

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

***Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas***

***Interview with Alfred Schmitz
U.S. Navy, USS La Prade***

Interview With Alfred Schmitz

Today is June the twelfth, 2002. My name is Floyd Cox, I'm a volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War. We're here at the Nimitz Hotel this morning and we're going to interview Mr. Alfred Schmitz concerning his experiences during World War II.

Mr. Cox: To start off with, Alfred, I want to thank you for taking the time to come over to tell us your story. Let's talk a little bit about your background. Where you were born, when you were born, where you went to school, and a little bit about your family.

Mr. Schmitz: I was born August the twenty-eighth, 1925. I was born at Austin, Texas. I went to school at the Austin High School, and then after that I worked as a welder and a radiator repairman in Austin, and I have a family now. I've had a family, my wife Dave and myself. I have three children, one son and two daughters. My son is 43 going on forty-four, and I have a daughter that's in her fifties, both daughters in their fifties now. I have sixteen, fifteen grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Mr. Cox: Oh, my goodness.

Mr. Schmitz: And we seem to have a good relation amongst all of us.

Mr. Cox: Good. Well, when you were working in the welding shop, can you recall the day or the time that you heard about Pearl Harbor happening? What were you doing that day, do you remember.

Mr. Schmitz: Well that was actually before I was working at the welding shop, I was younger than. At that particular day I was home and my father was a brick and stone mason like I was. We heard that over the radio that particular day, that was on Sunday. And we all didn't know what was going on, but he was already working for the government building different things when it started. He worked down in _____ at the Camp Swift big base, one of the largest bases, training bases, they had. That was for that mountain division in World War II. And then he worked on several other places, in Fort Hood and up at Tyler at some place up there. He just stayed busy working at different government jobs altogether because they needed the men to work and of course he was getting up in age, too.

Mr. Cox: So you were in high school, I guess you were 16, as I calculate, you were about 16 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor then, 1941.

Mr. Schmitz: Forty-one, I imagine, yeah . . .

Mr. Cox: Yeah, 16. So you got out of , I guess you would graduate from high school and then you went work at the welding shop for awhile?

Mr. Schmitz: I didn't graduate quite from high school. It was about that time they had changed the

need to go to school in eleven years, then they changed it to twelve. Well, at that time I had enough credits, more than enough credits, to get out of school, and I didn't want to go that extra years, but they wouldn't give me my graduation diploma. So I just went to work. In them times it was pretty hard still, so I went to work at the welding and radiator works, and one of the reasons I stayed out, like I say, was on account of I was doing work for the Corps of Engineers at the time, and I got a draft notice and the people that owned the business wanted me to stay for six months, they'd get me a deferment, which they did. And of course my mother and father wanted the same thing.

When that six months was over I said that's it, I'm going in. So I went in. I was actually about three months from being nineteen.

Mr. Cox: Now did you, were you sworn in San Antonio or Austin?

Mr. Schmitz: I was sworn in in San Antonio, that's where all of the people in that area there went to, to be checked out.

Mr. Cox: An induction center.

Mr. Schmitz: Yes. And actually you had no request for what service you wanted to go to, it was whatever they figured out, to where you went. And . . .

Mr. Cox: And they figured that you were good for the Navy.

Mr. Schmitz: Yeah.

Mr. Cox: Once you were inducted, sworn in, how did you, where did you go and how did you get there?

Mr. Schmitz: Took the train to San Diego, California at the Naval Training Base there.

Mr. Cox: You went by troop train?

Mr. Schmitz: Yes.

Mr. Cox: It was all GIs on the train?

Mr. Schmitz: Yes. After I was there I spent eighteen days in boot camp, that's all they give me.

Mr. Cox: Wow.

Mr. Schmitz: And that was just enough to get shots. After that I was lucky enough to go to the Engineering School for four months. And I came out a fireman then. So I got five days

off before I was taken over to the Marines base and then from there I was put aboard ship as a fireman.

