# Interview with Paul Findley

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Interviewer: Mark DePue



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DePue: Today is Tuesday, January 15, 2013. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I'm in Jacksonville, Illinois, specifically, at Illinois College, Whipple Hall. I'm with Congressman Paul Findley. Good morning, sir.

Findley: Good morning.

DePue: I've been looking forward to this interview. I've started to read your autobiography. You've lived a fascinating life. Today I want to ask you quite a bit to get your story about growing up here in Jacksonville and your military experiences during World War II, and maybe a little bit beyond that, as well. So, let's start at the beginning. Tell me when and where you were born.

*Paul Findley (far right), with his siblings.*

Findley: I was born June 23, 1921 in a bungalow that still exists, here

on Edgehill Road. I now live about three blocks away, so I haven't gone very far in this life.

DePue: Were you actually born in the home?

Findley: Yes. We had five children. I shouldn't have said we, but Joseph Stillwell Findley, my father, and Florence Nichols Findley, my mother, had five children. The eldest was William, who became a well-known expert on the properties of plastics. He was a lot older than I, by my standard, I would say, probably about eight years. And my eldest sister, Miriam, was two years younger than he. Two years [after] that, Ruth came on the scene. Then there was a gap of about four years, I believe, when I did. Then the youngest child still lives, the only sibling I have still alive, Barbara. I was six years old when she was born.

DePue: It sounds like your father would have been too old to serve during the First World War, then.

Findley: He did not serve. He had children by that time, two children, I believe. He was in the YMCA program. He had been the general secretary of the YMCA in Mankato, Minnesota, which I believe was his first assignment. He was general secretary there. It was, and still is, a sizable property. Then he heard about an opening here in Jacksonville. He thought that'd be a step up. He liked the idea of being closer to Princeton, where my mother's family lived.

DePue: Princeton, Illinois.

Findley: Yes, Bureau County. My father was from Indiana, I think, Brown County, Indiana.

DePue: What nationality, what ethnic background was your family's name?

Findley: Well, my mother loved genealogy. She had a passion for that. She insisted that our main blood was Scottish, not Irish, but there was a mixture. She traced the ancestry back several generations, found that an ancestor was a general in the Revolutionary War and, I think, was mentioned for vice president during his life. I hope I can bring back his name. I don't at the moment. But she and my father met at Geneva, Wisconsin, where they both were attending a YMCA conference. They had a little walk along the lake there. He popped the question, and she agreed.

She had had one year of college. It was then a girls' school, Wheaton College, known as a very conservative institution. I think she had art classes. She made some gold decorated china. I still have a sample of it. She loved art. She didn't do as much with it as she would have liked to have, but she saw to it that all of us had a dash of it.

My father was one of ten boys in this one family, two girls and ten boys. When he died, I believe there was only one brother still alive, but both sisters survived. They were both teachers. He had one year at Purdue University. I'm not sure why he went, but I have a carved wooden goblet that he made on a lathe, which I cherish very much. I'm not sure whether I've given it yet to a grandchild. If not, it's at home. I'm sure it isn't up here[1]. He obviously had an immediate interest in the YMCA. After one year at Purdue, he attended a training school in Chicago for Y secretaries and then had the assignment in Mankato. I think that was his first.

He was, at that time, a Methodist. My mother was Methodist, too. And curiously, when we came to Jacksonville, he was a Methodist YMCA secretary. But the State Street Presbyterian Church had a vacancy in the pastorate, and they persuaded him, as Y secretary—which wasn't too unusual for a Y secretary—to fill in as pastor of the church until they hired a regular minister. It went on for about four or five months, I believe, but in that time, the family got so accustomed to attending a Presbyterian Church, they just stayed. I became a member of the Presbyterian Church when I reached the right age, and so did my sisters.

DePue: Well, it harkens back to the old Scottish roots that the family had.

Findley: It does. That's true, Calvinist. And I remain a Presbyterian.

DePue: You said your dad came to work in the YMCA here in Jacksonville?

Findley: Yes, and it turned out to be a bad experience. This was right after the war, World War I. The local Y had decided to sell the old building and to use their revenue as a starting point for a new building. Well, there was a two-year depression that followed World War I, and, during that time, the directors of the Y chose to meet current expenses out of the building fund. So, in a short time, the building fund was gone. My father lost interest in that and decided to try his hand at farming, which was another big mistake. (laughs)

DePue: Had his parents been farmers?

Findley: Yes, they were lifelong farmers, although my mother's father was also a bricklayer and plasterer. He moved to Princeton, the county seat, a good many years before he died, and he did some plastering. He also was sent, at an early age, to Oklahoma territory, where he built some cabins for Indians. One of my prized possessions is a pair of buffalo horns that are tied together very neatly, a souvenir of Oklahoma days.

DePue: But back to your father, and his hand at farming.

[1] The Findley oral history interviews were conducted in the Paul Findley Congressional Office Museum located in Whipple Hall on the Illinois College campus. Congressman Findley has donated many of his personal and professional artifacts to the museum.

Findley: It was a mess. He had never had experience running a farm, but he plunged right into it. The Depression was no help, of course, but it wasn't any help either to be managing the family farm, because, judging by comments I heard my mother make over the years, her parents, Augustus Nichols and his wife, frequently found fault with poor Pop and his trying to keep the farm afloat. Well, after two seasons, he was ready to go back to Jacksonville, which he did.

I have several early memories of the farm. My birth was in Jacksonville when he was Y secretary, but my earliest memory was the day that a sack of flour was placed on the kitchen table. I, without intending any harm, pulled the table away, and the flour spilled on the floor. I'm sure it was a catastrophe financially. Everything was then. The farm, I don't believe had electricity, but I remember that because I was guilty of causing a problem. I also have a faint memory of the day that they slaughtered pigs, hogs, on the lawn of the farmhouse, and just to have the impression of them loading ground up pork into a piece of intestine, which I thought was a terrible way to preserve food. So, those were the two glimpses.

Then I had a further glimpse. The night I remember, riding with my father in an open sedan, which I assume he owned. He was nailing up "for sale" signs. He decided to sell what property he had on the farm, pull up stakes and leave. I was there to witness the ordeal he had of nailing up signs to advertise the sale. I don't know whether the sale was a success or not, but it happened.

DePue: What did he do then, after he moved away from the farm?

Findley: He moved back to Jacksonville, which he liked. He enjoyed the town and accepted a job as a salesman for MetLife, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. There were two such salesmen in Jacksonville, I believe. It was already the leading insurance company, I believe. He spent every day and every Saturday, including the weekdays, driving from house-to-house to collect maybe twenty-five cents or fifty cents as the premium for the month from each of the holders of an insurance policy. That's the way they paid the premium. He had to collect it. He had a big fat book called the blue book, in which he entered the transactions. He kept the money until Saturday. I remember watching. My father and mother were working together at a roll-top desk in the entryway to our little bungalow on Edgehill. They were counting up his receipts, which he would then deposit that same day to Metropolitan Life.

DePue: Being a salesman, you think of a certain personality that goes along with it. It's somebody who has to deal with rejection a lot. Would you say your father was a natural salesman?

Findley: All I know is that he survived as a salesman and continued for several years, until Parkinson's struck him. He had a weakness for limousines. He couldn't afford a new one, but it seems he always had a used limousine that was either taking him around town or being repaired. It wound up in the shop quite a bit.

DePue: How else would you describe his personality, especially before he got the Parkinson's?

Findley: Well, he was always business. I'm sure he was a good parent. One of the happiest moments I had was the day he brought a suit of clothes home from Myers Brothers, which was in Jacksonville. It was a two-piece suit. Maybe it had a vest, too. But it was a jacket and a pair of knee-length trousers, and I thought that was terrific.

DePue: That was for you?

Findley: Yeah, it was for me. I wasn't even at the store when he picked it out, but I guess he knew what size to get. I was really touched that he would do that.

DePue: You said, "I'm sure he was a good father." That almost sounds like you didn't see him that much.

Findley: I didn't. Nobody did. He worked, it seemed to me, almost day and night. I imagine he did quite a few collections at night. It does seem almost pitiful that he would have the chore of picking up fifty cents—or at the most, a dollar—and make calls day and night for that purpose.

He was almost always driving a used Franklin sedan. I remember that he had two different Franklins. One was probably a model 1922 and the other model, maybe two years later. But they were nice cars. I remember they had pull-down seats in the back seat, and they had curtains in the windows of the back. It was kind of a fancy vehicle at one time. I later discovered what was probably Pop's car in a barn in Roodhouse, Illinois. A man that had a fondness for old cars bought this car and had spent a lot of money fixing it up. He would take it around to parades, occasionally, but never drove it.

DePue: How did the Parkinson's affect him and affect the family?

Findley: Well, one day, he came home—we lived on Park Street by then—and he showed me his hands. His fingers were stiff. They had been around the steering wheel all day, and it was obvious he had trouble, big trouble. It wasn't long before he retired, in order to qualify for a pension, which was fifty dollars a month. That became the family's sole regular income.

DePue: Was the pension from Metropolitan Life?

Findley: Yes. It was a health policy he bought, which was fortuitous.

DePue: You can't imagine what the family's finances would have been, had he not made that decision?

