we arrived he had all this paperwork and he left.

Now there's nobody that I can speak with. Everybody was going down gangplank and I got my suitcase and I thought, "Well I guess this is where we leave. Everybody's leaving." So I walked down the gangplank and I get into this huge pier, was like a big hanger covered, and I see all these people in line and a bunch of---about three tables with officials checking them in---checking their paperwork. I figured that's what they were doing. And I'm way at the end of the line, So it gets to a point and they just pack up their stuff and leave and everybody's gone. They went out the doors and they're gone. So, I says, "Well, I guess maybe I don't need to be checked in or something." So, I walk way down to the end of the pier and I go out the door.

As I walk out the door---it was the most frightening thing in my life, because there's so many cars going in every which direction. There's a overhead train running and I look at this---so many people. And I says, "Oh my God! Where am I going? If I go beyond this they'll never find me. I'll get lost in this mass. I'll never be found." You know. So I walked back into the pier and now there's nobody there. It's empty. So I go back. I say, "I'm going back to the ship!" At least, you know, if they go somewhere, It'll go back to Lisbon. You know? (Laughs) So, I go back to the ship and the ship's purser, who I had met, had changed from his uniform to his civilian clothes and he was leaving. He was going out. So, he sees me, says, "What are

you doing here? You're not supposed to be here! Everybody's gone." I says, "Well I don't know where to go."

So, he said, "Well you come with me." So he brings me down to a group of people, including the – you, know, Greek sailors. They were all together waiting for boat to pick 'em up. So now, we get aboard this ferry. It's not a-- --it's a tugboat--- looked like. And we wound up over here. That's it. So now we get over here. I didn't find this out until later -- is that the papers used to publish ship arrivals and departures everyday from here and the government found of the Germans were using that information to catch ships to sink them. So the government forbid that practice and they could not publish ship's arrivals or departures anymore. So, my father had---my uncle had written my father that I left Lisbon, but he had no idea where I was going, when I would arrive or anything, because there was no more publication of the ships' arrivals. So he didn't know when my ship came--- when it arrived here. And he had no idea at all, so I'm here waiting. For two days I didn't eat---over here.

LEVINE: Because you were so upset?

PINTO: Uh, no. I didn't know where to go! I didn't know where to go to eat. There was a fountain at the corner and there was a like a library rack with books of different languages and I found two books in Portuguese, so I read and waited in the main hall there, sat down and I read. And that's when my experiences now hit me. And I don't want to get emotional. [pauses briefly] There were so many different people and---that I'd never seen, you know the robes, the dress from Asiatic, from Arabic dress and everything. But most of all, everyday, this group of maybe ten or twelve people---men, all men, would go to the corner, put the shawls o—shawls over their shoulders and start---I thought they were hitting their heads against the wall. I really did. And I says, they're in dire need. They're suffering, you know. And I didn't find out

until later they were praying! But---those kind of experiences sort of got to me.

And I think was on the third day, I was so hungry, I said I gotta find something. I gotta find, not where I can buy something, because I had five dollars with me. But, I didn't know where to go. So, one day I saw---there was -- they'd make announcements, but I couldn't understand them, you know. So one day I saw all the people go through this one door. And I said I'm gonna follow 'em. I don't care where it goes. But I went through the door and son of a gun, there's a big dining hall in the other side with long tables. They'd put the food on the table (Laughs), it would get down to you, then you'd have to sort of fight for your stuff. But there was a couple of men there that, they were sort of looking over and trying to help me, you know. And if I needed sugar for my coffee, I'd ask for sugar--- *açúcar* is the---what I'd ask at, so I knew and they'd look over and says---and they'd say, "Give him the sugar," in their own language. (Laughs)

So, that's how I survived. Then, after about, I'm guessing about four or five days---four days I think---they call my name. I heard my name called. That's---I'm in the big hall and I heard my name called and I'm looking all over, who wants me and I don't know. And then in the corner, way in the corner, I see a door open, and a man in some uniform came out to the door and he's looking around, you know. And I figure, well he must be looking for me. So, I went over to him and he asked me if I was my name and I said, "Yes," in Portuguese. So, okay, he grabbed me, pulled me and went into another office inside and in the other office was a man sitting behind a desk, again in some uniform, probably---I don't know.

LEVINE: Inspector?