Mr. Cox: What was your first ship assignment?

Mr. Schmitz: At first when I went aboard they didn't have it all straightened out, said that I was in the galley washing the trays. For about half a day. When they took off, about the second day I was sick. I was a little seasick. But it didn't last but a day.

Mr. Cox: What ship was this?

Mr. Schmitz: That was the *SS La Prade*, DE-409. She was a five-inch, at first three-inch guns only, then five-inch. Then we went to Hawaii, just progressed from there. They put us with, what's his name, the big admiral with the big task force . . .

Mr. Cox: Wasn't Nimitz?

Mr. Schmitz: Halsey.

Mr. Cox: Halsey. You went with Halsey.

Mr. Schmitz: And when we sailed out with them from Hawaii, in about six hours we couldn't see them. They left us. We weren't fast enough. So they sent us back. And from there we went to other different things.

Mr. Cox: This was what, 1944?

Mr. Schmitz: Yes.

Mr. Cox: Okay. And, well, did you ever catch up with Halsey's fleet?

Mr. Schmitz: No, no (chuckles). They didn't stop. They kept going. They told us to go home.

Mr. Cox: Oh, did they?

Mr. Schmitz: Yes.

Mr. Cox: So what did you do, turn around and go back to Hawaii?

Mr. Schmitz: Yes, yes. And from there, according to my records, what I've got from the ship, we went to Palau, and was involved down there then. According to what records I've got of it, we weren't there, we had no battle stars from there. And when they finally, or this situation that I'm going to tell you about, they were getting ready for the invasion of Okinawa. And about two months or so before that, they sent the ship I was on and four

others, three DDs, destroyers, and two DEs, and a giant tanker, one of the invasion type tankers, and we set out to sea. We never did find out what our orders were, we were sent up there for two months. Only thing I could figure, we was up there trying to see how far we could go before they found us. Finally, when we came back, why it took us a day to get back to the harbor, the invasion forces had already been brought in, just one ship after another.

Mr. Cox: Now this was, the invasion force was setting off for what island at this time?

Mr. Schmitz: The Marshall Islands. This was where we came in. We were out of everything, so we went into the harbor. These were all Coral Sea harbors, they're natural harbors. We presumed that they had submarine nets there in case something was coming in. But somehow or another some of these Japanese two-man submarines had gotten in there. They were laying on the bottom in the harbor. Well, luckily when we came in, of course, I was on the boiler still running, we had everything running, all five ships—zonar, radar, everything, never shut off. Well, we never did, until we got in and settled in. And when we came in, why, I was getting ready to shut down and go on _____, but they didn't drop any anchors. Then all at once, we called it the Black Marine, the big flag they put up when they got a submarine detected, the siren went off for that particular call. The next thing I knew we was getting bounced in and out of the water with ashcans all around us. They _____ the submarines a little harder and _____ all around, it's a wonder they hadn't killed each other. But those captains would fight over something like that.

Mr. Cox: You said "ashcans," you mean depth charges.

Mr. Schmitz: Depth charges, yes. And that didn't go on for a long period of time, but of course, us in the fire rooms didn't know what was going on. What I'm doing is down there trying to keep changing speed so they could maneuver around each other. But when it was over with, why, we were told by our ship that six of the submarines that were in there were on the bottom. They had one, well, it took so long, they had one that had got up under a cargo vessel and they couldn't get rid of him. So finally they give the cargo vessel, they fired up, they were just sitting there on auxiliary like we were. They fired up to get enough speed to move and move quick and get out of the way, and that's what they did, and that's when they took it there. So that's just about the extent of what I know what went on. I don't know, which ship sunk them or what, you know. It was just so much ammunition on the bottom, just anybody could of got hit by now.

Mr. Cox: Did any of those submarines broach before they went down for the last time?

Mr. Schmitz: No.

Mr. Cox: They just think they got them all on the bottom there.

