

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Robert F. Scheumann
Hoagland, IN
February 19, 2014
Headquarters Battery
323rd Field Artillery
83rd Infantry Division

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is February 19, 2014. I am interviewing Mr. Robert F. Scheumann by telephone. His phone number is 260-639-3438. His address is 15235 Minnich Road, Hoagland, IN 46745. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

All right Bob, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today. Now, the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is OK with you. (agreement read) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Scheumann

That's OK.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the next thing I'd like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road, we try to get back in contact with a veteran, he's moved. Do you have a son or daughter or some one we could contact if we needed to, to find you?

Mr. Scheumann

Yes. My daughter, Robyn Mahlan. Her phone number is 260-639-6779.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, good. Hopefully we'll never need that but you never know. Bob, what is your birth date?

Mr. Scheumann

April 22, 1921.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, I was born at home but that's in Allen County, near Fort Wayne.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Mr. Scheumann

I had four, including me and one sister.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, you grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Scheumann

None at all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, I worked for farmers and with little or no money, we had something to eat and that was the main thing. My dad was a farmer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You had a garden and things like that, then?

Mr. Scheumann

Yes, grain farming and we had a garden, that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Scheumann

I went to Hoagland High School only for nine years. I did not graduate.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your last year?

Mr. Scheumann

It was nine years. My last year was as a freshman.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do when you left high school?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, I worked for farmers, grain farmers and then I got a job in 1941 at Rea Magnet Wire at Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Scheumann

I went in the service in October 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Scheumann

I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you went into the Army, is that correct?

Mr. Scheumann

Yes. I got drafted in the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any choice of the branch?

Mr. Scheumann

No, I didn't have no choice.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Scheumann

At Camp Atterbury in Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that training?

Mr. Scheumann

Oh, it was very good and I was close to home. That was the best part of it. I could go home on some weekends.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you finished basic training, where did you go then?

Mr. Scheumann

I went to Tennessee maneuvers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that.

Mr. Scheumann

Well, it was awful dry and awful hot and it was hilly and we didn't get to do much but training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you in a particular division at this point?

Mr. Scheumann

Yes, I was in 83rd Infantry Division and in the artillery, 323rd Artillery.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of training did you have in the artillery?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, I was in the Headquarters Battery, direct the fire. Our own, you know, 105s.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, we went on Tennessee Maneuvers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

After the maneuvers.

Mr. Scheumann

After the training there we went to Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky. More training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You weren't actually on the gun, then?

Mr. Scheumann

Oh, yes, aimer, fired direction, directed fire. We carried our guns all the time, our carbines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Your carbines, OK. Then what happened?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, we had a couple months at Camp Breckenridge. We went to New York and then overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you leave to go overseas?

Mr. Scheumann

April of 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip over there?

Mr. Scheumann

We wasn't told where we was going until we got about half-way of what we called "the pond" to England. Then they told us that we was headed for England. We zig-zagged our boats back and forth so they couldn't be bombed you know...there was submarines in the area and we had to zig-zag so they couldn't hit us too well or zero in on us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was the sea pretty rough?

Mr. Scheumann

Yeah, it was rough but it wasn't too bad, either. Well in the spring of the year it's always a little rough I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened when you got to England?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, we just landed in Liverpool and we had to go out and set our own camp and we were housed in Scabey Farms in Liverpool. Of course, it was always raining a lot and kind of held us back a little bit in the tents.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did you stay in England?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, it was from April, the last part of April, until June, June 12, 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you land?

Mr. Scheumann

Omaha, Normandy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip across the Channel?

Mr. Scheumann

It was pretty rough.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you landed on Omaha Beach, was there a lot of damage and things there?

Mr. Scheumann

Yeah. The first thing we met was those, those cemented in, what do they call those things, bunkers?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Uh-huh.

Mr. Scheumann

Then they had us mark off a space with flags and we were OK because there was no mines around and they had so many mines there you couldn't get out of line or you'd get your foot blown off.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, we kind of bivouacked around Carentan, France. We was in Headquarters and we was able to get off the LST in the Channel and the infantry, it got so rough they couldn't land us. They had to wait a couple more days before they could land the LST. (Mrs. Scheumann: I've written a book on his experiences so that's why I know that is alright.)

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, all right. Were you firing your guns at that point?

Mr. Scheumann

No, we were just getting organized for a big push that happened in July 4 at four o'clock in the morning. There wasn't much you could do but just wait on them. Of course we had to do a lot of guarding, you know. There was some spies around.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened on July 4?

Mr. Scheumann

July 4 was when I got wounded by a rifle bullet. Then I got sent back to England. I got hit on my right shoulder, kind of sloped downwards and lodged next to my spine.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did that happen?