Findley: That's right. Well, each of us became, to a great degree, self-supporting. I earned money when I was mowing lawns a lot. The reel type mowers were the only kind you had (laughs), and they were hard to keep sharp, so I had that. A big lawn would be seventy-five cents. The other average lawns would be fifty. It's a hard way to make money, but I could keep all the money I earned, no taxes. (both laugh)

DePue: Seventy-five cents in those days, though, in the late twenties, early thirties, would have been serious money. How long would it take you to mow a big lawn?

Findley: I'll just guess it'd take two and a half hours.

DePue: That's quite a bit of time.

Findley: I did quite a bit of that. One day, a lady named Miss Prince—never married—lived on Grove Street, near our house. She called me up. She wanted me to deliver a letter across town, which I did. She paid me ten cents for the delivery. She struck me as being an oddity. The name, Prince, was well established because of David Prince, whose name was on the junior high school at that time. It was a separate building in back of what, for many years, was the high school on West State. They had access to the David Prince Building on second story tunnels that we could use.

DePue: How about your mother? You haven't talked about her much.

Findley: Oh, well she was…she worked. I'm not sure just how soon she did, but I dare say—

DePue: You mean after the Parkinson's?

Findley: That was after Parkinson's struck. Up to that point, I think she was full-time mother and homemaker and a good one. She was the leader of the family. She had to be, had no choice, but she did a terrific job. She led by example. There must have been other occasions, but I remember vividly one time I was scolded—never whipped, (laughs) no bodily attack—but she was very upset with me, because I had promised to come home from school right after school and not tarry to play football or whatever was up. Instead, I came in the usual hour, rather late, pretty close to suppertime. She had warned me to come home early so I could get ready to play in the band, which was giving a concert that night. I remember vividly, she said, "Well, I should make you stay out of the concert tonight as punishment, but Mr. [Paul] Van Badegraven, the director, I'm sure, would miss your trombone," which I played (laughs). And she said, "So, I won't do that, but always listen to me, and do what I tell you from this day on."

Oh, I have another. I'm not sure what I put in the book,[2] but one day, Mom asked me to go to the grocery store right at the end of Edgehill. I think she probably gave me fifty cents, or maybe it was a dollar, and asked me to get two or three items, which I did. I brought the change home, and she said, "Well, you could've bought yourself some candy with the change," which astounded me. I hadn't had any hint that I was entitled to any change (both laugh). I said, "Well, I'd like to go back and do that." She said, "No, you're home. Just stay here." (laughs)

DePue: After your father got the Parkinson's, what kind of work did she do?

Findley: She did some laundry work. I know that she took care of the shirts for a doctor that lived nearby. She always had a garden, even on Park Street. On Edgehill, she had a full lot next to our home that was a vegetable garden that she took care of every year, but that was before Pop got Parkinson's. But the jobs: I know she had as long as she wanted them. She was manager of the high school cafeteria, and that was nice, because we could all eat there. I had a job as cashier, I believe, most of the time, and my pay was lunch. I remember that she would get quantities of surplus food and to her amazement…Let's see, what's the nut that makes terrific pie?

DePue: Pecans?

Findley: Pecan. She'd get big cartons full of pecan nuts, beautiful. They were surplus. The government program for pecans was established, part of the south, you know. That's the way they got rid of supplies, was through cafeterias. [The high school] had a candy counter, as a part of the cafeteria, which was open during the noon hour. But also, if a faculty member wanted to get a candy bar, welcome to come in. [My mother] told me an amusing happening (laughs). One day, there were several faculty members, and she offered each of them a candy bar, at her expense. All but one took the candy bar, and that one said, "I'd rather have the nickel," so she gave it to him. Isn't that something? (both laugh) He was a high school teacher.

DePue: I would imagine her finances were such that they should have been giving her the nickel.

Findley: That's right. Her first salary was fifteen dollars a week. That would be three dollars a day to put on a full food program for the kids, three dollars.

DePue: I would think after that, by the time she got home, she wasn't ready to do much cooking or cleaning, but didn't have much choice.

Findley: She did it anyway, although I'm sure she got the girls to do more than I was aware of.

[2] Congressman Findley is referring to his memoir, *Speaking Out*.

DePue: You mean your sisters?

Findley: Yes.

DePue: How much did she have to do with your father?

Findley: Well, by then, he couldn't get out by himself at all. He was able to kind of stumble around inside the house, but never go outside by himself. I didn't pay any attention to him, to my great regret. I just didn't. Mom was the breadwinner, the mother, the inspiration for all of us, and she got us all to go to church every Sunday.

DePue: How else would you describe her personality?

Findley: She had a good sense of humor; it didn't bubble up too often, but it was there. We weren't afraid of her, but we recognized that she was the authority. She was the law, not Pop. Pop very soon had difficulty saying anything. Words came hard. By the time I was a sophomore in college, my mother's parents were both deceased. She had the opportunity to receive, as part of the estate, the family home in Princeton, which had been a very nice, big, fine home at one time, but it was very much rundown. But she and Pop moved up to that location, and I'm sure that she had inherited some money that helped. But she was such a frugal person that, when she died at a very, very advanced age, hundred and six, but her last six years, she was in a retirement home and couldn't see anything or hardly say anything.

But Mom took full care of my father; never a nurse in the home that I know of. So, she took care of him through the night, as well as when she was in the house daytime. She would get him dressed in the morning, and he would be on his own alone during much of the day, although my sister, Barbara, younger than I [was there] When the family lived at 806 West College Avenue here in Jacksonville, he could still help wash the dishes. That was about the only thing he could do. Barbara told me that she and he became good friends, and they would sit together and talk, which is something I never did with my father, to my regret. They would sit on the porch, maybe, and have a can of pork and beans together, as lunch, while she was home from school.

Mom stayed with the cafeteria work during the school year. In the summer she managed the Prairie Farms Ice Cream Shop, which was located in a building that came down and became the south lawn of the public library, just a few years ago. The Prairie Farms had a small building that they used for various purposes, but they also had, as a part of it, a store where people could come in, get a milkshake, buy ice cream cones, things like that.

DePue: Did that mean you could get a discount for ice cream in the summertime?

Findley: I probably got a free one, I'm not sure; although, this reminds me of Pop's earlier days. Sunday was a day when the family was all together, the only time, except for Saturday night, and that was never sure. But Pop would take us for a ride, maybe out in the country. It was a thrilling time. And then, before the episode was over, we stopped in Merrigan's. He went inside; we stayed in the car. He went inside and got us each an ice cream cone. That was before he became an invalid. He was still driving.

DePue: Who would you say you took after more, your mother or your father?

Findley: Well, I never reached the pinnacle that she held all her life, but I guess all of us tried to emulate her where we could. I was always interested in sports. My brother never was. The girls weren't. So, I was playing baseball at a very early age. In fact, while we were still living on Edgehill Road—which would probably take me into junior high years—I remember at dusk one night, I didn't see the oncoming baseball, and it hit me in the forehead and knocked me unconscious for a while. And then I came out of it.

I remember another time that I stepped on a rusty nail, and it went deep into my heel. Mom pulled it out, dressed the wound and didn't see a doctor, just used iodine, as I recall. And once, I was riding on the handlebars of a bicycle ridden by my brother. That's one of the few times we were together, I think. I think I caught my heel in the spokes of the front wheel and that threw me to the paving. Once again, I was unconscious for a while. Maybe that's what threw me off for a lifetime, led me into politics.

DePue: Since you did end up in politics later in your life, I'm curious whether or not politics was ever a topic of discussion around the dinner table or at home.

Findley: I can't ever remember it ever being that, although my parents were born and reared Republicans. They voted that way, but I can't remember them ever talking about public issues.

DePue: Now, this would have been during the FDR years, at least '32 on.

Findley: That's right. That's right. By then, my father was pretty much an invalid. He was able to shuffle around, but that's all. But I was interested in Herbert Hoover and FDR, and I became a Republican at a very tender age. My first campaign activity was the presidential bid of Alf Landon of Kansas. It was a colorful campaign, and I had hopes that he would beat FDR, but he, of course, carried Maine and Vermont, I think. (laughs)

DePue: Well, according to my calculations, he ran in '36.

Findley: That's right.

DePue: You would have been fifteen years old at the time.

Findley: That's right.

DePue: That's earlier than most people get interested in politics. What was it about Alf Landon—or what was it about FDR—that caused you to be an Alf Landon guy?

Findley: I listened to his fireside chats.

DePue: You're talking about FDR, now.

Findley: Yes, I was very conservative in my outlook. I had a used mimeograph. I had a used typewriter that I bought, and that put me in the publishing business. I earned some money by printing programs for recitals or band concerts or the church bulletins. I can't remember who was the…Oh, Victor Shepherd was then the Superintendent of Schools, and he asked me to mimeograph copies of his master's degree. Now it puzzles me that he was Superintendent of Schools with only a master's degree, but he was. It may have been that he was not a unit superintendent, but just a superintendent with limited authority over one-room schools. We had a lot of them. But that was my biggest publication job. My sister, Barbara, who liked to follow me around, helped me put it together. It's kind of a curiosity. Victor Shepherd violated the rules of his profession by marrying a very young high school girl. My wife, an avid bridge player, years later played bridge with this wife of Victor H. Shepherd. I forget her first name, but she lived on the corner of Edgehill Road. She was quite young.

DePue: But apparently his career didn't suffer too much for doing that?

Findley: That's right. I'm not sure whether the disclosure came before or after he got the job. (laughs)

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about the schools that you attended. Let's start with grade and junior high years. Were they public schools in town?