Mr. Schmitz: Yeah. What the zonar showed, why, they showed that there weren't any there. Like I say, there was nothing ever said about it, we didn't think about it, you know. Until near a year or so ago, they called in from here wanting to know about a battle with some submarines over there in the Marshall Islands. And I presume they was asking for people that had actually been involved in it. And that's why I'm here. So like I say, there's a lot of things that weren't told because it wasn't all that important enough. But now a lot of people like to have the particulars of what happened. Some were serious, and some were comical, and some weren't.

Mr. Cox: Speaking of comical, can you recall anything that happened while you were in the service that even, after all this time, you recall that was really something that was comic?

Mr. Schmitz: After the war was over we was coming back from Japan, and we got tied in that big typhoon, 140 miles an hour.

Mr. Cox: Oh, you were in that typhoon.

Mr. Schmitz: Yes, sir. And we finally come through, we come right through the middle of it, in the eye. First time I ever seen the eye of one, and that's beautiful, the eye. Then we went out the other side. By the time we got to Okinawa we tried to get a _____ but she could see the white lines on her and we didn't have nothing big enough to tow her, so we went. We hadn't had any mail for three or four months. We stopped there to get mail, and they said the whale boat, they said one of these men went in and asked about the mail, and "Yeah," he said, "it's here somewhere. It's up around the island, just go up there and look for it." (Both laugh.)

But another real instance of, I kinda get a chuckle out of it, it wasn't real funny, but the *USS Houston*, it was up around the Philippines, nine torpedoes there. We got up to the _____ let's make a deal with, we didn't have nothing that big up there to do anything with. We'd had to go into dry dock one time but they were too small. So they took two seagoing tugs and a tanker and hooked one of the seagoing tugs onto the *Houston*, she was listing about twelve degrees and there was about 300 people below decks dead, they couldn't open her up. So we headed out with her. Every twenty-four hours, why, they'd change tugs and refuel one with this big tanker, and us too. But we were within 150 miles of Australia with her where they had something big enough to take her on. Put her on there. But on the way down there, about a day before we got there, one Japanese kamikaze come up and this tug was towing back. We were forced to set in battle position when we were quite a ways off from them. He skipped on to the side to get them, the big ship, and he turned and flew forward, then turned around and come back, to get another run at her and dive in there, and this little tug had one 16 mm. and shot him down. (Both laugh.) Like I say, the only battle positions were that we shot at him

but, you know, we were looking for more to come over. It took me as kinda comical, with that much fire power on the ground, one little gun . . .

Mr. Cox: Yeah, one little 16 mm. Then, your course of being on the ship, was the ship involved in any sea battles that you recall?

Mr. Schmitz: Any sea battles. No, no. We had to run smoke screens, stuff like that, mostly for the bigger vessels.

Mr. Cox: And of course, you're down in the engine room, you didn't get to see anything going on, did you.

Mr. Schmitz: Well, in battle station I was a gunner on the twelve-incher.

Mr. Cox: Oh, you were.

Mr. Schmitz: Yes, and so . . .

Mr. Cox: That's when you went on duty down in the engine room.

Mr. Schmitz: No, if I was on duty they'd set the alarm off and somebody'd take my place.

Mr. Cox: Oh, okay. So that's the way it worked.

Mr. Schmitz: I had no intention of being a gunner like that, but that's what they called. The gunnery officer come down, not the officer but the big chief, he come down and said "I'm looking for somebody knows how to shoot a gun." Well, most of them were out of California there. I said "I been shooting one ever since I was six years old." So I got up on that gun, it was next to the bridge, so I got up there and I asked him, I said, "What's going on there, Chief?" He said, "Well, I just want to know before you ever strap yourself in there." He said, "I had to get a man off of this thing." And I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, one thing, he was out of California." And he said, "Another thing, when I told him to pull the trigger, he closed his eyes." (Both laugh.) He said, "So I eliminated him."

