

**National Museum of the Pacific War**

**Center for Pacific War Studies  
Oral History Program**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview with**

**Mr. Arthur O. Schott**

**Quartermaster  
United States Army**

**Date of Interview: April 4, 2003**

**National Museum of the Pacific War  
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**Interview with  
Mr. Arthur O. Schott**

**Mr. Nichols:** This is Chuck Nichols for the National Museum of the Pacific War. Today is April 4, 2003. I am interviewing Mr. Arthur O. Schott who served in the Pacific. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Mr. Schott, would you tell us when and where you were born?

**Mr. Schott:** I was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on July 9, 1918.

**Mr. Nichols:** Were your parents from there?

**Mr. Schott:** My parents were both native New Orleanians.

**Mr. Nichols:** How about brothers and sisters?

**Mr. Schott:** I have five brothers and one sister.

**Mr. Nichols:** And one wife?

**Mr. Schott:** And one wife.

**Mr. Nichols:** How many kids?

**Mr. Schott:** I have seven sons, no daughters, but I have six daughters-in-law. I have seven grandsons and six granddaughters.

**Mr. Nichols:** Do they all live in the New Orleans area?

**Mr. Schott:** They live in different places. One of my daughters-in-law lives in this area in Austin, Texas. One son lives in Dumfries, Virginia, right outside of Washington. He's an FBI agent. I have another one who lives on the outskirts of New Orleans,

in Mandeville, Louisiana and another one who lives in the vicinity of Metairie, Louisiana.

**Mr. Nichols:** They are relatively scattered around.

**Mr. Schott:** That's right.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you attend school in New Orleans?

**Mr. Schott:** I attended school in New Orleans, grammar school \_\_\_\_\_ grammar school in New Orleans, Our Lady of Lourdes School and then from there I went to Jesuit High School. From there I went to school at night. I went to work in the meatpacking business, the family business. From there I went to night school and during that time, the war came along and I was drafted into the Army in 1942.

**Mr. Nichols:** Do you recall where you were when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor?

**Mr. Schott:** I was at my home in New Orleans doing some paperwork, researching baseball records at the time and it was on the radio. My mother and father had been out somewhere and they came in and told me we were at war with Japan. I remember that just like yesterday.

**Mr. Nichols:** And they drafted you before you had a chance to raise your hand and say "I do."

**Mr. Schott:** They drafted me. I was in the draft. At that time, you were supposed to serve one year \_\_\_\_\_ 1944 peacetime draft but that didn't come about because they had to take them in sooner. I was drafted one month, actually I was drafted on January 27, 1942, which was just a month and a few days after Pearl Harbor. I went to a place called Camp Beauregard, Louisiana where I was issued uniforms and so forth and sworn into the service

and from there I went to Fort Francis E. Warren about 20 miles outside of Cheyenne, Wyoming. That was quartermaster training.

**Mr. Nichols:** Should have been a shock going from cozy New Orleans to Francis E. Warren.

**Mr. Schott:** Absolutely. From where the lowest temperature ever recorded in New Orleans went back to the 1890s when the temperature was only about 10 or 12 degrees, I found out in Wyoming it got to be 27 below zero. I stayed there 3 months.

**Mr. Nichols:** What kind of training did they give you?

**Mr. Schott:** Basically I went up there and they classified me as a clerk. I was in the wholesale meatpacking business so they put me in what they called refrigeration school. What it was, was mainly how to store meats at the proper temperature. We didn't have to worry about that up there. It was so cold, we didn't even need any storage.

**Mr. Nichols:** You didn't have basic training up there?

**Mr. Schott:** Basic training, of course. That was the specialized part. The rest would be normal basic training, how to march, firing range...

**Mr. Nichols:** A lot of KP?

**Mr. Schott:** KP, the whole works, yes sir. I remember that just like yesterday. I was there 3 months.

**Mr. Nichols:** What were the living conditions like up there?

**Mr. Schott:** The living conditions were not too bad because we had steam-heated barracks and I had duty to shovel coal into the furnaces to keep the barracks warm from time to time. Everybody did that. It wasn't too bad. There were about 250 fellow soldiers living in one barracks. They came from all over the country. Even one or two of them were from Alaska which was then a possession. I got to know people

from every area, a cross-section of humanity because some of them were

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**Mr. Nichols:** How was the chow?