PINTO: Some kind of inspector. And they asked me if I had money and I said, "I have five dollars," in Portuguese. They understood that. I give them five dollars and they took it and they reach in and they give me some change. They give me like three dollars and something in change. I didn't know what it was for, because they didn't explain anything. But, what it was, was the only way they could notify my father that I was here and he had to come pick me up, was by sending him a telegram. So, I was paying for the telegram, you know. So, when he got the telegram, then he called this brother in Long Island. He lived in---my father lived in New Bedford, so it was my father, my step-mother, my uncle, my aunt and my cousin (Laughs), their daughter, they all came to pick me up here. Okay, and after they picked me up, then we went out, we got something to eat and went to the World's Fair. The World's Fair was still on.

LEVINE: Well, before we leave the Ellis Island experience. How did---you were affected by all of these different kinds of people that you had never seen.

PINTO: Yeah.

LEVINE: What kind of an effect would you say that had on a fourteen-year-old boy, who hadn't been---?

PINTO: Well, it was like--.

LEVINE: Out of the country?

PINTO: It was like---it felt like I was in a different world. Now, let me put it – let me say this. Portugal didn't get involved in the war. They were neutral all the way through and that was the, that was the place where all the refugees from all the countries wound up in Portugal. It was from there, that for instance, the Jewish immigrants, the people, the refugees that had gone through so

much in the other countries, found a way to get to the United States or some other country: Brazil or wherever. And I knew that this was going on, cause I, you know, I'd read the paper. But, I never saw the people in their own environment, you know. I—I knew this was going on. I knew there were refugees from all over Europe.

LEVINE: But you hadn't seen them in Portugal?

PINTO: No. No, because, you know, they lived in a different---we---my uncle lived in the suburbs. You know it's a nice (laughs) --nice upper class suburb. (Laughs) So, if we went to Lisbon, if we went to the city, it was to go to a movie or something like that and then we'd go back home, you know. So, I was never exposed to it. I know that---I knew there were a lot of Jewish people in the country---finding. But there was no restriction as far as on anybody. They came, they were welcomed, they found---they -- some of them stayed for -- they're still there. You know, because they got involved in their own commerce and business and whatever. And others had relatives here or in other countries and went on. But it did not---I didn't have the exposure to that stuff. I knew there's -- was going on.

LEVINE: So when you saw them here---these different people, many of whom had passed through Portugal to get here---

PINTO: That's right.

LEVINE: Then how did that---how did that work in your fourteen year-old consciousness? Or how did you think about it?

PINTO: Well, I thought that -- this---I thought this was the kind of country that the United States was---a big mix of everybody. But, it's a different world. It's not---it's not the world that I knew. It's -- it's a -- it's out in -- in space or

something. You know, it's like a different, completely different atmosphere. You know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

PINTO: So, I know it affected me at that time.

LEVINE: Do you think that experience, I mean being a fourteen year-old, you can't speak the language, you really couldn't even eat for a few days and being in this place, as you say it was a different world, do you think that had some long lasting effect? Those days when you were kind of in limbo, you might as well say.

PINTO: Yeah, I was. And I had, in those days; I had no idea where my father was. I had no idea if he would ever come to pick me up. They wouldn't let me out, you know, because I was a minor. But in fact, though, the day I arrived in the United States, I became an American citizen. See, because he was an American and I was a minor. And I never had to be naturalized or anything. The government -- when I turned twenty-one, the government sent me the proof of citizenship, so I could register to vote.

LEVINE: I see.

PINTO: So, I didn't have to go through the same routine. I have what they call, well a dual citizenship and derivative American citizenship. So---but I had no idea if he would ever come for me. You know, I don't know. I had no idea what New Bedford, Massachusetts was compared to New York or s--. (Laughs)

LEVINE: You're right, you wouldn't know. Is there anything else about Ellis Island that, before we leave it, that you would say that you saw or heard or smelled or tasted or anything? (Laughs)

PINTO: Umm, I---I have to say that if I had known better, if I had been a little more grown up, a little older, and if I had any understanding of the language, that I wouldn't have gone through any of that, because they took care of us. They fed everybody, you know, and they -- and we had a place to sleep such as it was. I had one little suitcase that -- with me -- that everything of mine was in there, you know clothes, change and stuff like that. And I don't think, under the circumstances, let me say, I don't think that they could have done any better than they did, you know. I'm not blaming Ellis Island and the system here. It's just my circumstances; it's the way it happened.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PINTO: So---But and when -- when they decided to rebuild Ellis Island, my wife and I, I said we have to contribute, because it's an historical place. It has to be preserved, you know. And so many millions of people came through here and I'm one of those that maybe had a little rough time temporarily, but I survived it. (laughs)

LEVINE: And then you went to the World's Fair!

PINTO: Went to the Wor---

LEVINE: Right from here, you went?