Mr. Cox: What was that, a twenty mm. that you were on?

Mr. Schmitz: Yeah.

Mr. Cox: Is it one like we've got over here in our museum? Did you happen to see the one over in the Bush Gallery?

Mr. Schmitz: We haven't been in there.

Mr. Cox: Oh, okay. Well, we've got one of those that has two barrels, you know, and a man on each side.

Mr. Schmitz: No, no. All I had was a loader and a man to change the barrel.

Mr. Cox: So it was basically a three-man crew then.

Mr. Schmitz: Yes. Because the bow gets pretty hot, near the bridge, I was going ahead and shooting as many shells as I could through my gun to see when it would jam. I shot 12 canisters of sixty canisters during an exam.

Mr. Cox: So roughly, after 720 shells through it, it . . .

Mr. Schmitz: Yeah. So I uncocked her. To uncock it you've got to pull it down and then your man on the side got to put the cocking bar on it, and then it's unloaded. And this old chief said, "I'd lay off that gun. I want to examine that barrel." I said, "You're out of your mind. That thing's got a loaded head on it." I said, "No, no way. Not with me." I'd already had them take the canister off, it was still left on it. I just told them to back off. And he told them others to take that round and knock that shell out. I said, "Don't tell them to do that, don't take it off. It's got a projector in it." So finally, after all this playing around, he's trying us. And he said, "Well, at least you knew what to do."

Mr. Cox: Oh, so it was a test.

Mr. Schmitz: Yeah, it was a test.

Mr. Cox: To see if you guys knew what was going . . .

Mr. Schmitz: Why, if that had been, what if that had been in battle condition?

Mr. Cox: Right.

Mr. Schmitz: If he actually hung around there and tried to knock that shell out. You'd blow the whole thing up, you know. But like I say, it's taken people that never shot, you know, you don't know what to do about it. Most of these kids, just like me, but like I say, I've hunted all my life and everything else.

Mr. Cox: Sure. There's a little difference between a shotgun and an antiaircraft gun, isn't there.

Mr. Schmitz: (Chuckles.)

Mr. Cox: But still they're guns, aren't they.

Mr. Schmitz: Yes, still they're guns.

- Mr. Cox:** That brings up something, an interesting question. When your gun got hot like that, how did they change the barrel? Did a guy put on asbestos gloves? Tell me how they, exactly how they did it.
- Mr. Schmitz:** At first thing you had to do is uncock the gun. That's my job, put the gun down, then take the cocking bar and put it on it and then let it back down. They got a little ridge, a half-moon ridge, it fits over that barrel. It's got gears in it, or they can turn it one and a half turns.
- Mr. Cox:** Oh, okay. So you didn't have _____ basically, you didn't have to unscrew it like a pipe.
- Mr. Schmitz:** No, no. They're quick change.
- Mr. Cox:** Oh, okay. And they would have asbestos gloves on, or . . .
- Mr. Schmitz:** Yes, on their hands.
- Mr. Cox:** They had heavy gloves on?
- Mr. Schmitz:** Yes. And it wouldn't surprise me about the guns, they had a little tube on the side ran down into the water, and when they take that barrel out they just throw it in there and that thing'd shoot steam way out there. And I thought it warped them barrels, but it don't.
- Mr. Cox:** That was gonna be my question.
- Mr. Schmitz:** No, it doesn't warp it.
- Mr. Cox:** So the steel was tempered to the effect so it wouldn't warp if you got it cold.
- Mr. Schmitz:** Yeah.
- Mr. Cox:** Well, that's interesting. Well, after you were there in the situation with the Japanese submarines, then what took place then? They were getting ready to hit Okinawa, the U.S. forces were, is that correct?
- Mr. Schmitz:** Yeah. While we were in that harbor, it was supposed to have been a safe harbor, what they call a safe harbor. Because it was a safe harbor, we weren't allowed in it because we would draw the kamikaze. So this was a safe harbor, supposedly. And we had gone in there for one thing, and that's to get supplies and everything . . .
- Mr. Cox:** Refit. Is that where you got refit?