**Mr. Schott:** Well it was not like eating steaks at Antoine's or anything like that.

**Mr. Nichols:** No Cajun cooking?

**Mr. Schott:** That's right. But it kept us going.

**Mr. Nichols:** Where did you go from there?

**Mr. Schott:** I left on Palm Sunday 1942, three months after I got there. I was sent to San Antonio, Texas, Fort Sam Houston where I was given an assignment to go to the Third Army Headquarters which was located in \_\_\_\_\_ San Antonio. It was like having an office job, really, because we were already in camp and we took buses down to do the work we had to do. I became a staff sergeant and did the typing and anything associated with statistics. I was in the statistics and logistics department at one time. I was in the administration for a variety of things. I stayed there one year.

**Mr. Nichols:** Then you received an overseas assignment?

**Mr. Schott:** I received an overseas assignment. I went from San Antonio to Camp Stoneman, California right outside of San Francisco. From there I was shipped overseas and it took us 30 days to go from San Francisco to Brisbane, Australia. I stayed there for three months. From there I went to New Guinea.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you go on a liberty ship?

**Mr. Schott:** I went on a ....

**Mr. Nichols:** PTA?

**Mr. Schott:** I don't recall but it was a revised cruise ship that took about 5,000 soldiers. As I've told people from time to time, we didn't need an escort, because we went faster than a submarine. It took 17 days to go from San Francisco to Brisbane, Australia, about an 8,000 mile trip as the crow flies.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you encounter any submarines?

**Mr. Schott:** We had a submarine scare. They had notified us that it was out there, do some zigzagging which they did, so maybe we would have gotten there sooner, I don't know, but nothing came out of it, thank God, but that's \_\_\_\_\_.

**Mr. Nichols:** No aircraft?

**Mr. Schott:** No aircraft, not at all.

**Mr. Nichols:** When you got to Brisbane, what did they have you doing?

**Mr. Schott:** When we got to Brisbane, we had formed before we left the States another army. That was the Sixth Army Headquarters which was very prominent in the Pacific under Douglas MacArthur. Actually the Sixth Army Headquarters was commanded by General Walter Krueger under MacArthur.

**Mr. Nichols:** He was MacArthur's aide or second-in-command?

**Mr. Schott:** He was directly responsible to MacArthur from the Sixth Army and the Tenth Corps and others that were there. I did the same type of work, clerical work. We worked day and night, unbelievable hours. Days of the week meant nothing. Temperature while I was in New Guinea a whole year, all year--same temperature. And then there was \_\_\_\_\_, malaria and all that kind of stuff. We had to take special medication.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you go to New Guinea from Australia?

**Mr. Schott:** I went from Australia to Port Moresby, New Guinea from Brisbane, Australia. I went to about 4 or 5 places in New Guinea from time to time. I did have a few times when we had some scares of bombing and so forth but nothing ever came close to us in that particular time. After I was there a whole year, they sent us to the Philippines. We landed in Tacloban Harbor, which is right out of the town of Tacloban. I never could understand why they left us on the ship for about 4 or 5 days. We got there we were on about D+8 or something after they secured the basic part of the islands and so what happened was the Japanese planes were bombing us all the time. One night it hit the other end of the ship that I was on and \_\_\_\_\_ it. Personnel, everything, were killed. I went off the other side with the ones that were on my side and went down the ropes and right close by, we were about a mile off the shore, there were Navy patrol boats that came along and picked us up and took us in. That's as close as I came to any real fighting.

**Mr. Nichols:** You didn't have any encounters with Japanese on New Guinea?

**Mr. Schott:** No, none on New Guinea.

**Mr. Nichols:** We had secured it by then.

**Mr. Schott:** Exactly. But in the Philippines, it was a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ when we got on there. Dead Japanese and everything else. When we got actually onto the battlefield which was then secured, about maybe 10-12 days after the actual \_\_\_\_.

**Mr. Nichols:** What kind of firearms and other equipment did they have you carrying?

**Mr. Schott:** We carried the Springfield rifle, as I remember.

**Mr. Nichols:** 03?

**Mr. Schott:** Built in '03.

**Mr. Nichols:** Regular old canteen?

**Mr. Schott:** Canteen, sure. The usual things. That's right.

**Mr. Nichols:** I guess unlike the combat troops, you didn't carry a pack with clean clothes and all of that?

**Mr. Schott:** No, nothing like that.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you have to wear those leggings that everybody hated?