PINTO: Yep. Right from here, we went out and had something to eat. Then we went to the World's Fair and--- that's the World's Fair that was '39 and '40, the sphere and spiral. They showed, for the first time, I saw television, they showed it there. They were demonstrating it. I saw neon signs that I remember, the screwy future cars that we were supposed to get. (Laughs) A lot of things I remember from the World's Fair.

LEVINE: Now what was it like seeing your father, being with your father?

PINTO: I recognized everybody immediately. And---it was emotional. I think it was emotional for him too, to find me here. I think that if the war had not been on, he would have been at the pier when the ship arrived and taken me home. You know, that was the normal routine. I wasn't supposed to come to Ellis Island, except it turned out I had to, you know. And, if I had not been a minor, they probably would have released me into the -- into the city, you know, on my own, but I was a minor so.

LEVINE: Well, how about your father's wife? What was that like, having a---

PINTO: Well, she was, she was nice to me.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PINTO: She was always nice to me.

LEVINE: Oh, good.

PINTO: She knew very well, and I'm sure my father didn't have me come to join them unless she approved, because they married the same year that I came, earlier in the year. And, I'm sure she had to approve, because you know, they actually had to borrow money to pay for my passage. At that time he was out of work, in fact, you know. So, this was 1940 and, I think, '39, they had to send the money and we were just coming-- starting to come out of the depression. And this -- the mill where he was a weaver had burned down and he was out of work for a while. So, they borrowed money from a friend and to pay for my passage and they were both committed to it. But she was good to me.

LEVINE: Good. Okay, I'm just going to stop for a second. Okay, so the World's Fair, was that something? What kind of an experience was that for you?

PINTO: It was---it was sort of overwhelming, you know. But, I think what tempered it a little bit, was the fact that I had gone to the World's Fair, the Portuguese World's Fair in Lisbon that was being held at the same time. That not --It was not about the World, it was about the Portuguese world, you know, all the colonies, all the various provinces and stuff, they had expositions. It was beautiful too, but it was more limited to the country.

LEVINE: Is that the telegram?

PINTO: No, I wish I had that. No, this is---this is my -- my medical certificate to be able to come to the United States -- from my passage.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

PINTO: Yep.

LEVINE: Well I'd like to make copies of these papers.

PINTO: Sure.

LEVINE: If you don't mind. So we'll have it in your file. Oh and this you as a fourteen-year-old?

PINTO: That's my mother.

LEVINE: Oh no, that's your mother.

PINTO: Oh and I couldn't find my passport, my original passport as a fourteen-year-old. That's my mother, but she was already sick at that time.

LEVINE: Aww, yeah. I think you look like her.

PINTO: Yeah they say I do.

LEVINE: Aww, that's lovely. Well, okay, so you went to the World's Fair and then what happened? You went back to New Bedford and then you told me about the school part.

PINTO: We went to---first we went to Mineola to my uncle's and then from there we went back to New Bedford, you know where my father lived. Then, I went through the school system, like I said, and I was -- I was in junior high when the war started. Okay, at that time---by that time I was a member of a soccer team that was practicing, we were practicing already to play for a club, a Portuguese club---there's like sixty-four clubs in New Bedford, and they had a inter-club league. I was going to play soccer for them, but then the war came 1941 and they started drafting the members of the team. They would not draft me, because of my dual citizenship, but when I saw my friends leave, I said, "Well, I'm not going to be drafted into the Army. If they draft me I'm gonna join the Navy, so I was seventeen, I joined the Navy.

LEVINE: What was your motivation to join the Navy? Do you know?

PINTO: Well, when I joined, I had planned to stay in it for twenty years or more. I was gonna be a sailor for the rest of my life, practically. And, so, I joined. The Navy had four kinds of enlistments. They never drafted anybody into the Navy, even during the war. But they had, it was all volunteer, you know. They had regular Navy, which U -- was U.S.A., period. Those was very rigid requirements: physical and mental, because you were going to stay in there

for twenty years or more. And they had U.S.N R and they had two or three classes in that. U.S.N Reserve and you could join for four years, three year or two years. Then they had U.S.N.I, which were those that were drafted by the A—for the Army, but chose not to go in the Army. They selected the Navy instead, so they were called inductees. They were inducted into the Navy. Well I said, I like the Navy and I'm gonna join, I'm gonna be-- I'm gonna try for regular Navy first of all. Well the regular Navy enlistment was for six years minimum, right up the first enlistment. So, I said if I fail the physical or anything then I'll go to the regular---the Reserved Navy. But, I tried for the regular Navy and I passed everything. So, now I'm signed in for six years. And this was in 1942, but I was sixteen at the time and the Navy said, "Well, okay, everything---you've passed everything. Go home; we'll call you when you turn seventeen."

