

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Walter H. Neumann
Spring Hill, FL
October 10, 2014
YMS-231
Mine Sweeper

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is October 10, 2014. I am interviewing Mr. Walter H. Neumann by telephone. His phone number is 352-688-7124. His address is 4133 Toad Road, Spring Hill, FL 34606. 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:

Walter, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Neumann:

I enlisted in the Air Force to start with then I sat and I was waiting for a call and they didn't call. This was in 1943. So I was waiting for their call but they had more pilot navigator enlistments than they needed so I ended up enlisting in the Navy and I enlisted in a minority cruise to age 21.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right, right, good. I need to read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is OK with you. So let me read this to you. (agreement read) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Neumann:

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 or something. So do you have a son or daughter or some one we could contact if we needed to?

Mr. Neumann:

I have a son and a daughter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, either one, whichever is easiest for you.

Mr. Neumann:

The daughter is the closest one, that's the one with the granddaughter. My son lives about an hour from here.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is her name?

Mr. Neumann:

My daughter's name is Barbara Mincey. Her address is 5872 Fairlane Avenue, Brooksville, FL.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for her?

Mr. Neumann:

I don't have it right here.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have your son's phone number handy?

Mr. Neumann:

Let me go over to the other place. I may have it...it's 813-871-9295.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's your son's phone number.

Mr. Neumann:

That's the son.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where does he live?

Mr. Neumann:

He lives at Tampa.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, fine. That's all I need is the phone numbers. Hopefully we'll never need that. Now, what is your birth date?

Mr. Neumann:

My birth date is April 23, 1926.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Neumann:

I was born in Goodrich, Wisconsin.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were your mother's and father's names?

Mr. Neumann:

My mother's name was Marie Neumann and my father's name was Gustaz Neumann.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Neumann:

Yeah, I had a brother and a sister.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was your brother in World War II?

Mr. Neumann:

No, he was younger than me and he became a Lutheran minister. My sister is eleven years

younger than me and she worked in the Pentagon for a while and she was one of the first woman IRS agents in the country. She worked at headquarters until she retired in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What are their first names?

Mr. Neumann:

Her first name was Ruth and her last name, married name, was Bettinger.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your brother's first name?

Mr. Neumann:

My brother's first name was Wilbert. My sister's husband was in Korea and Vietnam and he is buried in Arlington.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he killed during the war?

Mr. Neumann:

He was in the Seabees during the Korean War and he switched to the Army Corps of Engineers and he was in the Army Corps of Engineers and served two tours in Vietnam. His name was Bob.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He came home from the war, right?

Mr. Neumann:

He came home from the war and he worked in the Arlington Cemetery for about ten years from where he retired and he ended up buried there because of a Medal with Valor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Neumann:

My father lost about everything. He had a lot of stock in many different companies and he had preferred stock in a bank which killed him because it made him responsible for everything and basically he had nothing in his name until after the war. All we had in our name was what was in my mother's name.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then during the Depression, how did you get along?

Mr. Neumann:

My father was a Lutheran minister and he sometimes didn't get paid but we ate good because my mother canned a lot of food and we basically lived out of the garden.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You had a garden then.

Mr. Neumann:

We had a big garden. So we ate good and my father got a very small income but the church had a parsonage which we lived in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Neumann:

I first started in a prep school. I went to a one-room grade school for eight years and then I went to a prep school which was a Lutheran prep school until my last year and that was Northwestern College Prep and I finished my senior year at Athens High School. That's where I got my high

school and after high school they had an NYA radio school, government one, which they closed down so I only got a little over a month in but I had it the summer after I did go about a month and a half to a radio school. Then I went to Concordia College for a couple of months before I enlisted. Concordia College which was in River Forest, Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you grew up in Wisconsin did you?

Mr. Neumann:

I grew up in Wisconsin in a little town called Rib Falls which was about eleven miles west of Wausau.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Neumann:

I was the only one in the service in my immediate family.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date did you go into the service?

Mr. Neumann:

I went in April of 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were seventeen?

Mr. Neumann:

I was seventeen. I was going on eighteen. I wasn't quite eighteen yet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, close to eighteen.

Mr. Neumann:

Yeah, I was going on eighteen.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You joined what they called a minority cruise, is that right?

Mr. Neumann:

Yeah, a minority cruise until the age of twenty-one.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You told me a while ago how you chose the Navy.

Mr. Neumann:

I chose the Navy after the Air Force didn't call. They had more pilots and navigators than they needed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go for boot camp?