Mr. Schmitz: Um-hum. And then when we did, why we got back into the invasion force and went to Okinawa.

Mr. Cox: Okay. And did you go into Okinawa with the invasion force?

Mr. Schmitz: I tell you, I say we did, yes, because we didn't get a battle star for it but we went in between the beach and the big wagons, for submarine protection while they bombarded. That was another big picture to see, we seen the three old battleships, the *Texas*, the *Arkansas*, and the *New York*, 1918, 1912, '13, when they was made. The *Texas* was the only one under power, she was by herself. The other two, they towed up there and just anchored because their engines was gone. So you had to run protection in-between them to keep anything from doing any more harm. They wasn't hit, they were just wore out, you know.

Mr. Cox: Yes, they were old ships.

Mr. Schmitz: Oh yeah. And like I say, in that Pacific year, you wouldn't see and I don't know what they had in the Atlantic. But we had just multitudes of them old 1918 tin cans in there.

Mr. Cox: Were these four stackers?

Mr. Schmitz: Yeah, four stackers and they got dumped over right there and many many men drowned in them things. Those things, you know, in World War I they went across the Atlantic. It was rough, but you didn't have the typhoons. And they had about six, seven hundred men on board each one of them things.

Mr. Cox: Well, now, when you were at Okinawa and you were patrolling back and forth, protecting the battleships, were you on battle station at that time?

Mr. Schmitz: No, not until we _____. After that, when they was sitting down around what they called _____ Beach or something there, and they were just lobbing stuff in there, well after that we were sent out, ten miles out, on what they called the picket line.

Mr. Cox: Oh, you were on a picket.

Mr. Schmitz: Yes. And we went back and forth, meet one here and go back and meet one here, just go back and forth. We weren't allowed anywhere near harbors or anything. So whenever you run low on fuel or supplies you called for another ship to come and you pulled out for three, four hours or so 'til we'd get fitted, and then you'd come back and took his place. Well, when we fell back, ours was gone, they done put him on the ground.

Mr. Cox: Oh, kamikazes got him?

Mr. Schmitz: Um-hum.

Mr. Cox: Yeah. Do you remember what ship that was?

Mr. Schmitz: No, it was a destroyer.

Mr. Cox: Did your ship come under attack by any kamikaze?

Mr. Schmitz: No, never did. Our sister ship did. But we never did. But . . .

Mr. Cox: That was rough duty on picket.

Mr. Schmitz: Yeah. And then after that, when they secured most of it, and that thing had 11 hidden harbors in it. There were a lot of them tin cans was in there, and some of them, one of them come out of there, this one gun shooting one _____, and he knocked down 20-some-odd Japanese planes.

Mr. Cox: Wow.

Mr. Schmitz: But, they put us out after that, run us in along the beaches, coming in within 15 hundred yards. See if we could make it. They had some old batteries there been shooting. And you're just trying to make them at you so you could radio in tell them where they're at.

Mr. Cox: Right. Basically, that must bothered you, you were running decoy.

Mr. Schmitz: So that was about the extent of it. After that, why, I went to Japan when the war was over there. Went into a little place called Sasibo and . . .

Mr. Cox: Oh yeah, we got a base there right now.

Mr. Schmitz: We took over the harbor there. And then when we, after that, they give us orders to come home. And this is something I never will forget. We went down to Nagasaki, that's where they put the atomic bomb. And we had seventeen empty bunks. And we went down and picked up seventeen Seabees. It was in there, and that was no time since they'd dropped that dang thing. And I told her before, she can verify this, that I often wondered what happened to them men because that radiation was hot as a firecracker in there. I couldn't see the town, it was up in a valley, but we never stopped, we just pulled up and kept running. And they had steel docks down there that were just, they weren't melted but they were hot, so hot they just buckled.