Findley: Yes. I attended only public schools. I attended two different grade schools, because, one day in Washington School, a fire started in the attic, and it burned to the ground. In the wake of that tragedy—nobody was hurt, shouldn't call it a tragedy—they passed a bond issue in 1934, I believe, which would be almost unheard of that anybody got approval of a bond issue, but they did in Jacksonville.

*Paul Findley's first grade picture.*

DePue: In the depths of the Depression

Findley: They built four brand new elementary schools.

DePue: You have a wonderful story in the book about that experience of that school burning.

Findley: Yeah. [laughs] Pop took me in the building while it was burning. I went up to the classroom on the second floor. We cleaned out my desk and left, stayed on the lawn, watching it burn up. [laughs]

DePue: What do you supposed possessed him? Was he trying to teach you a lesson, or he was worried about the expense?

Findley: I guess. [laughs]

DePue: Were other parents taking their kids in?

Findley: Not that I know of. [laughs]

DePue: Well, that says quite a bit about your father, I think.

Findley: Frugal was a word that had to be used toward him, and mother, too. I never felt I was frugal. I was able to buy enough, change myself to buy a new pair of shoes or a sweater or a shirt or whatever.

DePue: The money you were making on your own, was that your money, or was it going to the family kitty?

Findley: Oh, yeah. No, my parents, to their credit, didn't try to tap my earnings. [laughs) Maybe they should have, but they didn't. Whatever I earned, I could spend.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about your high school years.

Findley: Well, in David Prince Junior High, it's hard to believe that I was a center on the basketball team, because I was only five-eight-and-a-half, but I had the center job. That was my only day of stardom in sports. I didn't make the grade in high school, didn't bother to try hard. I didn't try hard at all in college, although I played tennis and got a letter for that. Junior high was a good experience.

We had a lady named Hester C. Burbridge. She was a maiden lady, as many teachers of that era were. She set a good example, and she emphasized citizenship. My scrapbooks have some samples of citizenship certificates I got. Almost everybody got them, but that meant they were behaving. She was a good leader. I took part in baseball, basketball and track. We had a junior high track, a little bit, so I took part there and won a few ribbons, but I wasn't any star at all. I just loved sports. I catch; I was the catcher on my baseball team.

DePue: You must have taken up the trombone sometime in here, as well.

Findley: I did. I was ten years old. That was 1931. By then, I believe we lived on Park Street. I don't know how I acquired a battered, used trombone. It was loaned to me; it wasn't purchased. But I got it, took it to bed with me the first night. (laughs) I thought I had arrived, to have a trombone.

DePue: So, this wasn't forced on you by any means, it sounds like.

Findley: No. All of us took part in music. I guess partly because we were expected to. But the schools had good music programs, and I enjoyed the chorus, enjoyed being in *HMS Pinafore,* when I was in high school.

Now getting back to grade school. At that time, the YMCA had a program at all schools. Even though they had nothing but a single, very small apartment as their office, they had something going on all the time. Someplace, I've got a band to put around my left arm showing that I was on the gray-Y baseball team. So, in grade school, elementary school, everybody had a chance to be on the YMCA team. The Y had semi-religious programs for all the students that took part. High Y was the term for high school. Tri Y might have been the term for junior high. I'm not sure. But I mimeographed the bulletins about the YMCA grade school and the high school activities. I did a little publicity, without charge, for the YMCA activity.

In high school I was busy trying to make money, and I did, along with being a student. Why I got permission, I do not know, but the principal said I could sell chewing gum to the students during the day. I sold a lot of chewing gum.

DePue: Did you approach the principal about this?

Findley: Yes, I did, to see if it was okay.

DePue: Well, you were something of a—you might object to the term—but something of a hustler then, when you're hustling to get things.

Findley: That's right. That's right. I also got permission to print programs for football games. I don't think they have programs anymore, but I sold ads to appear in them. Then, I sold the mimeographed product and picked up a little money there. So, I was an entrepreneur at an early age. This happened, I'm sure, beginning in junior high.

DePue: Where did you attend high school?

Findley: Jacksonville High School, which was the same property, just next door.

DePue: So, it was only one high school in town at the time?

Findley: Yes, yes. Well, Routt High School for Catholics. But in my boyhood, there seemed to be a wall between Catholics and Protestants. I think my parents

may have encouraged that separation. I'm not sure, but I never went in a Catholic church until I was out of high school.

DePue: Were the Catholics in Jacksonville primarily German Catholics?

Findley: No, I think mainly Irish. Now there's a Father Formaz, who was a…sort of a gloomy figure to me. I don't think he promoted any interfaith relations.

DePue: You had your own little printing publication firm. Were you also involved with the school newspaper?

Findley: I was. I'm not sure whether I was ever on the regular editorial staff, but I contributed to it, wrote articles. I once took to task the annual—I'm having trouble with words—the emphasis on darky humor.

DePue: Minstrels?

Findley: Minstrel shows, yes. I didn't take part in the minstrel shows, but I criticized them, because they demeaned blacks. That was pretty courageous, back in that era.

DePue: How many blacks were in Jacksonville at the time?

Findley: It was never a major part of the population. I would say, maybe five hundred.

DePue: So, there were some African American students you went to school with.

Findley: Oh, sure. Yes. I shared a desk with a black girl in first grade. It didn't strike me as strange that we had blacks. I accepted them.

DePue: Were you involved in any school elections?

Findley: Oh, yes. I never passed on an election. [laughs] I was president of the school sophomore class, think that's about the time that I criticized the minstrel. I was fifteen. Would that be right? I guess. That's probably right.

DePue: Well, that would have been about the same time as the Alf Landon election.

Findley: That's right. Well, getting back to the minstrel show, my criticism of what I called gutter filth—how about that (laughs)—in a letter to the student newspaper, caused quite an outcry. One of my critics said, "Well, the time will come when you'll need our help. I can see you getting into politics, and you better be careful about losing friends over something like this." I kept that letter. It's in my scrapbook someplace. It was unsigned. The author said that he was speaking for several faculty members, who took part in the minstrel shows as well as students. But I was just criticizing it on my own. I didn't pretend to be speaking for a big audience. I just thought it was improper to demean the race.

DePue: Your comment strikes me that at least some of your classmates thought that you had political aspirations, even at that tender age.

Findley: Oh, I got elected president of the sophomore class, and I'm not sure just how it happened. I can't say that I planted the idea. In the early stage, there was only one person running against me, a good friend. And I persuaded, I think, another good friend to run, so we had a three-way contest. I didn't get a majority of the vote. (laughs) I just got a majority of the vote cast for individuals.

DePue: Did you have any thoughts at the time about, "Hey, politics might be something I want to go into in the future?"

Findley: Well, I began writing for the *Journal-Courier* when I was early in high school.

DePue: Is this the local paper, then?

Findley: Yes. It still exists. I really enjoyed seeing my name and some copy I'd written in print. I wrote *JHS News Notes*. That was the caption. I'm not sure how many…how often I did that, but it was fairly steady. Then I began to get little, minor assignments to cover a sports event that nobody else wanted to cover. This put me in the newsroom. This was back when hot type was used—linotypes—and melted lead was used in forming the casing that was put on the cylinders to put on the press. I got a lot of printer's ink in my veins, and it stayed. (laughs)

*Paul Findley in the newsroom at the Jacksonville Journal Courier, 1939.*

DePue: What did you think you wanted to do, once you got out of high school, then?

Findley: I wasn't sure at all. In fact, I wasn't sure when I graduated from college. But I did love journalism. I thought that was a noble profession, not a place to make money, but a place to serve an important role. I was tending towards newspaper work, at that time.

DePue: What were your favorite courses or subjects in high school?

Findley: I took part in debate, but, as I recall, I wasn't any big winner, but I was active in it. I liked history. There was a man whose family owned the Cardinal Inn

on West State Street, that was once a residential hotel. He was a history teacher that I really enjoyed. I enjoyed economics. We had a course in economics, and there was a good teacher of that course. But I liked all my courses. I had Latin for two years and then French for two years. Then, in college, I took Spanish for two years.

DePue: How good a student were you?

Findley: I'm not sure that I ever got clear to the top, but I was up towards the top all the time; got good grades.

DePue: Given your family circumstances, was there ever any thought that you or your other siblings would not finish high school and go to work?

Findley: No, no. There was never the slightest doubt that we would all go through college. That was absolutely a certainty. It was just never talked about.

DePue: Was that coming from both parents?

Findley: That was because of my mother. I'm sure her husband was also chiming in, but she geared everything in that direction.

DePue: Well that's quite a stretch, given the financial circumstances of the family.

Findley: Well, many were having financial trouble. It wasn't uncommon. I think, the majority were having a tight time.

DePue: I think you graduated in 1939 from high school. Is that correct?

Findley: That's right.

DePue: You said you were in the pressroom quite a bit. Were you paying attention to what was going on in Europe and in Asia during those years leading up to your graduation?

Findley: Well, I remember reading the *Chicago Daily News* a lot. I imagine this started in high school, because the *Daily News* would be around the newsroom of the *Journal-Courier*. It was an outstanding paper. It had a terrific foreign news service. You probably don't remember it, but it existed. It was really sort of like the *PD* [*Post Dispatch*] in St. Louis and the *New York Times*. It was in that category.