**Mr. Schott:** Wore leggings, we surely did.

**Mr. Nichols:** You didn't take them off to make yourself more comfortable?

**Mr. Schott:** Sometimes, maybe, but most of the time we left them on.

**Mr. Nichols:** I've heard that was one of the things that soldiers and marines discarded because they would sweat so badly.

**Mr. Schott:** Well, absolutely yes, especially in the islands as you said.

**Mr. Nichols:** They would collect pockets of water.

**Mr. Schott:** From there, I went right on shore. I was there from...that happened from maybe November or something of 1944 and I stayed there until after Christmas in 1945. By that time the troops had moved and we were then moved from Tacloban in the Philippines to Manila. I saw the siege of Manila after they had leveled it. It looked like a city that used to be called atomic \_\_\_\_\_. You'd see remnants of the Japanese. You'd see a leg over here. It was miserable there.

**Mr. Nichols:** Manila was on the island of Luzon.

**Mr. Schott:** The largest island in the Philippines, Luzon. Manila was a part of that.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you have any contact with American prisoners?

**Mr. Schott:** I never had any contact with American prisoners during that time. I stayed there until about the early part of 1945 and then they told us they were going to give the people who had served so much time, we had secured the Philippines by that time,



that they would give the service people who had served enough time, start rotating, letting them go back to the States and have a 45-day leave. Then we were supposed to come back and prepare for the invasion of Japan. That was our understanding of what was going to happen but it all worked out better, much to our advantage really. Myself and about seven other people in the organization I was in with the same more-or-less experience or time were given this opportunity to go. So we went home, but before we got home, we got on the ship which was going to take us back. It took us 30 days to go from Manila to San Francisco on the ship. So what happened was, the day that we were leaving they made the announcement that Franklin D. Roosevelt had died. So we got on the ship and had been at sea five days when word came over the wireless that the Germans had surrendered. I think it was May 5 as I remember. The Germans had surrendered so the war with Germany was over and it was at that moment they had all kind of news coming in that we were going to concentrate then on only Japan. As far as going back, when I got there, we didn't have to go back because I had my points, you add up all the points, overseas time and some people were married. I wasn't married then, I didn't have any dependents but myself but that in a nutshell ended my army career because when I got back, I was at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, that was my temporary duty as a reservist, I went to Camp Shelby which is close to New Orleans. I spent three months in Camp Shelby at a separation center doing clerical work for them there and I got out on, the war with Japan ended on August 15, 1945 and on August 22, one week later, I was discharged. I spent one week in the peacetime army and 3 years and about 7 months in the army as a quartermaster.

**Mr. Nichols:** You mentioned on your biography here that you were in “graves registration.”  
What would this entail?

**Mr. Schott:** Yes, graves registration was a rather morbid deal. We had to, on occasion, get a driver and we’d have to pick up a body or something like that or they’d have bodies flown in. I didn’t do the actual burials, but we had to keep a record of all the people. In the army, in the quartermaster, in graves registration, there was nothing separating anybody, whether you were a general or a private, if you died you were buried and we kept the records, of course, by ourselves, no computers-- name of the person on the right side, name of the person on the left side, what the rank was that you would write in there. The other thing was we had to keep an inventory of everything that came off of the bodies that came in. Some men had letters on them, some had rosaries, medals, dog-tags, whatever, we had to make a list of all that.

**Mr. Nichols:** You did this in the Philippines?

**Mr. Schott:** That was in the Philippines.

**Mr. Nichols:** In Manila?

**Mr. Schott:** In Manila. That’s correct.

**Mr. Nichols:** What were your living conditions like? I know you didn’t live in a mansion.

**Mr. Schott:** In Manila, the way we were situated over there wasn’t too bad. We slept in tents  
\_\_\_\_\_ as I remember.

**Mr. Nichols:** Where did you stay when you were on New Guinea?

**Mr. Schott:** On New Guinea, we had tents, the same situation. We moved around so much on New Guinea, we didn’t how long we were going to be in a place. We never did really run out of food, we always had some food. It wasn’t the best.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you have a lot of k-rations? Did you have a chow line?