Mr. Cox: Yeah. But now were the Seabees, were they, as you recall, were they sent to Japan after the bomb was dropped, or . . .

Mr. Schmitz: Well, I didn't presume they was in there.

Mr. Cox: If they were there when the bomb was dropped . . .

Mr. Schmitz: I wouldn't think so. Not in Japan.

Mr. Cox: Well, I didn't know if they were POWs or not.

Mr. Schmitz: Oh no, no, they were construction crews. We had them go on board and the poor fellas stayed sick all the way back in when they went through that big hurricane.

Mr. Cox: Oh, I imagine.

Mr. Schmitz: So we got them in to Hawaii.

Mr. Cox: During the typhoon, were you down in the engine room all this time?

Mr. Schmitz: Oh yes. When we got into something like that, we run double crews there, for each position there's two men.

Mr. Cox: How did you hold on during something like that?

Mr. Schmitz: (Chuckles.) Very _____. (Both laugh.)

Mr. Cox: Well, I've heard that it's quite an experience. Many guys said they'd rather be in combat than go through something like that.

Mr. Schmitz: Those vessels on the sides weren't but five-eighths of an inch thick. Now, you can imagine, when those waves hit us on the broadside, it went down the side like somebody hitting with a sledge hammer. You couldn't sleep, you know, nothing. I tell you, those Seabees, them poor fellas, were suffering.

Mr. Cox: Yeah, not used to that kind of . . .

Mr. Schmitz: Oh man. They have to just smell something, and . . . (Both laugh.) Well, like I say, it was quite an experience. I had quite a number of fellas that I was going to town with as we got back in Honolulu.

Mr. Cox: Well, once you got through the typhoon you were on your way home, did you come straight to the United States, or did you stop in Hawaii?

Mr. Schmitz: We had to stop in Hawaii and re-oil her.

Mr. Cox: And then you came back in to, what, San Francisco, or San Diego?

Mr. Schmitz: San Diego. We went to the destroyer base where they decommissioned her.

Mr. Cox: Right. So you just served on one ship when you were . . .

Mr. Schmitz: Yes.

Mr. Cox: Do you go to any of your ship's reunions? Does your ship ever have reunions?

Mr. Schmitz: No, 99 per cent of them was from the upper end of the New York area and not into California. And there was _____ started by a little old man at one time, and about '50, about two little phases of it _____, just a little booklet. But after that I never heard of any of them. I only had one good friend of mine, _____, from Washington State, and then some from Massachusetts and places like that.

(unidentified woman in background): Where was it that they jumped off the cliff?

Mr. Schmitz: Guam.

Mr. Cox: Tell me about that.

Mr. Schmitz: Well, we weren't actually in Guam in the invasion there, but I had heard about it, and I'd heard about the Japanese telling all the people that lived in Okinawa, and Guam, were either Japanese or, I don't know what they call them, Guamese or something. Anyway, they told them that once the United States got in there and took the place, they was gonna rape all the women and kill the children. So what really happened was, when the United States got in there and they could see everything going to hell, why, they rushed to that bluff and just dove off into the harbor there and drowned. We pulled up in there when they was just floating everywhere.

Mr. Cox: Oh, so you actually saw the bodies of the natives that had committed suicide when you came into the bay. I imagine that's something you'll never forget.

Mr. Schmitz: Yeah. You see, that Guam is got several islands tied into it. Tinian is the one that the B-29 took off from with the bomb to Japan. It was pretty well tightened up around there for awhile on account of that bomb being in there. Well, there's lots of different things that went on there, things that I seen, that are actually just ordinary things, you know.

Mr. Cox: Once you got back to San Diego, did you get discharged right away, or . . .

Mr. Schmitz: No. At that time, World War II, they had so many men when the war was over, they just couldn't throw them out. You had to have so many points for months in, and combat duty, and stuff like that.