So, when I did they sent me orders to go in. And, so I went to Great Lakes, Illinois to---for boot camp. Then, from there, I went to---let me see, Miami for sub chaser training, gunnery school in Norfolk, sonar school in Key West, Florida. It's so many – so many places. (Laughs) But, then I was in the Navy, period. Oh, I was an interpreter for a while for Brazilian sailors that were bring trained at Miami. They had a lot o-- about three hundred Brazilian sailors that we were training to take over our ship. The ships that were built here and they'd sail them back, you know, for patrol and stuff like that. So, I was interpreting some of that part of the time. They wanted me to stay, but I wanted to go to sea bad, so I asked for sea duty. And I got on my ship, *U.S.S. Schmidt*, and again---it was *U.S.S. Schmidt* was the name of my ship. I picked it up in Quincy, Massachusetts and stayed on it for three years or more. So, the---the ship was named---you want to continue?

LEVINE: Yeah.

PINTO: Yeah. The ship was named for the first Catholic priest that was killed in the war. He was killed in Pearl Harbor and he saved twelve sailors. He lost his life, but he pushed twelve sailors out a port hole and he couldn't make it himself. So, my ship was named, but it was a German name. (Laughs) And every time we'd say, "I'm from the *U.S.S. Schmidt*," you know they'd look at us---

LEVINE: Oh my goodness.

PINTO: A little bit funny, because, you know, it was a German name. But, then I served on the *Schmidt* in the north Atlantic, south Atlantic, the Mediterranean, North Africa, --- the Murmansk convoy out to Russia. We were in the invasion of Normandy. Then, before -- before the Germans, they were beat---they were, before they can collapse actually; they took our ship, they brought it to Staten Island to be converted to an amphibious destroyer -- transport. At that time, then, after it was converted, we went to the Pacific. So, in the Pacific, what we did was underwater demolition. The frogmen. We were all re-trained, became amphibious sailors. And when the Pacific---I cannot even remember all the names of the places that we were at, but we were in Saipan, Eniwetok, Miyaki Jima, Chichi-jima, New Guinea, so many places. And then we were in the invasion of Leyte, in the Philippines. We were part of that. And during that invasion, we had a problem with our boiler room in the ship. It blew some---broke some tubes or something. And so, they said, "Well, you can't stay in these operations. You gotta go back to Pearl Harbor to be repaired."

So, they sent us back to Pearl Harbor, but, in Pearl Harbor, after the Phillipine -- Battle of the Philippines , there was so many ships damaged, Japanese and American, and all the facilities were being used to repair capital -- what they call cruisers and other more important ships than ours. Mine was a destroyer escort, so they sent us to the West coast to San

Pedro, California, which is the Port for L.A. And, they put us in dry dock to fix the ship. And one day, I'm on duty, I'm actually the petty officer on duty and all the ships in the harbor start blowing their horns and I didn't know why. So---I -- I -- there was civilian workmen working on the ship and I says, "What's everybody blowing their -- their bull horns for?" "Oh, didn't you know? The Japanese surrendered, gave up." So, I said, "Oh, gosh!" And we don't have a horn, because we were in dry dock, so we didn't have any steam or anything on the ship, so I said, "I gotta have a horn to blow." So, I went in search---I knew we had an emergency horn that you could pump, you know, air horn that you could pump.

LEVINE: Oh, right.

PINTO: So, I found that thing and I'm up on the bridge blowing hard. (Laughs)

LEVINE: So you were in the service, in the Navy, for how long then?

PINTO: Four years.

LEVINE: Four years?

PINTO: Yep. I had joined for six years, but at the end of the war, they said, "Don't -- anybody that was seventeen and joined for six years and had so much milita---sea duty, so much, you know, duty in -- in combat areas, could---

LEVINE: Could leave?

PINTO: Could ask for a reduction to four years.

LEVINE: I see.

PINTO: Minimum. I had to serve four years. And by that time I was married, had a wife and a son, so I said well this is no life for my wife and son, so I decided to leave the Navy.

LEVINE: So did you marry while you were in the Navy?

PINTO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh huh. And how did you meet your wife?

PINTO: We were in the seventh grade together.

LEVINE: Aww. (Laughs)

PINTO: Yeah, we met in the seventh grade and we were also neighbors. We just lived about two streets away from each other.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PINTO: So, and when I went in the Navy. You know, I had my orders to go report to Great Lakes. They gave me a little party at her house, okay, and some of the boys and girls that we had gone to school---it's all school chums. And we had some games and stuff and spin the bottle was one of them.  
(Laughs)

LEVINE: Oh, oh.