Mr. Neumann:

I went to boot camp at Great Lakes, Illinois. I happened to have the boot camp number that was 966. That was my boot camp number.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that boot camp?

Mr. Neumann:

Well, I didn't have any problems because basically I learned the ropes while I was in the prep school so I was one of the few that went through boot camp without a happy hour. I never got caught with any infractions.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, good.

Mr. Neumann:

I did all the wrong things at the right time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What are some things you did in boot camp?

Mr. Neumann:

We had our calisthenics, we had swimming. I passed my swimming test there and we had all of our tests, eight tests, in different subjects which I came in the top two percent.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any kind of weapons training?

Mr. Neumann:

Yeah, we had weapons training. We didn't have much. In other words we had a little bit. There was a lot of calisthenics. There was a lot of marching. In fact they held us over for an extra week because they had a change in command and we was the color company in the change of command. We had a real good Master At Arms or whatever you call them. He was good. Everybody liked him. He was tough but everybody liked him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Neumann:

No, it wasn't. As I said, I got through it fairly easy and for me I had absolutely no problems. In fact I never thought about it as tough.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then after boot camp, where did you go?

Mr. Neumann:

After boot camp they sent me to the University of Wisconsin radio school for about five months. I was in the radio school, radio training. I came out of that fairly good, too.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you learn in that radio school?

Mr. Neumann:

Well, radio code, radio theory and I already knew how to type but the high school typing wasn't as tough as the radio school because you didn't dare make any mistakes in the radio school. They took off a lot of speed. In other words if you had one mistake, they took off five words per minute. It was the same with learning code. If you had one mistake copying code, they took off five words a minute and we had to be able to copy twenty words a minute to graduate.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you talk about code, was that the Morse Code was it?

Mr. Neumann:

Yeah, that was Morse Code.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was it very hard to learn that?

Mr. Neumann:

No, they had a system that they taught it in and basically like they taught the code for four letters which was basically close, like one dot and one dash letter and then when you had those down pat, then they added other letters which were similar until you learned the whole thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was that school?

Mr. Neumann:

That was twenty weeks of school. We had to be able to copy by printing. In other words we were taught how to print a letter fast and also in the least amount of strokes. We had to be able to copy by printing fifteen words a minute and then they put us on a typewriter and then we had to learn to do I think it was twenty words a minute on the typewriter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's pretty fast.

Mr. Neumann:

I could copy over thirty at the end.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you finished radio school, where did you go?

Mr. Neumann:

Part of it was, for my first year and a half in the Navy I never used radio. I'll get into that. I was put on that ship and they only had one radioman, one quartermaster, one signalman basically at sea until I got off the ship in Japan I never copied any code. I was basically a signalman quartermaster.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ship was that?

Mr. Neumann:

That was the YMS231.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's a YMS?

Mr. Neumann:

That's a 126-foot wood minesweeper. I had two of those.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you join the first one?

Mr. Neumann:

I went on the first one in June of 1945. That was in Boston before we got to the Pacific. We ended up going to the Pacific. When I got on that ship, they handed me a Quartermaster-Signalman manuals and I had to learn their duties and after a couple of practice cruises I was standing Quartermaster-Signalman duties. That was all the way in the Atlantic and all the way through the Pacific, all the way to Japan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you go through the Panama Canal?

Mr. Neumann:

Yes. I went through the Panama Canal. In fact the ship that followed us, there was six of us in one lock.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About what date did you go through the Canal?

Mr. Neumann:

I went through I would say in July of 1945. It was before the war was over. In other words we was through the Canal and into the Pacific before the war was over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when you got on the YMS231, you spent about a month...

Mr. Neumann:

I was on the YMS231. We almost had a disaster coming out of the Canal because there was no lights on the ship at the time. In other words, we were in a convoy and we had to follow the tail of the ship ahead of us. We was the last one in the column. I was standing Signal watch on the bridge along with the officer and two lookouts. It was a black night, there was a flash of light and a ship was noticed coming into our side. Our officer... I feel our officer saved our lives because he hollered down the tube to the bridge, steering, "Sharp starboard screw reverse" and we spun around like on a dime and the ship that was coming in passed us on the opposite side on the bow. We got saved by a flash of lightning.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was it like to go through the Canal?