**Mr. Schott:** We had k-rations. We had a chow line. We had them all.

**Mr. Nichols:** What kind of food did they serve you in the chow line? I know what k-rations had.

**Mr. Schott:** In the chow line, we had beans and rice and things like that. In Australia they gave us mutton. I like lamb chops and things like that, but when you start eating, it's mutton.

**Mr. Nichols:** How about Spam? I always ask about Spam.

**Mr. Schott:** Spam is just glorified ham. It wasn't bad. I was in the meat business and I knew meat pretty well at that time. Spam is ok. It's not bad.

**Mr. Nichols:** You weren't too reluctant to eat it like some people were?

**Mr. Schott:** No, I wasn't reluctant to eat it.

**Mr. Nichols:** After you got back home...

**Mr. Schott:** After I got back home, I went into the family meatpacking business. I worked a total of 49 years in the meatpacking business. Two years after I got home, I met my wife. We've been married 54 years.

**Mr. Nichols:** You've had a long relationship then. A few ups and downs, I suppose, like everybody that's been married that long has had?

**Mr. Schott:** Lena could tell about that. (laughter)

**Mr. Nichols:** You didn't stay in the army reserve?

**Mr. Schott:** Oh no. I had more or less an opportunity to apply for OCS or to take Warrant Officer but I didn't volunteer for that. I said "the only thing I want out of this army is out." Some people stayed. One of my friends was called back during the

Korean War which was right after that. I made up my mind, I was never to be a military man.

**Mr. Nichols:** Were you drafted with any of your buddies? Did you go through training with any of them?

**Mr. Schott:** No, a lot of my buddies were drafted but we all went to different places. When I got there, there was a whole bunch of us that went to Wyoming, but as soon as we got there, we were separated. When I got to San Antonio, there wasn't one person from New Orleans with me at that time.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you meet any special people during your career that you stay in contact with?

**Mr. Schott:** Oh yes, for a long time. I met plenty of people. I could tell a lot of stories about that. I kept in touch with them until some of them, just through the course of time, drifted apart. We came from all over.

**Mrs. Schott:** (inaudible)

**Mr. Schott:** Yes. Two of my brothers were in the service. One of them was shot down at the \_\_\_\_\_ Sea, but they rescued him and he recovered. I believe he had been on 24 missions \_\_\_\_\_ Pacific \_\_\_\_\_

**Mr. Nichols:** Was he in B-17s?

**Mr. Schott:** I think it was a B-24 but I couldn't say for sure.

**Mr. Nichols:** How about your other brother?

**Mr. Schott:** My other brother was an ensign in the Navy. He was in the European theater and also in the Pacific theater more-or-less after. He was in longer than I was. He went to Hawaii when they were having some kind of a test out there for the atom bomb after it was all over.

**Mr. Nichols:** On Bikini Atoll.

**Mr. Schott:** That's right. He's a priest now.

**Mr. Nichols:** They had to blow up a lot of our old ships. Instead of turning them into scrap, they used them for targets. Any amusing things happen during your career in the army that you can tell us about?

**Mr. Schott:** They are hard to recall.

**Mrs. Schott:** (inaudible)

**Mr. Schott:** Oh, that's an interesting thing. In the army, periodically you've got to be checked up and so forth whether you like it or not. So they told me I had a dental appointment one day. At the time \_\_\_\_\_ so I reported to the sergeant and said "I'm here to see a dentist." So the dentist came out and said "So you're from Louisiana." I said "Yes." He said "I'm from Louisiana too" and he told me some place right outside New Orleans, I forget where it was, but it was close by. "Would you like to have some of the good old \_\_\_\_\_ right now?" "I sure would." So after he took care of my teeth, the sergeant gave me a \_\_\_\_\_ and said "You got better treatment than the generals get." (laughter)

**Mr. Nichols:** It's a good thing you were a fellow Louisianan or you might not have got that treatment.

**Mr. Schott:** It's \_\_\_\_\_.

**Mr. Nichols:** It sounds like your career in the army was relatively uneventful by some standards.

**Mr. Schott:** I was very fortunate that I went through everything without any problems. I knew some fellows that were killed. Some died accidentally. I never got malaria or anything. Everybody worried about getting malaria but I never had any problem with that. I used to worry about going to where I never saw any temperature

below 33 degrees in the wintertime to a place where it was 20 below 0. I said “man I’m going to get pneumonia or something.” I stayed there three months and I never even got a cold. I saw fellows that came from New York and Boston and lived where it was much colder and they came down with flu and everything else. I’d say that was one of the things that I was real fortunate in that area.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you have to take atabrine?