PINTO: So we kissed and then I went in the Navy and we started writing. I was in boot camp, we started writing together and they got more involved, you know, and every time we wrote we became a little more serious. But, we also went to junior high, you know, I was beginning junior high. She was

already in her second year of junior high, you know, because of my starting late, she was a little ahead of me. And she was a musician, played the violin. And she played in, actually at---she was fourteen, she was already playing in the symphony orchestra in New Bedford.

LEVINE: Oh, that's wonderful.

PINTO: So, and she would take over the junior high orchestra---lead the orchestra when the – the – when the teacher was not available. He'd pass -- pass it on to her. So, we got closer and every time I, after boot camp, I came home we started going together. And then I was assigned to my ship and I was doing convoy duty and we -- we were fighting German subs all the time. And she was---we got married, I was eighteen and she was sixteen. She had just turned sixteen, you know. And we -- we had promised the parents that we would wait until we were older, until the end of the war, but the longer, the more we kept in touch, the more we realized we have no -- have any idea how long this war's going to last. And she wanted to, even if I died, she wanted to have something from me, so we decided to have children right away, you know. So our son was born and when he was born, actually, I was re-- re-trained out in Virginia for the – for the new ship that they were converting. But, after the---well, that's -- we got married, we have had a boy and a girl. The girl is Barry's---married Barry and they have three sons and four grandchildren, my great-grand children. And beautiful kids. And of course, Barry's Jewish. You didn't know that?

LEVINE: No.

PINTO: No, yes, in fact, Orthodox Jewish. (Laughs)

LEVINE: No kidding.

PINTO: Oh, yeah. It was never any---well it was a – when they s-- they met in college and they started going together and then -- to regress a little bit about them. The Bar-- with us, we never had any problem with any body's religion or ethnicity or anything, and we taught our children never to do – to be that way, but Barry's mother expected Barry to marry a nice Jewish girl.  
(Laughs)

LEVINE: Sure.

PINTO: So, she—oh she was very upset, but we got together. We---the parents got together. In fact, his father came, says "You know, Rose," his wife, "is very upset and I don't know what to do about it." And I said, "Bob," I said, "If they're really serious, what can we do?" I said, "You know, I've talked to both of them and you cannot deny it, love. You know, if there's---so it's up---. I don't know how to help your wife, but if they're serious about it, we might as well accept it." So, they did. They accepted it and we became very good friends.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Let me go back to your navy days. When you look back on those four years, how did that experience, how do you think of that time spent during war in the military?

PINTO: I always felt -- from the beginning, I felt that I had to do everything I could for my country. And I accepted the fact that I was a citizen here. This was my country and I had to do everything to defeat our enemies--- to help defeat our enemies. There were---we were involved in many scrapes, many situations where we shouldn't have survived. But we did. We were attacked by kamikazes. We were torpedoed. We had a route around Iceland and Greenland, North Atlantic where we'd go for days without eating, because they couldn't fix any food. The ocean was so rough they couldn't. We had to go without. So, in all those four years of going through this, we

always felt that the ship was named for Father---for Chaplain Schmidt and he was watching over his own ship. You know, watching over us. And we still feel that way. We still have reunions.

LEVINE: That's wonderful.

PINTO: Yeah, I organized the first one in fifty-five, ten years after the war was over. And I've---my wife and I have organized two or three others. And we didn't go for the last two, because we weren't healthy enough. But, they have another one now this month. I don't know if we're ---it's in Florida---I don't know if we can make it. But, we're still---all the shipmates that are surviving-- -we're losing them every week just about, now. But those that are surviving, we're still in touch with each other.

LEVINE: That's wonderful.

PINTO: And everything. By the way, I was---my ship was the first ship in Japan after they gave up! That -- that's something. When -- when the Japanese gave up and everybody's blowing their horn in the harbor, right after that they refloat us or they put us back in service and we brought the whole crew back and---there's a next experience I have to tell you about, but---we were took off, went to Japan. We were in Japan five days before MacArthur came---to make preparations. There were two ships: our ship and another ship like ours with underwater demolition teams. We went to Sasebo, Japan which was thirty miles from Nagasaki and we were there thirty days after the bomb was dropped there, so that whole area was contaminated. We didn't even know it. The Navy didn't even know about those things in those days. But we were there to make preparations, make sure that they were serious about surrendering and they wouldn't fire on our ships when they came with the troops and so on. So, everything went fine.