Mr. Neumann:

I don't really remember too much about it. I remember going through the locks and we went through the lake between and then we had to go through another set of locks on the other side and this happened...we went through at night. In other words we were in the Pacific about four o'clock in the morning when that lightning happened. I could even tell you the exact date. Let's see if I can find it. That flash of lightning that saved us was August 4, 1945. That happened about four o'clock in the morning. This is from my diary notes. In other words, I wrote in my diary that "I had the four to eight o'clock watch on the flying bridge and we almost hit a freighter after getting out of the Panama Canal. Saved by a flash of lightning." That's what I put in my diary.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you left from Boston to go to the Panama Canal. Is that correct?

Mr. Neumann:

Yes. We went through the Panama...Let's see. I have here "Left Lunion Bay and started for first set of locks at three o'clock. Went through all locks by ten. All YMS in locks at same time."

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you went down to the Panama Canal did you go through the Gulf of Mexico or the Caribbean Sea or what?

Mr. Neumann:

We could only go so far on our fuel. So basically on 8/6 of 1945 I have in my diary, "Arrived in Nicaragua at 1750. Went ashore." Then I added something later, "Atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan." Which we did not hear about. That I have down on 8/6 but we didn't find out about that until later. I have on the 8th of August and on the 10th I have down here, "Heard the war by signal light was over. Then told it was not. Had a celebration at sea. Depth charges were dropped, three inch, fifty, tracers were being shot plus all of our signal tracers were shot up. Only one left in possession of skipper before finding out it was not over." In other words, somehow or other we got notice that it was over and it wasn't over. That was on the 10th and we had to get fuel again in Manzanero, Mexico on the 13th of August. We refueled there and then on 8/14 V.J. of historic record like the dropping of the bomb, I don't remember that's when it ended. I just have that note. We left Manzanero, Mexico on 8/15 and the next stop was in San Pedro, California where we got overhauled because we were still being shipped over instead of for the invasion of Japan we had to do minesweeping and occupation duties.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me back up. On the way down to the Panama Canal through the Atlantic, anything happen on that part of your journey?

Mr. Neumann:

No. Nothing happened there. In other words, basically it was still during wartime, a few days before the end. There were still no lights on the ships, no radio transmissions. That's basically all I remember.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of course the war in Europe was over so there weren't any German submarines out there then.

Mr. Neumann:

There were still submarines out because the war wasn't officially ended. We didn't have anything like that. There were YMSs that were involved with submarines in the Atlantic, though, and they used depth charges but we didn't get involved with that. In fact the ship I was on was also in the Normandy invasion before it came back to the States. It was in the Normandy invasion and I have the documents where it and three others were assigned to the U.S.S. Augustus to take it into the landing site and the Augustus had all your high commanders on. I have the stuff I copied off of e-mails covering that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now then, after you got overhauled there in San Pedro, then what happened?

Mr. Neumann:

No, nothing happened through the Canal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go from there?

Mr. Neumann:

After the Canal we went to Nicaragua for refueling and then we went to Manzanero, Mexico for fueling and then the next stop was San Pedro, California where we got overhauled and they degaussed our ship with magnetic wires. We left San Pedro for Pearl Harbor and on the way to Pearl Harbor we only had one bad experience. We had to fuel at stormy seas and we got a little bit of our ship damaged in the fueling and we get to Hawaii and we were there, I don't know, a couple or a few days and then we were sent to Eniwetok and we fueled at Eniwetok and got supplies and then we went on to Saipan and we was refueled there and got supplies and then we hit the typhoon two days after that. We were supposedly heading for Sasebo, Japan when we hit that typhoon. In fact I was on watch when that came in to the side. It was coming into our port side and we had to change course going into it and instead of going toward Japan we were headed toward the Philippine Islands because we had to head into it and we kept diving off of breakers that were almost as high as our ship was long. Every time we dove, our screws came up and I remember hanging on to our chart room table and we had about a four-foot diameter helm and the helmsman actually laid on the helm as we dove and the screws came out of the water and pinned the tachometer and we come back down again and start for the next one. Then when that was over, we had to change course back to Japan and we got a change of orders on the way. Instead of going to Sasebo, we went to Wakanourawan which was going to the inland sea toward Kobe and Osaka. We joined a fleet of minesweepers there which were to sweep the mines in the inland sea and in the Kobe and Osaka area and that lasted from November until February. In other words, we were still sweeping those mines all those months. The mines mostly were dropped by B-29s in earlier 1945 so they were mostly our mines that we had put in there. They had deactivation dates on them. In other words they deactivated themselves but we still...they

put in a second batch so basically, and they also had counting devices on it. In other words, one may be set to blow up under the first ship and the other one the ninth or tenth ship, up to ten ships. So it wasn't just a case of sweeping the area once, if I remember right, they swept every area fourteen times. Then what happened was, they wanted to bring in seaplanes in Kobe and Osaka so my ship and two others were sent into Kobe and Osaka to clean up that while the rest of the fleet was working from the outside and we swept mines there. We didn't get any but we not only swept with our ships, we was given some LCVPs, landing crafts if you know what they are, and they put batteries on two of them and they had tails coming off the batteries with a magnetic field around them. So we were actually sweeping on the LCVPs, too. I caught one sweep on the LCVP which was an experience on itself because we hit an underwater and tore a hole in the bottom of the one that we was on which we was luckily able to beach.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was quite an experience.