**Mr. Schott:** Under supervision.

**Mr. Nichols:** Turned you yellow?

**Mr. Schott:** It did turn you yellow. I never did lose my complexion but I know some people that were fair-skinned. I remember we had a chaplain, he was a priest who had been over there a while and he was yellow. They said it was from taking atabrine.

**Mr. Nichols:** A lot of the military were trying to toss those tablets. That’s why they had supervised dosages of it.

**Mr. Schott:** That’s right.

**Mr. Nichols:** After you got out of the military, did you go back to school of any kind?

**Mr. Schott:** I did go back to school. I took a Dale Carnegie course in public speaking.

**Mr. Nichols:** I know a lot of them used the GI Bill and went back.

**Mr. Schott:** I never did that. I went right back to the meatpacking business. Maybe I should have stayed and taken advantage of it. It would have been better for my \_\_\_\_\_. I have a great hobby. I’ll just tell you quickly about it. I’m a baseball historian. I’ve followed baseball for 70 years and I’ve written a column and all kinds of things about baseball. That kept me very busy. She’s been a little bit uncomfortable with some of the records I keep. They are so dense in the house that we hardly have room to move around. Well, I guess that about covers it.

**Mr. Nichols:** If that is all you have to offer, that's fine. We appreciate everything we can get. I don't know if your wife has anything to add here or not. If she does, put a couple cents worth in here, that'll be fine too.

**Mrs. Schott:** \_\_\_\_\_ as you say, we have ups and downs, but we've managed through it all. Of course every time I'd have a baby, he'd say "another boy-- that's another \_\_\_\_\_" That's what I wound up with. I have wonderful daughters-in-law and granddaughters so that's been just fine. This is my daughter-in-law and my son.

**Mr. Nichols:** What were you doing during the war?

**Mrs. Schott:** I was in school because there are nine years between us. He was 27 when I met him, and I was 18 so we courted for a while. I finished college and that's when we decided to get married.

**Mr. Nichols:** So when the war started, you were just a mere child.

**Mrs. Schott:** I was in high school.

**Mr. Nichols:** Do you remember scrap drives?

**Mrs. Schott:** I remember rationing, red coupons, gasoline rationing and all of that.

**Mr. Nichols:** Food rationing? Tokens?

**Mrs. Schott:** Yes, we had to use those for the meat or the butter, so we hardly ever ate butter. We ate margarine. Yes, I remember all that. Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ my aunt who wanted to get some extra coupons for gasoline. She had a little house in Long Beach, Mississippi so she raised a Victory Garden and she shared those coupons with my mother who needed extra gasoline \_\_\_\_\_ They called it a Victory Garden. She'd raise some of the vegetables and so forth.

**Mr. Nichols:** Did you have any siblings in the service?

**Mrs. Schott:** My brother is younger than I am so he wasn't.

**Mr. Nichols:** We appreciate you sitting here with us today.

**Mr. Schott:** I'd like to ask you a question. Is there any chance I can get a copy of this tape?  
I'd be happy to pay for it.

**Mr. Nichols:** A copy of the tape. I think we can probably arrange that. We'll have to send it to you. We're going to transcribe the tape to paper and we're going to send you a copy of the transcription for you to correct, add comments to, make changes to and send back to us. Then we'll put it in final form after you've corrected it and send you a couple of copies for yourself. So maybe that will be just as good as a tape.

**Mr. Schott:** That'll be as good as a tape.

**Mrs. Schott:** One thing I realize that you didn't say about the ship that you were on that got hit, you didn't say that it was a kamikaze.

**Mr. Schott:** I didn't say that? It was a kamikaze. Planes \_\_\_\_\_ ship

**Mr. Nichols:** Was this the ship that you were going to, this wasn't the one you were going to Australia on?

**Mr. Schott:** This was the ship going from New Guinea to Tacloban in the Philippines. Tacloban was the stop before Manila.

**Mr. Nichols:** Was this another modified cruise ship?

**Mr. Schott:** What do you call them? A PT?

(tape ends)

**PROOF**

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