Mr. Cox: Right.

Mr. Schmitz: Well, I lacked about six points that was enough to get out, so it cost me an extra three or four months to get out.

Mr. Cox: What did you do during that time that you got off of active sea duty and you were in port, what was your job then?

Mr. Schmitz: We stayed aboard the ship and were decommissioning it. Well, there was nothing in the boiler room because she was sitting dead in the water. I worked in the machine shop and I had to go through and count every tool we had there, and what kind it was, and catalog it, and the same thing all over the ship, you know. And then after that, why they dismantled some of the guns and then some of them, they put this, a kind of netting they put over it and spray it, to keep it . . .

Mr. Cox: Mothball it.

Mr. Schmitz: Mothball it. Of course, I left there before it was finished, but we'd gotten along pretty well.

Mr. Cox: Once your time came up to get discharged, you got your discharge there in San Diego?

Mr. Schmitz: No, no, I got that in Houston, Texas. We were put on board a troop train and taken to Houston, Texas, and got the discharge there.

Mr. Cox: And then you went home. Were you glad to be back in Texas after all that time on the sea?

Mr. Schmitz: Well, it takes a little while to adjust to what's going on, you know.

Mr. Cox: Do you still have your sea legs?

Mr. Schmitz: I doubt it. (Both chuckle.) My brother wants me to come down to Port Aransas, he's fishing down there all the time. He's retired, and went down there. But I told him, I said "Well, I'll have to maybe get my sea legs and get some pills or something." He said, "I've got them pills," he said, "I've been down here three years and I still have to take 'em." (Both chuckle.)

Mr. Cox: Well, is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experiences, Alfred?

Mr. Schmitz: Well, not a whole lot, you know, there's just routine things. I was court-martialed once.

Mr. Cox: Oh, you were? Tell us about it.

Mr. Schmitz: It was just a deck court martial. We were overhauling the _____, the bars, take them down and clean the dirt and all that stuff and everything. We worked dang

near twenty-four hours straight. Anyway, the sooner we got it finished and got it fired up and it was all right, why, I went to the _____, and went to sleep. And they had a man in there _____, they should have got us out before they could do anything. Well, I was kinda covered up, and he left me laying there asleep. In the meantime, this alarm went off and I was supposed to be on the gun. I didn't show. Of course, it was just nothing, but then I get a deck court martial for it. Said it was going to cost me \$20 off pay for three months—I was making big money, you know.

Mr. Cox: (Chuckles.) How much were you making then, Alfred?

Mr. Schmitz: Oh, probably ninety dollars a month.

Mr. Cox: Did you get a reduction in rank, too?

Mr. Schmitz: Yes. Unfortunately. I lost one rank out of it. And then I served two or three days on it, I guess, chipping paint and stuff like that. I couldn't watch the movies. The chief man on this _____ he come down and he said "I want you to get back on down there and take over your job, get this thing working." "I don't want it," I said. He said, "I told you to get back down there." I said, "I'd rather be out there chipping that paint." Third time I went. Like I said, sometimes it gets comical. You have to break the ice once in awhile. _____, I says, "I wouldn't carry no _____, if someone would give me a gun, I'd shoot at you." (Laughs.)

Mr. Cox: Well, I certainly, once again I appreciate you taking the time to stop by and relate your experiences to us.

Mr. Schmitz: Well, like I say, I'd a never been in unless I hadn't heard of this, maybe two years ago, when they were here, down here for the winter.

Mr. Cox: As I told you, the way it works, we're all volunteers so we won't be transcribing your tape within the next six months, we're that far behind, but I certainly once again, thanks for coming in, and thanks for your service during World War II. It took every one of you guys all away from a water tender to an admiral to keep that thing going.

Mr. Schmitz: Well, like I say, I'm just getting older now, and all of that, had so many operations that I'm just glad to be alive.

Transcribed by: Betty Paieda
Harbor City, CA
November 8, 2008