Mr. Scheumann

It was just a stray bullet that I happened to be the one it hit. That's the only answer I can give you. I was on my knees and drinking coffee out of my K-ration and getting ready for a big push. Maybe about daylight and I didn't get in on that. I had to go back to the hospital in England. It was a bullet wound.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was this a German bullet that got you?

Mr. Scheumann

Yeah, it was German because they got five grooves in their bullets. The American rifles had four. It had kind of a flat spot on one side; that means it ricocheted off of something and hit me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK. Then what happened when you got to the hospital?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, they put me on a hospital boat, sent me to England and there I was put in a ward out there, a bunch of GI's in there and I couldn't get the bullet removed right away. I had to wait seven days because they had lots worse injuries than mine. So it was a little bit of a cut and the bullet popped right out. I've got the bullet here at home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did you stay in the hospital?

Mr. Scheumann

Just about two months.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, I took another trip across the Channel. I got kind of nervous in the place. I couldn't get no sleep because people was wounded and all day and night, I just couldn't stand it any more so I volunteered to go back on the line. "Well, we'll see," they said. Finally they said, "Yes, you can

go back.” So I was on light duty for quite a while but I’m OK. I’ve got a little bit of lameness on the right shoulder.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went back to the 83rd Division?

Mr. Scheumann

Oh, yes, that was almost a miracle. Most of them got sent to the infantry in the front line and here I got a job driving a three-quarter radio repair truck.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Scheumann

Wasn’t much more happened but in between we got pretty close to Germany and of course we went from there to the Hurtgen Forest in Germany and then this Bulge deal come along and we had to pull all our equipment out and headed for the Bulge. So it was hard to get there. It took us over a day to get there because they kind of messed up the...the German people had American uniforms on. They jammed up the traffic you know so we couldn’t go nowhere.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How close were you to the front line?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, we usually was back I’d say two miles or so I’d say from the front line.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What army were you in?

Mr. Scheumann

I can’t answer that. We was in Patton’s most of the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Patton was the 3rd Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

3rd Army?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Scheumann

OK. We didn't know half the time where we was at. No signs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do at the Bulge?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, we directed fire. But just like I say, I was on the radio repair truck so I wasn't what you call clear up front. We stuck around fire direction, Headquarters Battery.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you're truck would repair the different radios then?

Mr. Scheumann

I didn't repair any. I just drove the equipment, spare parts, they needed a lot of spare parts. Then I had a trailer that had some more supplies in it. I also had the job of getting the mail, had to drive quite a ways to get the mail for... I didn't go every day but maybe every fifth day, pick up mail for the GI's in our outfit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that mail run?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, you had to watch. There's time you'd go after mail and you was almost up to the front line. You'd get lost once in a while and then of course there was always somebody jumping out of ditch and flag you down , "Get back there. The Germans are right up here a couple hundred feet." Guess I was lucky that way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you take the mail to the units on the front line?

Mr. Scheumann

No I didn't, just to the Headquarters Battery.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, all right. What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Scheumann

Of course we lost a lot of men. It was mighty, mighty cold but we survived. There wasn't much activity in the Bulge with us because we couldn't get up to the problem. You know, it was all messed up. So it's hard to tell you why we won the war, but we did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get anywhere close to Bastogne?

Mr. Scheumann

I wasn't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened?

Mr. Scheumann

What happened, they just all at once it was over with and then well, they sent us back to Passa, Germany and the whole army of occupation.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you cross the Rhine River?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, we went across the Rhine River and they made us come back where we were and the Russians had to take Berlin. Is that what you mean?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah. Now, it was actually five months from the Bulge until the war ended. What did you do during that five months?

Mr. Scheumann

We had, you know, when there was a bridge or a main street, we had to check whatever they carried. You know, if it was food, it was OK and if it was a gun, why we made them throw the guns away. The war was over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you all capture many Germans?

Mr. Scheumann

No, I didn't capture any Germans. Our unit did, they took twenty thousand prisoners all at once. That was before the Bulge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you see any of the concentration camps?

Mr. Scheumann

I didn't know much about them until I got back out of the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On May 8, 1945 is when Germany surrendered. Do you recall that?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, we was by the Elbe River and knowing it was going to be over with quick but they always said, "Well, it'll be another day or two and so on". So I don't know how to answer that really.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any contact with the Russians?

Mr. Scheumann

No, we didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer:

After the war got over, what did you do then?