One of my close friends in high school that I dealt with quite a bit, because he was a full-time employee of the *Journal-Courier,* was Carl Erland Erickson. He was night editor. That is, he took care of the *Journal-Courier* night edition…no, the morning edition. He worked at night. I did most of my work at night, so I was right in the room with him. We became close friends, and

we talked about everything, a lot of politics, Chicago Cubs. I became a Cubs fan in junior high. (both laugh)

DePue: Well, isn't this St. Louis Cardinal fan at the time?

Findley: Well, that's Missouri. This was Illinois. (laughs) There are a lot of Cub fans still in Jacksonville, but they're the minority.

DePue: Another story that I recall from the book is you had a strong view about FDR and what historians call the court-packing event.

Findley: Yes. I talked to him pretty severely for trying to pack the court. I thought it was an unconstitutional initiative. Did he try to do that by executive order? I can't remember.

DePue: I think so.

Findley: Or did he propose at Congress? I don't think he—

DePue: I know there's a huge political debate.

Findley: He was going to do it on his own, and he became pretty much a dictator, really. Congress was heavily Democratic, all through his years. I don't remember any years in which the Republican Party seriously challenged him on anything.

DePue: Well, I know that the frustration that the president had with the Supreme Court was it had declared a couple of his major initiatives as being unconstitutional.

Findley: Yes, that's right. Well, with my mimeograph and typewriter I could be a publisher, and I was. For several years, I came up with ridiculous statements sometimes (laughs). One of the headlines was *Evidences of Communism in Jacksonville*. How's that? (both laugh)

DePue: That was probably a surprise to the Jacksonville citizens.

Findley: (laughs) It pleased the local private utility. I think they asked for a few extra copies. (both laugh) But I would print maybe fifteen or twenty and just hand them out to anybody that wanted to read it.

DePue: What were you charging for these?

Findley: Nothing.

DePue: Just as long as your name's out there, or your opinion's out there, huh?

Findley: Yeah, that's right. That's right. In fact, at one point—I think I was probably a freshman in high school—I had a little hand-operated printing press, loose type in it, would pull the handle, had a disk that took care of the ink.

A neighbor of mine, Baird Oxtoby—who was the son of a professor at Illinois College, who later was my teacher—Baird and I decided to found a Latin American expedition. We were determined to go to Ecuador. (both laugh.) Can you imagine this? (laughs) We got literature about Ecuador from the embassies, and then a few other countries down in Latin America, and we were going to have an expedition. We wanted to explore the head shrinking activities of South America. (both laugh) I'm sure it never happened, but I read about it, and it was fascinating.

So, Baird and I even printed up envelopes and letterheads and made our requests for literature on letterheads like that, the Latin American Expedition, Jacksonville, Illinois. (both laugh)

DePue: Well Congressman, it sounds like you didn't lack for either imagination or gumption back in those days.

Findley: That's right. (laughs)

DePue: So, what do you do with all that pent up energy then, when you're looking to find a college? Where did you look?

Findley: Well, I wrote to Oxford in England. (DePue laughs) They sent me a nice letter, said you aren't eligible. I think I wrote to Harvard and got turned down there. But the turndowns didn't bother me at all. When I was in high school, I had a lot of assignments to cover lectures that occurred here in Jacksonville. They were authors of books mostly.

DePue: Coming to the local colleges, perhaps?

Findley: And I also covered political meetings. That's where the bug really bit me, Democrat, as well as Republican. I was covering them for the paper. I'm not exactly sure what year all that began, probably my senior in high school. And then, I did a lot of that while I was in college, for pay.

DePue: You didn't start at college here in town, did you?

Findley: Well, I actually did. I got an offer, a very nice offer, as a Rector Scholar at the great university in southern Indiana, DePauw University. I went there, expecting to go there. I found a woman, who had given me a room I could work off, and I was planning to go to DePauw.

Well, I came back home, and I realized that it would be cheaper and easier to go to Illinois College. I didn't have any money, except for what I had earned, so it would have been a struggle to be at DePauw, more so than here;

because I had established good will at the *Journal-Courier*. I could expect to earn some money there. In fact, my earnings from *Journal-Courier* were the single most important income that I had. But when I got back, I decided to go to IC, and that was a disappointment to my mother. She was very disappointed. She didn't think Illinois College was nearly as good as DePauw. It probably wasn't, but that's where I chose to go, and she didn't fight it. I've been glad about it, because Illinois College has been a part of my life, a fascinating part, all through the years. I was on the board of trustees for thirty years.

DePue: I know you also took a trip to Washington, D.C. I think that might even have been before you graduated from high school.

Findley: That's right. Now, that was not for winning an editorial contest. My first trip, I hitchhiked, I believe. Back in that day, that was commonplace. Now my mother didn't like it, but she didn't fight it, either. I hitchhiked quite a bit around the Midwest.

DePue: But why Washington, D.C., of all places? Was that the political bug that you had?

Findley: That was the political bug. I stayed overnight with a family that had relocated from Edgehill in Jacksonville to Arlington, Virginia. The parent, the father, Frank Vannier, had worked at Eli Bridge Company, but he got an attractive offer working for the federal government in the Bureau of Labor, I believe. So, I stayed overnight with them for a couple of nights, just on my own, and just wandered around. I picked up a card, so I could get into the senate gallery and saw Borah of Idaho, the Lion of Idaho.

DePue: Was it Frank Borah?

Findley: I think it was Frank.[3] He was one of the veteran senators. They called him the Lion of Idaho. And I saw…Who was the man in Wisconsin that originated the primary system?

DePue: It wouldn't have been LaFollette, would it?

Findley: Yeah, I saw the young Robert LaFollette, with a nice, neat bowtie, sitting at the desk in the Senate. Those are memories of that trip. I think I hitched a ride back to Jacksonville. I was still in high school, I believe.

DePue: Let's get more to your college years, then. You've talked a little bit about how you managed to finance your way through college. Did you have any kind of a scholarship, as well?

[3] William Edgar Borah, known as the "Lion of Idaho," was a Republican senator from 1907 to 1940.

Findley: Yes, I did. I always had a scholarship for…oh, maybe it was a hundred and fifty dollars a year. That just covered fees, I believe. Believe it or not, I believe that sum **did** cover fees. I didn't buy any new books. They had a book store, which was the Center for Rotating Books. A student would buy a book, sell it back to the bookstore, and they would resell it to the next customer. So, buying books was not the ordeal that it is these days. I was able to continue working for the *Journal-Courier*, and that was pretty steady. I put in quite a few hours, so I didn't have time for a lot of social life, but I did have some. (laughs)

DePue: Does that mean you were dating, once you got to college, a little bit? (both laugh)

Findley: That's right. Believe it or not, despite the Depression, most of us had a tuxedo. I bought one. I think it didn't cost much more than ten bucks, but I bought one.

DePue: Well, that means you can go to the dances.

Findley: That's right. And they had dances, formal dances—with the girls all dressed up and the guys in tuxes—at Phi Alpha. That was normal for Phi Alpha back then. (laughs)

DePue: That's a local fraternity?

Findley: Yeah.

DePue: Were you a member of Phi Alpha then?

Findley: Oh, yes. It's a literary society. It's not a fraternity. It's not a live-in thing, at all. This college is unique for having a very active set of literary societies, women, as well as men. I think it's one of the good features of Illinois College.

DePue: Was Illinois College a co-ed college at the time?

Findley: Yes, when I was there, yes.

DePue: The other college in town here was…

Findley: It was just a woman's college then.

DePue: MacMurray?

Findley: We did most of our dating down there.

DePue: Why didn't you date the girls that were going to Illinois College?

Findley: I don't know. I guess because I saw them in the daytime. (both laugh)

DePue: Well that's not very kind.

Findley: It wasn't. I didn't mean it that way.

DePue: What was your major in college?

Findley: History, a double major in history and political science.

DePue: And you kind of intimated before, you didn't really know what you wanted to do with it.

Findley: That's right.

DePue: But it sounds to me like you're leaning seriously towards journalism, though.

Findley: And I thought about law. In fact, I know that, had I gone to law school, it would have been an asset to me as a journalist. I talked to an editor of the *Evening Star* in Washington on one of my trips out there, after the war. He said, "You ought to go back; get a law degree. Even if you're going to go into journalism, it'll be an asset for you."

DePue: It sounds like the people you were working with, maybe a couple of your mentors that were in journalism, were definitely seeing you going that direction?

Findley: Yes, that had to be the case because, out of the blue, after I had come back from the war, about a year later, one of them, who was also a politician, Richard Yates Rowe, Sr., who was state treasurer at the time—in the lineage of two men named Richard Yates, both governors of Illinois.[4] One was a Civil War governor, and both of them are pictured in the hallway out here. By the way, those photos—maybe you know this—those are the likenesses of the former students of Illinois College that went to Congress, about twenty of them.

DePue: Congress or the state legislature or both?

Findley: Congress, Congress.

DePue: Strictly Congress. Well, that's quite an accomplishment.

Findley: It is, I think. I think it is.

[4] Richard Yates Rowe, Sr. (1889-1973) was the great nephew of Governor Richard Yates, Sr. and nephew of Governor Richard Yates, Jr. He served as Illinois Secretary of State 1944-1945 and Illinois State Treasurer 1945-1947. He ran unsuccessfully for Lieutenant Governor in 1948 and lost in the Republican gubernatorial primary in 1952. See http://www.ourcampaigns.com.