But, when were---this is an aside thing---when we came to the San. Pedro, California to have the ship repaired, by that time we were already training for the invasion of Japan. We had been training off Maui, in Hawaiian Islands already, and we knew. We knew we were going to be the first ships in, the first people in to clear the obstacles for the troops to come in, 'cause that was our job: underwater demolition: the Frogmen. And we also knew that not many of us would be able to survive, because our team, Team 18, were the team that cleared Omaha Beach in France and thirty-eight of them went in to clear the beaches, only six came back. So, the -- the risk was very high. So, when Truman, President Truman (Laughs), dropped the bombs on Japan, we could kiss his feet, because we knew he gave us our life. You know to us that's what it was.

Not that anybody was unwilling to do their job. So,---when we got to the states we were under very, very strict orders not to write anything home, not to tell anyone, not to call anybody and let them in any way know where we were, because we were doing this in very secretly. So, but when we got to the States, in California, I called home, called my wife and I said," I can't tell you where I am, but if I am in any way able to get any kind of leave, I will call you and we'll meet somewhere in the middle of the country, so we can just meet each other." So, that's all I told her. So, she didn't wait anymore. She figured, well if you call me, you gotta be in the United States, so she took -- all she knew was that she used to write to me, care of the fleet post office in San Francisco, California. So, she took off, went all the way to California and she had a heck of a lot of trouble, because in those days all the train coach seats were reserved for military. They were all numbered (Laughs) and reserved for military use only, but she was able to team up with a soldier and he said, well I guess, told the---you know, the conductor or something that it was his wife or something.

She got to California---San Francisco. When she got there, she didn't know what to do, so she went to the YWCA to stay. She had one suitcase with her and now she went to the Red Cross. She went to the Navy office there. She went to every place she could figure to find out where I was, so she could go and meet me. But, because of our secret standing, even the Red Cross could not find out from the Navy Department, where I was. So, they kept, you know, trying. They tried everything and the Red Cross kept saying, "He must be under very secret, we can't," even the Red Cross can't find out and that's something. So, but they arranged something. The Navy said, "Well okay, we'll do this." Tell her to get on the train, from San Francisco, mind you, and go to LA, and go to the intersection of such and such a street and wait at that corner." Honest to God, that's---so in the mean time, my captain got orders for me to be able to get off duty, to go to LA and be at that intersection such an such a street. Neither of us knew anything about meeting, you know.

So, I go to that intersection. I thought I was being put on shore patrol, 'cause I had done shore patrol too. And you report to some place, they gave you an arm band and say, "Well, you -- for the next four hours you're taking care of sailors that get drunk." You know. (Laughs) So, I get to that intersection, you know, and it's like this. And I'm at one corner and I'm waiting for somebody to give me orders or something and I look over to the other corner and there she is, my wife standing there. So, we had only four days together and at that time you could only stay in a hotel, registered in a hotel, I think for four days – the maximum. Then you had to leave, because there was the military had preference, you know. So, she had to keep moving and, but, four days later we're on the way to Japan, so she's left all alone there. She didn't have her suitcase. She left it with a friend at the YWCA in San Francisco. She thought LA, was next town, you know, but it's a long distance. So, she didn't have anything with her, so she had to stay there and she got a job in a restaurant, a waitress. Yeah. And she was shifting hotels

every four days until she could get enough money to come back home.  
(Laughs)

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness! What was your wife's---what is her name and what was her maiden name?

PINTO: Her maiden name is Ellis Ferreira.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

PINTO: F-E-R-R-E-I-R-A.

LEVINE: Okay, let's just conclude. I know you mentioned before we started the interview that you did photojournalism.

PINTO: Oh yeah. That was my job.

LEVINE: That was your job. And say the paper that you did that for.

PINTO: *Manchester Herald*.

LEVINE: And that's in Connecticut.

PINTO: Yeah, Manchester, Connecticut. In fact, I still have my press pass. It's still valid, actually.

LEVINE: Well, why don't we conclude here? I mean, I'd like to see that too, but with your saying what has brought you a lot of satisfaction in your life.

PINTO: Mostly my family, the family that – that we have. My wife, children,--- grandchildren, all nice boys, people like Barry, whose a wonderful person,

and my great-grandchildren now and the fact that---see my – my education was interrupted by the war, but at the end of the war I had four years of college coming to me. So, I took advantage of it. That's how come I wound up doing this. ---Oh, my great-grandchildren, Barry's great-children -- grandchildren.

LEVINE: I don't think you actually answered the question about, when you look back on your Navy career, how has it affected you? How do you feel about that period?

PINTO: Well, I feel like I did my duty. And if more had been required of me, I would have done it again, if necessary. It was – it was a hard experience, but very satisfying.