Mr. Scheumann

We went to Camp Lucky Strike, you know, in France, waiting to go home. Heard that in New York they was on strike so we waited an extra month until the strike was over with before we could get on a boat and go back to New York. I had five extra points because I was wounded and I got to go home a little earlier but the people that was married, they went first. Then the ones with Purple Hearts and then others. I got discharged through the Armored Tank Division. They filled up to send a whole division home so they took some of us to fill in so we could get a boatload, I'd guess you'd call it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when did you get back to the States?

Mr. Scheumann

I got in New York November 11, 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So quite a long time after the war was over. Now, on April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died.

Did you all hear about that?

Mr. Scheumann

We were still overseas then.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you hear about it?

Mr. Scheumann

Just one soldier to another I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Scheumann

They had all the flags at half-mast and of course we didn't hear as much as you did hear in the States.

Mr. Misenhimer:

During the time from May til November, did you stay all that time in France or where did you stay over there?

Mr. Scheumann

We was in transit here in France, being sent home. They took all our money and everything we had sent back ahead of us so we didn't have no money to spend or nothing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then in August when they dropped the atomic bomb, did you hear about that?

Mr. Scheumann

Yes, we did. They got my truck ready. It was in good shape and they was going to send that to Japan, in the South Pacific. But they didn't get to send it. The war was over with.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you all have any kind of celebration when Japan surrendered?

Mr. Scheumann

Oh, of course. We was real happy because we could have been sent to that war right away if it wouldn't have ended.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When were you discharged?

Mr. Scheumann

It was in November.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's all right...November of 1945.

Mr. Scheumann

Yes. I was discharged from Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, no I didn't have any trouble. Only thing is, I worked at Rea Magnet Wire and I thought I was going to take four or five days off but there was a lot of celebrating going on and I decided I'd better go to work because you can get in trouble if you celebrate too much after you get out of the service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Scheumann

Yes, I've got four kids and a couple of them went to college, having the Purple Heart and everything they got their education for nothing. So that was a big help for my family and myself, too, and my wife.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use it for anything else? OK, no. Did you ever see any U.S.O. shows?

Mr. Scheumann

Oh, we saw a bunch of them. Especially overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Who all did you see?

Mr. Scheumann

Bob Hope was there in Passa, Germany and they had a big gymnasium out there but I didn't get to see him that night. I was on guard.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Scheumann

Oh, yes. They was good to us. My grandmother died when I was at Camp Atterbury and they got me three days off for the funeral. They gave us a lot of clothing, like those knit hats and scarves.

They was all G.I. and come from the Red Cross.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get home with any souvenirs from World War II?

Mr. Scheumann

I got one of them Nazi armbands and the bullet, of course, and I've got a little pistol that I think was supposed to have been a Belgian pistol. That's about all I have.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were overseas, what would consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, there wasn't too many days that you wasn't frightened. Then I was young and it didn't bother me that much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Mr. Scheumann

Yeah, she tried to make you homesick.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of her?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, we listened to her so I guess it wasn't that bad. Played nice music, trying to get you homesick I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Scheumann

We didn't have no penicillin yet but we had a big pill they give me when I got wounded so it didn't...sulfa drugs. You had to drink a canteen full of water so you wouldn't burn up your kidneys.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Scheumann

I was in five major battles. We got ribbons for that and I got them right here. My wife handed them to me. One of them is a European, African, Middle Eastern Campaign and got a Purple Heart and American Campaign. I was in five major battles.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of course you got a Purple Heart.

Mr. Scheumann:

I got the Purple Heart, of course.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, I'd say they took it all pretty good. We lost, of course, some men but we didn't expect not to.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. Scheumann

Well, what was exciting was when I was in the hospital the buzz bombs come floating over there and you didn't know what was going to happen. When they run out of fuel they fell and exploded. But they wasn't very accurate.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did any of them hit close to you?

Mr. Scheumann

No, but I could sure...we was kind of behind a big hill, the hospital was and they all crossed over and then you could hear the big boom. Like I said, they wasn't very accurate.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Scheumann

P.F.C.

Mr. Misenhimer:

All right.

Mr. Scheumann

Disability now. I get fifteen percent.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's from your wound?

Mr. Scheumann

The only problem I had, I should have looked into that the day I got discharged and I didn't do it until recently.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see that sign "Kilroy was here?"

Mr. Scheumann

Oh, yes. That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was everywhere, wasn't it?

Mr. Scheumann

Of course we had great faith in Ernie Pyle. He printed our newspaper for us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see him?

Mr. Scheumann

No, I didn't but he was in the area where I was. He was well liked by all the soldiers.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, yeah. Well, Bob, that's all the questions I've got unless you've thought of anything else.

I want to thank you again for taking your time today and I want to thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Scheumann

OK. Same to you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you. All, right we'll keep in touch. That's it for now.

End of Interview

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