DePue: For a school that your mother didn't think was good enough for you. (both laugh) I assume you kept involved with a lot of other extracurricular activities in college, as well?

.Findley: Tennis was the only sport I took part in. The college was not full of various clubs at that time. Phi Alpha was all I could manage, I'm sure, and I know I missed a lot of the meetings at Phi Alpha. One of my memories is a note from my yearbook, from a Phi member who said he hoped that I'd be able to attend Phi meetings more often in the future. So, I was not always there.

DePue: But there's a picture in the book here of you directing the Illinois College band.

Findley: Well, I was a federal employee.

DePue: A federal employee?

Findley: (laughs) They had a federal youth administration, one of the alphabetic…

DePue: Alphabet soup programs that FDR had?

Findley: …for students. I think I got a hundred and twenty-five dollars for a year directing the Illinois College band. So, I was a federal employee during that time. (both laugh)

DePue: What attributes did you have that made you perfect for the job of directing the band?

Findley: Well, I think I directed the band while I was a federal employee, directing the band. (laughs) I had a pretty good band. We didn't work anybody too hard, but I remember we played long for a daytime concert, in what was then the chapel building. We had an evening concert when the picture was taken on the steps of the library, which still exists.

DePue: It looks like you're wearing a very smart looking pair of white trousers here, as you're directing.

Findley: That's right. I'm sure I had paid for them. And I had a jacket that was maybe the remnant of a band uniform. We didn't worry about uniforms.

DePue: Were you also involved with some school politics again? Did you run for class office or anything like that?

Findley: No, I don't believe I did. I worked, it seemed, almost a full, 40-hour, week at the *Journal-Courier*, plus the college. I was off campus most of the time. I lived off campus all the way through. The first two years, I lived at home.

DePue: Then, did you rent a room after your parents moved to Princeton?

Findley: Yes, just a room from a family named Gilchrest, which is right across the street from where we used to live at 806. The Gilchrest family rented out two bedrooms upstairs, very small rooms. And Wilbur Moore became a close friend. He was in Phi Alpha, and we had a lot of fun together. He had one room. I had the other. We didn't share. We didn't room together. We each had a private room. And we'd occasionally get out. He played the saxophone, and I played the trombone, so we would get a girl, and ring her on the phone and serenade her with a little music. (both laugh)

DePue: What were the songs you were serenading them with? Do you remember?

Findley: Well, they were favorites, "Oh, tell me why the sky is blue, then I will tell you why I love you." That was a few of the phrases.

DePue: So, some of the ballads of the day?

Findley: Yeah.

DePue: I wonder also, you started school, I would assume, September timeframe in 1939. That's the timeframe the Germans invaded Poland. So, World War II has started in Europe. It's already going on in Asia at that time. We'll talk about Pearl Harbor here in a bit, but, between those two events, what was your view about all of this and what the United States was doing?

Findley: I was against going to war. I thought, just let the British take care of their own problems over there. I wrote a few editorials to that effect. I doubt that they pleased Joe Patterson Smith, the very well-known, blind history professor, one of my teachers. He once told me that my mind was like a harness that needed oiling. I squeaked. (both laugh)

DePue: So, even after France and the low countries fell to the Nazis in 1940, and England was standing all by itself, you still felt that we needed to stay out of the war?

Findley: I'm not sure just how long. I think I had my doubts, until Pearl Harbor.

DePue: Let's talk about that day. What do you remember about that day, December seventh?

Findley: Vivid memory. I was in the upstairs, rented room of the Gilchrest house, coming down the stairs, when I heard Roosevelt's voice on the radio announcing the attack on Pearl Harbor. Sunday. I was getting ready to go to church.

DePue: How did that change things for you?

Findley: It changed from night to day. I knew we had to be entered. We were under attack. We had to go after the Japanese. They were, of course, allied with the Nazis.

DePue: Did you have any doubts, after that, that we had to go to war with Germany, as well?

Findley: No, no doubts. It really cleared my thinking, if I could call it thinking. (laughs)

DePue: So, according to Professor Smith, you got your harness oiled after that?

Findley: Yep, I guess. One day, he asked our history class to identify George Catlett Marshall. Not a soul raised their hand. None of us ever heard of George Marshall. And Smith said, "Well, you'll be learning lots about him in the future." (laughs)

Joe Pat Smith was a veteran of World War I. He was blinded, I think, when he was aboard ship; some explosion blinded him totally. But despite that handicap, he earned his baccalaureate degree and all the way through Ph.D., thanks to mentoring by his wife, reading everything to him. He was a brilliant guy. In fact, I know he had dreams of being a member of Congress in the south, and he, I believe, turned down a suggestion by one of the local Democrats that he run. He was not impressed with me as a candidate for Congress. I ran against a guy named Carrott in Quincy. (laughs) And Joe Pat, according to some intelligence I received, described the choice for Congress as being, between a Neanderthal, me, and a vegetable, Carrott. (both laugh) I think there was a tinge of jealousy, because I think he dreamed of being in Congress someday, but it didn't come his way.

DePue: Well, I know you made some important decisions, shortly after Pearl Harbor, in respect to your own military involvement. What were your decisions?

Findley: The other members of the Phi Alpha debate team… Oh, that was one of my activities. I was always on the debate team for Phi Alpha.

DePue: Do you remember the subjects that they were debating at the time?

Findley: Well, at my suggestion, they debated the Federal Union for the Atlantic Federation Proposition that Streit was advancing. I know that we lost it. Streit lost, too.[5] Let's see now…

DePue: Your own future with the military.

[5] Clarence Streit (1896-1986) was a leading proponent of an Atlantic Union.

Findley: Well, I knew that I would be drafted if I didn't enlist. I was told that, if I would enlist in the Navy Reserve, I would not be called up until next February. This was summertime, or spring.

DePue: So, the spring of '42.

Findley: Yeah, spring of '42. I enrolled in the University of Chicago Law School and took enough courses, passed enough, to graduate the following January, just ahead of the time that I would be called up. So, all three of us did the same thing the same day.

DePue: Why wouldn't you have stayed at Illinois College? Couldn't you have also done that from Illinois College?

Findley: Well, there was no summer program at all, hadn't been for years.

DePue: So, did you just take courses during the summer at the University of Chicago Law School?

Findley: Yes, just the summer. I thought I might go back and get a law degree after service, but I wasn't sure. When I did leave the war, I had a job offer from Clarence Streit, the author, to be assistant editor of a new magazine he was launching, called *Freedom & Union*, a monthly. I enrolled in the George Washington University School of Law in D.C., but I never attended the class. I simply didn't take part. I could have done that under the G.I. Bill, but I didn't.

DePue: Well, I definitely want to get to more of the story about Clarence Streit, because he obviously was influential in your career, but let's go back to the decision then. You're now in the Navy Reserve, and my understanding: Did you volunteer? Did you want to be an aviator, a pilot?

Findley: Well, I thought it'd be kind of neat. (both laugh) That was actually my attitude. When the time came, I decided to opt out for a variety of reasons. They kept increasing the flight prep schooling. They increased it twice while I was in, and then the backup of candidates for pilot license was growing so fast at the other end. You won't believe this, but I was afraid the war would be over before I got overseas. I truly felt that way.

DePue: I'm sure your mother was paying attention, reading about the war in the newspaper and thinking, He wants to be a Navy pilot; that's a pretty dangerous business. (both laugh)What was she telling you?

Findley: She never mentioned it.

DePue: Didn't she? Did you have any of your other siblings in the military?

Findley: No.

DePue: Your older brother wasn't.

Findley: By then, he was an expert on the properties of plastics. He had built a lab, as an instructor at the University of Illinois, to test various types of plastic materials: stretch, twist, heat, cold, all those things. He quickly became a leading expert on plastics, so he was set aside for this for the duration of the war.

DePue: His contribution was much more valuable in that respect, wasn't it?

Findley: That's right. Then, he soon got an offer to be a professor at Brown University, went there. He never got a Ph.D., but he got about three masters, and he is eccentric. He just didn't think he should have to bother with a Ph.D. He was already a full professor and a head of the department, so what else could he get? (both laugh)

DePue: Well, they played in different rules at that time in academia.

Findley: That's right.

DePue: When did you graduate from college, then?

Findley: January of '43. We had a separate commencement. There were probably twenty or thirty of us that graduated.

DePue: How did you stand in your class?

Findley: Well, I got Phi Beta Kappa, so I did okay. I'm not sure I was number one, but, to my surprise, I was invited to be in Phi Beta Kappa. Unfortunately, the grades for law school didn't arrive before they had to make the decision, (both laugh) because I think I got a B-plus and a C. That wasn't exactly stellar.

DePue: A gentleman C, though, perhaps. (both laugh) What then, after you graduated?

Findley: The war, immediately. I immediately went into service, went to Monmouth, Illinois. The campus of the Monmouth College had been taken over completely for the war, and it was a Navy prep school. I suggested they have a school newspaper, and I became the first editor of it. *Wingtips*, that was my name for it. It was a printed paper and pretty good. And believe it or not, I was able to do twenty-two push-ups. I'd have trouble doing two now.

DePue: Was this an emphasis on engineering, academic classes?

Findley: No, we had Morse code, dead reckoning flying, things like that and all interesting. I did well in all of it.

DePue: And where after that?