LEVINE: Can you say anything about war time and how people are when they're faced with such extreme circumstances in life or death?

PINTO: Wartime, if it could be outlawed, but it can't, should be outlawed. It's the most horrible kind of experience on the World anywhere. It – it – it. There should be better ways of doing things. War should never happen no matter what. The things I saw, during the War, the -- what it did to families, during the war, it's just abhorrent, it's terrible. I don't think, let me say this, I don't believe that there's a military man that served during the war that was not against the war, you know. There might be, I don't know, but if they had any war experience, they would be turned off on it. That's my press pass here.

LEVINE: Oh, that's very nice.

PINTO: Well, I retired as an editor.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Well I'd like to put that in your pile of things to copy too. It's very nice. Okay, well is there anything else, you'd like to say, before we close? About coming to this country? About living and serving in WWII for this country? Ellis Island? Anything that you would like to say.

PINTO: Gosh, there's so many things I'd like to say, but---

LEVINE: I know. Well, it's been a wonderful interview. I thank you for that.

PINTO: Um---Well, you can't deny, you can't deny that for personal freedom and many other things, this is the greatest country in the world, and I've been to quite a few. But it hurts me, it hurts my feelings every time I see a law that is passed, whether it's local, town, state or federal, every time that they pass a law that it tells me it's restricting personal freedom. It hurts; it hurts, because I fought for the personal freedom, you know. And I think they should, before they pass a law, they should say, look at it, is it enhancing our freedoms or taking away our freedoms? And there should never be anything taken away. There's no reason why they can't pass laws to protect society without restricting freedoms, you know? So, these are the things I think about. This country means a lot to me, you know, and I don't know how else to say it except that we should protect it all the way through, everyday if we can, you know.

LEVINE: Okay.

PINTO: So, my -- my brother---I have a brother. (Laughs) I didn't mention him before. My brother's from my stepmother.

LEVINE: Right.

PINTO: So, he came late. He's a year older than my son, actually, that's all. And he is of a different, of course, different generation. Both he and my son served in Vietnam. My brother was---he retired now, he's from the military. He's a colonel---retired colonel. But, when he went to school, I think because of my father's influence of languages and stuff, he decided to become a linguist. So, he went to the University of Massachusetts and specializes in Russian and Slavic languages. So, he speaks like five different languages or more. And, because of his specialty being Russian, he became important during the war, during the Vietnam and so on. And he, at one time, he's got a PhD in languages, at one time he was teaching Russian – the languages at the University of Florida.

LEVINE: (Sneeze)

PINTO: Gesundheit.

LEVINE: Thanks.

PINTO: And he lived in---he lived in Mary—he lived in Tallahassee at that time. And as I understand it, the way he explained to me is that the University of Florida and the government had made an arrangement so that they could teach military officers, Army officers, at the University, you know in languages and stuff. So, my brother was the lone professor that had to go with the arrangement. So, he was teaching there. Then, at that time, one time he calls me and he says, "Brother, I have to ask you something." He said, "I'm gonna be working---I'm gonna go to work for another branch of the government. Is there anything in our background that might be embarrassing or something?" And so, at that time, I said, "Look, I work with secret stuff in the Navy." You know, I was a sonar man, so they never really--you know that was secret by the Navy. And since I became a photojournalist, I've been cleared and investigated by the Secret Service so many times that they must have quite a file on me, 'cause I was cleared to

be at the commissioning of the Nautilus, the submarine Nautilus, which was very tight security in those days. I said, "I've been cleared to be with---to be next to every president that ever visited Connecticut." And they had to send my name in---my paper had to send my name in to Washington every time---

LEVINE: I see.

PINTO: --- to be checked out before they sent credentials for me to be with the presidents. I says, "So they have a good file on me. Don't worry about it." But, they also investigated our father and they investigated the whole family, because one time we're camping. My wife and I are camping and we come home, this was after he asked me this, I come home and my next door neighbor says, "Did you do anything, because there were two people here asking a lot of questions about you!" (Laughs) You know. You know, that's my life, but he---he's still working for that branch of the government.

LEVINE: Wow. And how did you feel when your son went to Vietnam?