Findley: Then I was sent up to Davenport, Iowa to the next flight preparatory school. And then I got word that that wouldn't be the last preparatory school. So, I began to think, well, I'd better get in this, or I won't see or have any of the fun of the war. (laughs)

DePue: Well, and again, in your biography, you said, at St. Ambrose College.

Findley: That's right, yeah.

DePue: So, you know, I have visions of somebody going into the military, and you're going through something like boot camp, with drill sergeants yelling at you.

Findley: That's right.

DePue: But it doesn't sound like that's what your experience was here, to begin with.

Findley: There was some skills training, but it was pretty fundamental. There was flight training at St. Ambrose, and I loved flying the plane. I've still got my record book. It's probably around here someplace.

DePue: So, you got in the cockpit, once you were at St. Ambrose?

Findley: Oh sure, yeah. They had an airstrip, which Monmouth did not have, so flying was a part of the program. I qualified for solo flying and did all kind of chandelles and wingovers and spins and pretty exciting.

DePue: Were you an enlisted or a commissioned officer by this time?

Findley: I was then a cadet, not a commissioned, but I was given the option of going for a direct commission at Great Lakes, so I went up there. There was a chance that I wouldn't get it, but I thought I would, and I did. They had two full lieutenants, adults in their mid-career, I think, who interviewed candidates for direct commissions. They asked me to be in charge of the cadets and the others who were gathering every day, trying to get a direct commission. I decided I was put in charge of the sequence of the interviews. They were very pleased with the way I managed that, and that helped me to a prompt commission.

DePue: Did that happen at St. Ambrose, or once you got to Great Lakes?

Findley: To Great Lakes. I took a chance on getting commissioned. And one little, almost funny, part of my experience up there: I learned to improve my dancing, because the Trianon and the Aragon were in full swing. Weekends, we would go down to have the fun of dancing at those. You probably don't know what they were like, but each of them was a giant ballroom, and they had two full bands that would take turns. It would cost ten cents a trick or whatever it was called. So, weekends were a lot of fun. I enjoyed that.

DePue: Well, I'm a big band fan. Do you remember any of the big bands that might have gone through there?

Findley: No. But this was the big band era, so they didn't have any little bands. They were all big. (both laugh) Oh, by the way, they had my medical records wrongly filed. I was admitted for surgery on a leg one night, and the next morning, I said, "Are you sure I'm the one that ought to have leg surgery?" They looked at the chart and said, "Oh, my God. We messed this up. You aren't the one that's supposed to be here." (both laugh)

*Ensign Paul Findley U.S. Navy 1943.*

DePue: Welcome to the Navy, huh?

Findley: Yeah. (both laugh)

DePue: Okay, how long were you at Great Lakes, and when were you there?

Findley: Well, it wasn't much more than a month, and that would have been… Let's see, '44. I went to Guam, probably the last of '43.

DePue: Was it there, then, that you got your commission?

Findley: Yes. Then I went to Harvard for three months, training for supply officer and then, straight out.

DePue: Well, there's a bit of irony. You got to Harvard after all. (both laugh) Was that more of an academic setting, then?

Findley: Well, the business school is where we were stationed. I think Harvard had regular courses all the way through, but this property was dedicated to us.

DePue: Where then did you learn about all things military, like how to wear your uniform and how to salute and what the rank structure was and discipline and marksman?

Findley: I learned a lot of that at Monmouth and St. Ambrose and Great Lakes.

DePue: Were you considered to be one of those ninety-day wonders or a different category altogether?

Findley: Well, I guess. But the ninety-day wonders wound up with a commission as a line officer. They could just as well step right in and be captain of a very small ship. We weren't trained to be on the line.

DePue: What was your training?

Findley: Supply.

DePue: Is that something that you had a voice in?

Findley: No, it's one they just assigned to me. They needed them.

DePue: So you go from wanting to be an aviator to being a supply officer. What did you think about that move?

Findley: It pleased me, because I knew that I'd be shipped overseas. I didn't want to be stationed in the U.S., as some of them were.

DePue: What did your Mom think about the move?

Findley: She never said. (laughs) She really didn't. I had told her what I had done, and she said, "Well, we'll be thinking about you," that sort of comment. I'm sure she worried until the war was over. But my duty…There was a rough period when we went in at the end of the liberation of Guam. The bullets were still popping around and a lot of Japanese were still in the woods. But there's sort of a hardship period, living in a tent and all that stuff. My job was paymaster, and I was also, believe it or not, in charge of the commissary.

DePue: But that's once you got to Guam, itself?

Findley: Yes.

DePue: Well, let's get you from Boston, out to the Pacific. How did that occur?

Findley: That was not a good experience. I was on a troop train to Seattle, I guess. It was the depth of winter. The train had a very poor heating system. Much of the time there was no heat in the cars that I was in, so it wasn't a fun trip.

But one pleasant moment of it occurred when one of my Hollywood heroes, Gene Kelly, wandered through the room where we had a little poker game going on. We invited him to join us, which he did nicely and played one hand. I won it, straight set. That was my initiation into poker. I never really played poker before, but I learned on that trip.

It was a lengthy trip. Then we got on a converted liberty ship or a converted…I think it was built as a troop ship, but it was a liberty ship, very unstable. It bobbed around a lot, and I was sick, I think, most of the way to Hawaii. But I also read the entirety of *War and Peace* by Tolstoy. So, it was memorable for two things: vomiting over the side and reading a big book.

DePue: Had you started rethinking about being in the Navy when you were taking that trip?

Findley: No, no. I was just eager to get to Pearl Harbor. The battalion was already fitted up and had started in Atlanta, Georgia, and then moved out to Pearl

Harbor. Then, one of the supply officers got orders to leave, and I took his place.

DePue: Did you know, when you were on the ship heading to Hawaii, what your unit of assignment would be, where you were going to end up?

Findley: When I got on the troop train, yes. I had the orders.

DePue: That you were going to be in a particular unit, once you got to Hawaii.

Findley: I knew that I'd be with the 72nd Seabees..

DePue: Tell me about your impressions, once you arrived in Hawaii, other than being thankful at *land*.

Findley: Well, it was a short visit, a couple of weeks. We got orders to go to Eniwetok, the gathering point for the invasion of Guam.

DePue: Do you remember what Pearl Harbor or Hawaii was like at the time? Could you still see some of the scars of the attack?

Findley: Yes. I could see the battleships down. I knew it was serious business, and I knew that Japan was a tough nut and that we were trying to win a war at two sides of the world. So, I knew it was going to be a struggle, but I never doubted for a minute that we'd win. The possibly of we just losing just never entered my mind.

DePue: So, as you said, you didn't stay there very long, though. You headed out to the Pacific shortly after that.

Findley: I remember that we had an executive officer named Clayberger, who was not popular to begin with, but I remember that he said, "Well guys, this is it." (laughs) That was the announcement. We're ready to go. It was only then that we knew it was going to be Guam, but we headed for Eniwetok. Then, the operations on Guam took longer than expected, and we stayed, swinging around the hook, for thirty days in Eniwetok. We had nothing to do but play poker.

DePue: So you got better at poker.

Findley: I did. The chips were worth a quarter… I guess fifty cents, quarter and a dime. You could lose five dollars in a day, but you could have a lot of fun. I built up a pot of about two hundred and fifty, which is pretty good. But then, the tide turned. By the time we got to Guam, I was about back to zero. (both laugh) It was good.

DePue: I've got a map here of the Pacific Theater, just so I can kind of get a sense of things too. It might be hard to see, but here is Guam, right at the bottom of this

map here. I know that the Battle of Guam was July and August of 1944. So, how long after the actual combat phase were you actually shipped in?

Findley: Well, we landed in August. I'm sure.

DePue: So, right after the firing was done.

Findley: Right after most of it was done. That's right.

DePue: What was the unit's mission then?

Findley: To build a Navy airbase on a hilltop. Is that a map of Guam?

DePue: It is. I don't know if you can read that, but that's a good map of Guam during the war.

Findley: I think the Navy airbase was up here, but I'm not positive.

DePue: On the northern end of the island, it looks like?

Findley: Yeah.

DePue: Before we get too much farther into the Guam experience, tell me about the 72nd Seabee battalion.

Findley: Well, it consisted of men. I called them middle-aged men, but they probably were in their thirties and forties. They were all technicians. They were skilled at asphalt laying, skilled engineers, skilled carpenters, electricians. They were all able people, well-trained.

DePue: Heavy equipment operators?

Findley: Yes, oh yeah, bulldozers and pans all over the place. My roommate for a long time there was Homer Barger, B-a-r-g-e-r. Homer was married to a girl from Argentina. In private life, he was an expert on installing a refinery for a big steel mill. He did big installations like that. After the war, he went back to that type of work. I kept in touch with him. He was the only Seabee that I really kept in touch with, almost every month after the war. We had a great, great time together. One of his jobs was to install these giant tanks that would hold fuel oil. They were bolted together. They were not—

DePue: Not welded?

Findley: Not welded, but they were designed for fast erection. That was his job, was to make sure they were put up right and fast, and he did it. It was nothing, no problem for him.

DePue: It sounds like you were one of the younger people in the unit.

Findley: Oh, I was the youngest. In fact, several of them said—out of my earshot, but I heard about it—that I looked too young to be an officer. (both laugh)

DePue: Did you have any problems? I mean, I'm sure a lot of these people were very seasoned people, as you mention.

Findley: All over.

DePue: Did you have any problems with kind of exerting your rank and your discipline, or was that not a problem?

Findley: Well, I didn't have authority over any of the other officers. My total authority was over the paymaster crew of about five enlisted men and over the chief cook. I had to get approval of menus each week. I remember we had quite a party in this mess hall for New Year's Day and Easter. I sang in the choir a few times. (laughs) I was on very good terms with a lieutenant named Hamburg, who was a Congregational minister, but he was the chaplain for the unit. Chappy liked tennis, so we had a tennis court built pretty fast. (both laugh) Lots of funny episodes happened on Guam.

DePue: What were your living quarters?

Findley: Tents; never graduated from tents. Lucille was a Navy flight nurse, and she and her buddies were in a tent too, for a while. They did graduate to a Quonset hut, but we did not. No complaints.

DePue: Did you see many of the native people of Guam? Did you have many relationships with them?

Findley: Well, they were right next to the base property, so they would show up sometimes, come in to watch a new movie, (laughs) outdoors movie. We would sit on a log and watch the movie, and sometimes we'd be sitting with a native nearby, but we didn't have many dealings with them.

DePue: Was it the unit's expectation that your unit was going to be there in Guam for a while?

Findley: Well, we would be there until the invasion of Japan. There was no doubt about it. There was some talk that we might go to the Aleutian Islands or Japan, but that was scrubbed. I'm glad it was. That would have been very cold. We weren't happy about going in on the invasion. We knew that the casualties would be very heavy. But it didn't bother me. There was nothing I could do about it, so I just made up my mind to take what came along.

DePue: Well, you had mentioned several times, up to this point, that you were a young man in a hurry to get to the combat zone.

Findley: That's right.

DePue: Once you're in the combat zone, you were not really combat, except I know there was—

Findley: That's right. It was really a soft assignment I had. We had plenty of time to play softball, which we did a lot of afternoons. The duty for the paymaster wasn't arduous. It was mainly signing pay cards. We had what was called "the rough roll" and then "the smooth roll." The records would be on the rough roll, then they were transferred later to smooth roll. Then they got bright and decided they didn't have to go through all that and just had what amounted to the smooth roll, not the rough roll. So, the job got simpler as time went on.

DePue: Were you kind of anxious, once you'd been there for a while, to get into combat still, or were you content to stay where you were?

Findley: I thought invading Japan would be quite enough. (both laugh) I was called to hold paydays aboard a couple of ships. I remember one time, I had to climb a rope ladder down the side of the ship and have the big bag of money over my shoulder. Another time, I was transferred in a chair that was swung from one deck to the other. That was a little variety. But fortunately, Lucille was there quite often, and that added to the excitement.

DePue: Tell me about how you met her in the first place. It's Lucille Gemme?

Findley: One of my properties that I had control of was the Quonset structure that you can see in the background. There's an officer's club, built after everything else was done, built as an officers' club and a Quonset. It was very nicely fitted out, had a restroom for ladies, as well as men. The other units on the island would be envious, of course, because most of them didn't have an officers' club. Anyhow, a certain unit was given permission by the skipper of the battalion to use our officers' club for a party, but I was in charge. It was my baby to take care of, so I attended it. Lucille was one of the female guests of the pilots, and her host got so drunk, he was just bleary-eyed. He could hardly stay in the chair.


*July 4, 1945 party, organized by commissary officer, Findley, (right) cutting the cake.*

DePue: This was a Navy aviator?

Findley: No, Air Force. (laughs) They were all Air Force officers. I could see that he was hardly in the shape to take her back to her quarters, so she readily agreed to let me do it. So, that's how it started. During the evening, that photo was taken.

*The night Paul Findley and Lucille Gemme met at the Officers Club on Guam, 1945*

DePue: This is the first night that you met her.

Findley: Yeah, that's right.

DePue: Well, Congressman, we'll certainly include this picture here. This is a great photo. You two are pretty close already, the first night. (both laugh)

Findley: I noticed that.

DePue: You're just a few inches away from her.

Findley: Well, I think I had her backed up against the wall, didn't I? (both laugh)

DePue: You did. You did. Now I don't blame you at all. She was a striking young lady, it looks like.

*Lieutenant JG Lucille M. Gemme.*

Findley: Yeah, she was. There were only eight of them, so there were eight flight nurses. In the early days, there wasn't any Army. This was in the early period, when the Army was being established, when they had the party. The flight nurses had been established on our airbase, just shortly before this party.

DePue: The odds were incredibly against you, though, if you're looking at just the percentage, the numbers of men versus available young women there.

Findley: The *Chicago Tribune* wrote a feature story about me, and the guy in charge figured that the odds were forty to one against me…not forty to one. It's a lot more than that, probably forty thousand to one. (both laugh) I think that's about it, because there were a lot of personnel on the island by then. It was loaded down.

DePue: Apparently, though, after that first meeting, you didn't waste any time courting her seriously? Would that be a fair thing to say?

Findley: Well, I courted her seriously. I didn't waste time. (laughs)

DePue: And she was obviously receptive.

Findley: Yes. For one thing, I was in charge of the officers' mess, along with the other eating facilities. Whenever Lucille would be able to be my guest in the officers' club, everybody rejoiced, because the food was a lot better. (both laugh) Yeah, they all enjoyed being with her. She was quite a hit.

DePue: Tell me what it was about her—other than her looks, obviously—but what else about her really attracted you?

Findley: Well, being selected as a Navy flight nurse put her in a pretty small group, because this was experimental. I don't think this type rescue had been developed anyplace in the war. They knew that they were going to attack Iwo Jima, and they wanted nurses trained for combat circumstances, able to ferry new recruits into the battlefield and then return, with a full load of injured. I thought that was very commendable and very exciting. It meant that Lucille had passed all kinds of tests to get there. Yes, she was fun.

DePue: Obviously she had the personality to go along with the looks, as well.

Findley: She did. She did.

DePue: I want to learn more about what she did, but before I do that, I wanted to ask you about Thanksgiving and Christmas. Do you have any memories about either of those holidays, once you were on Guam?

Findley: Well, I know that I encouraged the mess hall to be specially decorated and have a special menu on those occasions, and they did. They were glad to. We rarely had visitors of high rank, although Lucille, being a rare human being on Guam, a rare lady on Guam, was invited to the top quarters. I remember Nimitz invited her to dinner. She wasn't the only one. A couple of them were invited to dinner. [Admiral] Chester Nimitz was the host, and she had a delightful evening up there. He had quarters on the top of the highest hill in Guam, I believe. She still kept the place card she had, which he autographed.

Of course, every time she went to Iwo Jima, she could be a target, and she had to hop in a foxhole a time or two, just because the Japanese were able to raid at that time. They chose their trip so that they would make the transfer at dawn, because the fighter planes generally would not arrive until midday.

DePue: Fighter planes from Japan, itself.

Findley: Yeah.

DePue: I know it was just a few days before the Marines were able to seize that tiny airstrip that was on Iwo Jima. Is that where she was flying in?

Findley: Yeah, yeah. That tiny airstrip was it.

DePue: And there's still ferocious fighting going on in the northern end of the island.

Findley: That's right. And they would have to repair the airstrip every time a plane took off, because it would be immediately bombed. But, fortunately, the bombs weren't big enough to really take it out of service.

DePue: Was there a hospital on Guam, as well, where these—

Findley: No, no. There were a lot of medics, and they were brave people. A lot of them died. There's a man who lives here in Jacksonville named Warren Musch.

DePue: I've interviewed Warren.

Findley: Warren played in the trombone section when I directed the IC band. (DePue laughs) He helped me when I was first a candidate for Congress. He was there for every day of the Battle of Iwo Jima. He never got scratched, but he said he saw a lot of people blown up.

DePue: You say Lucille was picking them up, the casualties in Iwo Jima, and then they were flying back to Guam.

Findley: Yeah.

DePue: Once they were at Guam, was there some kind of a hospital there at Guam?

Findley: Well, I think they called it a medical center, maybe. They almost immediately put them on bigger planes to fly them to Hawaii for medical care.

DePue: So, Lucille and these other nurses that were in this group, were they…

Findley: They didn't go to Pearl Harbor. They were back and forth to Guam only; except, when they had time off, they might hitch a ride to Pearl Harbor.

DePue: But they weren't performing any nursing duties at Guam, itself, only these duties on the flights going back and forth?

Findley: I guess. I don't know for sure. There must have been a major naval medical center hospital. I'm not sure.

DePue: Well, I would think, just the nature of the injuries that they were seeing, that that experience itself had to be very traumatic, dealing with those injured.

Findley: Well, they used the triage system, and they only flew back the ones that had a chance to survive. The nurses on the planes had the tough job of keeping them alive for a six-hour flight back to Guam. I got the nurses before, some years ago, to estimate the number of patients they did get back. They said there were at least 2,000 wounded that the flight nurses brought from Iwo Jima to Guam, and they lost only one injured Marine inflight. That doesn't mean that the rest of them all survived, but they got them back safe and sound, except for one.

And they had to fly close to the surface of the ocean, because the cabins were not pressurized.

DePue: This sounds like something of an experiment, at the time, as well. This was something new.

Findley: I think so. I think so.

DePue: Was it just Iwo Jima?

Findley: No, as soon as Iwo was secured, they did the same thing at Okinawa, which was an even bigger battlefield.

DePue: And farther away, quite a bit farther away.

Findley: Yeah.