PINTO: I---I'll tell you, in a way being a father, I felt some anxiety, but I told him right off the bat, at the beginning, I said Ronnie, that's his name, "You've received so many benefits, so many good things in your life from this country that this is little bit that they ask you for payment back. So, it's your duty." I told him that. I explained the benefits and the things that you receive here, you can never pay back, but this was little bit of payback that they asked him to do. So, he accepted that. He went and he had quite an ex---he actually he was - - went to OCS too, of secret candidate school, 'cause he placed so high on the test. That's another experience. When he finished high school---he goofed off in high school. He never came home and did any home work and I'd ask him, "Don't you have homework from school?" He said, "Yeah I did. I had a book report," or something, "I did it during study period. It's all done. I turned it in." He was so easy for him, you know. So, when he -- when he

graduated, some of his friends were going in the Navy, so they had to go to Hartford to take the test, you know, the exams. And he went with them. He had thought about, because I was Navy---

LEVINE: Yeah.

PINTO: He had thought about the fact that he might be ---- go to the Navy.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PINTO: But he hadn't committed. So, he went to Hartford to be with his friends while they were taking the test. And while he was there, the examining officer saw him sitting there and he says, "How about you? Aren't you gonna take the test?" And he says, "Oh no, no I just came with my friend." He says, "Well as long as you're sitting down, why don't you take it anyway?" Find out, you know. So he sat down with him. He took the test, the same as the others'. And next thing we get a call from the recruiting officer in Hartford. He says, "We can't believe it. Your son came, was just to be a standby with his friends. We got him to sit down and take the exam." He said, "He not only finished fifteen minutes ahead of time," which nobody is supposed to finish, you know, in time. It's so the exam is designed so that you are not able to finish in the allotted time, you know, that's part of the---part of the, you know, the figuring. He said, "But your son not only finished fifteen minutes ahead of time. He got the highest mark we've ever had here."

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness.

PINTO: "So now this is the recruiting officer. "I already talked to my people and we're ready. We want him to try for Annapolis," said, "And we feel that he's definitely officer material, so we wanted him to try for Annapolis. And if he

should fail for Annapolis, we're ready, we're ready to offer him four year, full-paid tuition for any school of his choice."

LEVINE: Wow.

PINTO: And at the end, the only commitment is that he's committed to giving his four year of service as an officer, you know, in the Navy.

LEVINE: Right.

PINTO: So, when I talked to him about it. Oh, I talked to him, I said, "Jeez, it's free, free school, four year!" An education without the need for the---and also the books and everything! Plus a little subsistence, they had a little allowance. Well, well okay, you know, we talked, he says, "I'll---I'll think about it." "Well you're going to try for Annapolis first." "Ah, my grades in school are not good enough to go to Annapolis." So he goes to school and he has a session with his counselor. His counselor was a lieutenant in the Navy reserve and when he looked at his record in school, he says, "You're not good enough to be an officer in the Navy!" Completely discouraged him. So, he comes home, he says, "No, my counselor said, "no" and I can't make it so I'm not going to go." So now he waits. He's drafted into the Army. He goes to Fort Dix, in New Jersey, and he takes exams again. Again, they call us, "He's officer material! We want him to go to OCS." He would not go, because he didn't want to commit. He wanted to serve his time and get out.

LEVINE: And then go.

PINTO: You know. So, he would not go. So, Fort Dix sent him to Fort Benning, in Georgia, where the Officer Candidates School, is anyway. And in Fort Benning, his commanding officer called us at home to convince him to do it. Says, "We've been talking to your son. We're trying everything we can. We

don't understand why he rejects going to Officer Candidate School," and so on. So, I told him the reason. I told his officer, his commanding officer, the reason is because he doesn't want to commit to so many years of school and then so many years of service. I said, "He wants to do his duty, serve it – serve his term and get out." So, he said, "Oh, is that why? Well then maybe we can arrange something." They got him up that night, they talked to him all night and they told him, "If you don't graduate from Officer Candidate School, you don't have to serve the extra time." You know?

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

PINTO: So now he accepted. He goes to Officer Candidate School. Then he had a medical problem and he--- they wanted to fix his medical problem and he says, "No." He had got spasmodic ankles and he got – he got hurt in high school playing football and that came back on him. But anyways, he says, "No, I want to get my hitch over with." So he goes to Vietnam. They send him to Vietnam.

LEVINE: Oh boy.

PINTO: But because of his background in Officer Candidate School he became the adjutant to the general commander.

LEVINE: Oh, my gosh.

PITNO: So he was flying around in his helicopter. (Laughs) He had---he had some experiences there too, but---

LEVINE: Alright, well, I think---

PINTO: He survived.

LEVINE: I think we can end here. We actually went way over, but that's okay. You've really given a wonderful interview and I'm very happy to have it.

PINTO: Oh, thank you.

LEVINE: And I'm going to make copies of these papers and then we'll have those on file too. I've been speaking with Reginald Pinto and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off.

END OF INTERVIEW