DePue: What was the aircraft, do you know, that they were flying?

Findley: DC-3. That's what Ozark [Airlines] used in its infancy.

DePue: That's the standard commercial aircraft for a lot of years.

Findley: Yeah.

DePue: Were there any Japanese survivors left over, after the mop up on Guam itself?

Findley: I don't know what the numbers were, but many of them were still wandering alone in the woods and didn't even know that the Japanese had surrendered.

DePue: Did they occasionally come out and surrender or occasionally come out and fight?

Findley: Oh, they would occasionally get brave enough to watch a movie at night with us (laughs). A few of them even got in a chow line to eat. Many of them were desperate for food. In fact, Lucille said that a Japanese came to the Quonset. It was a Quonset by then, where the nurses were quartered. (laughs) She said they didn't know quite what to do, but they could tell he was hungry. He wanted food, so they gave him a couple of slices of bread with butter on, or what passed for butter, and he ate the food and just scrambled right back in the woods. I'm sure there were quite a few.

DePue: You hear the stories about the survivors that were left behind, and you also hear the stories about how fanatical the typical Japanese soldier was, that they would fight to the death. Did you have any close encounters, where they would stage attacks or anything?

Findley: No. In fact, one of them came into the camp to surrender (laughs), and one of the shipmates of the 72nd was defecating on a log at the time. He said, "I'm

too busy. Go up to the road. The chaplain's up there." So, that's where he went. I guess they communicated somehow. (laughs)

DePue: The position you're in, that's speaks universally, I think, whatever the language would be. (both laugh) Okay, you had to be hearing stories, especially from Lucille, about the things that she was seeing at Iwo Jima and Okinawa and especially about the nature of the combat there. Once Okinawa is secured, then the discussion's got to be about going into Japan itself. What were your thoughts and others' about doing that?

Findley: I assume they had a role for these flight nurses, but we all assumed it would be a slaughter on both sides. But we knew we had to obey orders, so why worry about it?

DePue: This is probably about the same time. There's things going on in the United States and Europe. I wanted to start with asking about FDR's death on April 12, 1945. Do you remember that?

Findley: Oh, I do. I was on Guam, and I couldn't imagine how Harry Truman could pick up the reins. I knew that he had never been brought into the White House. He never had any kind of on-the-job training as vice-president. He was ignored, really. He just wasn't of interest to FDR. I guess FDR figured he'd live forever. But I really wondered how Harry Truman could really provide the leadership needed. That was a time when I fully comprehended the achievement of FDR. I saw him, not as a politician, but as a truly giant leader, at a time of great need.

DePue: It took his death to get you to the point of recognizing that?

Findley: Oh yeah, sure.

DePue: It wasn't too long after that—I think, May eighth or May ninth—V-E Day in Europe. What was the reaction of you and others about that?

Findley: Well, we got snippets of news, but we really didn't even know what was going on on Guam in great detail. I can't remember if we had the miniature editions of *Time* and *Newsweek*. I don't believe we did.

DePue: How about *Stars and Stripes*?

Findley: *Stars and Stripes* would be the next best. It was the main source. And honestly, I don't remember seeing a *Stars and Stripes* on Guam. I'm sure they were there, but never got to me.

DePue: Well, when did you end up hearing about the atrocities that the Nazis were doing in Europe, the death camps and the holocaust? Was that well after all of this?

Findley: Yes. I have to say I don't know. I was on Japan for two or three months, but my life was filled with what's happening right there. I don't believe I was aware of the death camps.

DePue: When you were still on Guam, there had to be a lot of talk about the invasion of Japan.

Findley: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Did you know the mission, the specific mission, the 72nd was going to have?

Findley: I didn't know until the armistice was over. We had a way to learn some details about the ceremony of surrender and the fact that the surrender would permit the survival of the hereditary ruler.

DePue: That Emperor Hirohito has taken position.

Findley: Yeah, that's right.

DePue: Well, tell me about then hearing about the atomic bomb: the first one at Hiroshima on the sixth, and then Nagasaki on the ninth of August.

Findley: Well, frankly, we were all relieved and grateful. I think that was true of everybody. We didn't really comprehend the devastation caused, because we didn't have any details about how close to surrender they were, anyway. We were very, very much thankful, no doubt about it.

DePue: When you first heard the news, did you even comprehend what an atomic bomb was?

Findley: No, but I did when I got to Nagasaki.

DePue: Tell me about that experience.

Findley: Well, my buddy…What was his name? I can point him out in the picture here. (laughs) He and I chummed around a lot together. I had a jeep, so we headed for Nagasaki within days after we landed. By the time we got to the site, the site had been cleaned. The Japanese have some special talent at organization and discipline. There were no bodies around. There was just a great, vast, empty area that had nothing bigger than my fist, except for a few twisted I-beams. It made me realize that we were lucky we had the bomb, instead of the other guy. And I think the Nazis were pretty close. I think they were close to having one. We heaved a sigh of relief. But we went in, as scheduled, to Sasebo Naval Base on Kyushu Island, one of the main islands, and we occupied, for our barracks, the site where the training camp for Japanese sailors, who were much the same that we were, construction battalion type. We noticed the difference in plumbing in the restrooms. (both laugh) [No seat. Just a hole in the floor.]

DePue: Between the officers' and the enlisted restrooms?

Findley: Well, no, for all of us. We were all in the same boat, the same boat. (both laugh)

DePue: I assume that Lucille is not with you now, once you got to the occupation duties in Japan.

Findley: Oh, that's right.

DePue: What had been the discussion before the two of you left Guam about your future together?

Findley: Well, before I left Japan, the commanding officer of the battalion told me that he could arrange for me to stay in Japan and China for a while and browse around and see the place. I told him, "No, I'd rather get back." Of course, Lucille was the main magnet, plus my mother.

DePue: When you were still on Guam together, had you proposed to her?

Findley: (pause) Oh, I'm sure I had. (both laugh) I can't cite a day or an hour.

DePue: There clearly was some understanding between the two of you, though.

Findley: Yeah, that's right. We were planning to get married. I bought a ring at Olathe, Kansas. There was a naval station there…still is, I believe. A simple diamond ring.

DePue: I want to finish off with just a couple questions about your impressions of your occupation duty in Japan.

DePue: What was your impression, once you got to Japan and Sasebo, in terms of the kind of reception you would have received, had you had to fight your way there?

Findley: The base was interior on a small, little inlet, and the hillsides were just covered with armaments, ready to go. We would have been under unmerciful fire. We would have had trouble unloading the ship and having anything to unload. My hunch is, we wouldn't have landed. We would have been destroyed.

DePue: Did you see an awful lot of devastation, once you did get to occupation duty?

Findley: Oh, yes. The Naval base had been attacked, of course. I think I just took that one trip into the countryside to see Nagasaki, but I saw a lot of effects of the bombing, fire bombing. We had set some big cities ablaze.

DePue: I know that both Nagasaki and Hiroshima, they kind of had to deliberately not firebomb those, so that they had an appropriate target for the atomic bombs.

Findley: Nagasaki was not a military site, no arms industry, so far as I know. It was just a big city, and that's why they obliterated it.

DePue: Now, before you got there, you had undoubtedly had a strong impression of the Japanese soldier and how they would resist. What was your impression of the Japanese people, once you got there?

Findley: Well, by then, we'd had experiences with several of the Japanese on Guam, and frankly, we felt…pretty much, we felt sorry for them. We didn't see the vengeful beasts that had been portrayed. I'm sure there were a lot of kamikaze types, a lot of obedience to the emperor. My belief is that the government that MacArthur established could not have been better. It was truly outstanding. And I think the consideration we gave to the emperor's life probably tempered some of the outrage of the Japanese.

DePue: Did you ever feel threatened or at danger by the Japanese people?

Findley: No, no.

DePue: No?

Findley: Never, but I was never around population centers in Japan.

DePue: When did you return to the United States? Was that in 1946?

Findley: Well, '46, we were married in January, so I left Japan…just a guess, it must have been October or something like that.

DePue: Just one more question for you, then. You've talked at length about your military, your combat experiences. You didn't really see a lot of direct combat. Lucille apparently got closer to the beast than you did. But what did you conclude? What were your feelings about the experience and how it changed you?

Findley: I concluded that war was about the most uncivilized thing that we had ever engaged in. I couldn't see how it could be justified. I even had some doubts about whether our entry into the war was a good thing. I believe today that it was essential. One thing that really, really impressed me was meeting a man who had been in a German P.O.W. camp, who talked to one of the German soldiers and learned that he had been trained already to take part in the occupation of the eastern seaboard of the U.S., because he was fully informed on the geography of part of Connecticut. He knew exactly what the names were or what the rivers were. Here, before Hitler had any real shot at defeating Britain, he was thinking ahead of America. That really puzzled me, that the Germans would be that thoughtful and detailed in planning ahead,

because this guy didn't make it up out of thin air. He knew the facts of that particular spot where he would be expected to be in charge. It made me realize that the war was needed.

DePue: That's probably a good place for us to stop today. We've talked for close to two-and-a-half hours here.

Findley: I'm pleased that my voice held out, because everything about me is falling apart. (both laugh)

DePue: Well, from my perspective, you're doing just great. So, we will stop today, and pick this up and talk about your career getting into journalism and then politics, the next time we meet. Thank you very much, Congressman.

Findley: Thank you.

(end of interview session #1)