Mr. Neumann:

The people where we beached it evidently hadn't seen any Americans because when we went ashore and down the street to find out who owned the little shipyard, the people were scared and they went into buildings and we finally found somebody that could speak English and we got in contact with the owner of the shipyard for large fishing boats and stuff like that. He fixed up the bottom and another ship took over the sweeping after that and we went back but I can remember, almost picture it yet, when we went back to pick up the LCVP, the owner of the shipyard, he was afraid to take the money. I don't know how much our officer had but he finally took the money but when our officer handed him two cartons of cigarettes, he stood there, bowing. I can still see the guy's face, him bowing when he took those cigarettes. I have to say one thing about the

Japanese: I got shore patrol duty quite often there in Kobe because of the fact that you had to be a rated man to start with and we only had seven rated men left on the ship but I was always assigned duty along with an MP and I always ended up in what they called the black market area of Kobe at the time. We never had any problems and I felt that the Japanese that we did have contact with were friendly but we talked to a lot of Korean people who had been brought to Japan to do work. In other words, they were basically slave labor. We talked to a number of them who were waiting to leave Japan to go back to Korea at the time and then I remember one boy. His mother was English and his father was Egyptian and they got caught there at the beginning of the war and he come to our ship and talked and we'd give him something to eat and he told us quite a bit of things that happened during the war about how they had to live.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Quite an experience. What else happened?

Mr. Neumann:

He said all the Europeans, they lived in a group basically. There was a house or place where American POWs were in Kobe, too. There was a house there someplace. He said his father used to go and his father could have got into trouble he said, but his father went to the fence and used to talk to the POWs there. But he said they didn't have much to eat and he told us how his mother used to make soup out of almost everything, including some different types of root to have more to eat. But then we left Kobe and my ship went back to the States for decommissioning and we went back to San Diego but I still had maybe about fourteen or thirteen months left, something like this, and I got put on another YMS and we left Kobe and went to Shanghai, China and we swept mines off the China Sea off of the Yangtze River for about a month while I was on that YMS and the command ship needed a radioman so I got traded by the

YMS to the command ship for a seaman and a fireman so I became a radioman on the command ship which the next time I was at sea broke down and we was without water and lights or engines for two days until we got towed back into Shanghai. That ship I ended up decommissioning. In fact I was the only radioman left on it when it was decommissioned so I was responsible for decommissioning the sea division, something like that. Then I got put ashore in Subic Bay and I ended up sent to Manila and I became a flag radioman for NCO for a commander in Naval forces Philippine in Manila and while there I was offered...two months after I was there they was after me to re-enlist. They made me three offers, first a school in radio-teletype maintenance, I turned them down and then they offered me a ten-month school in radio theory as an ET. I turned that down. Then they offered me OCS and I turned that down. After that about a month later, a ship pulled in to Manila Bay and they needed six radiomen right away. They were heading for Australia and I don't know did you ever hear about that Navy plane that broke the record in 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I don't think so. What was it?

Mr. Neumann:

I ended up in Australia for the preparation of that world-breaking flight. The Air Force wanted to take over all land-based flying and the Navy wanted to prove that they could do their own. The plane was a P2V Navy bomber. It flew from Perth, Australia to Columbus, Ohio non-stop and without refueling. It was 55:17 hours' time and 11,236 miles. I have a letter that...there was 200 letters that were able to be mailed on by the people that was involved in the preparation. I still have mine. In fact, you can find it on two different sites on the internet. It's one of the few, in fact it's the only one that anybody knows that's left in existence because they were all sent to

family members and they maybe got destroyed. They had three postmarks on it, one on the ship, it had one just before it took off, one right after it landed. I still have that yet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did it take off from and where did it land?

Mr. Neumann:

When I got back, my job in Manila was filled so instead of being a flag radioman, I became a staff radioman and they put me on as a supervisor of watch at Fleet Weather Central at Clark Airfield Base where I was then until I was supposed to go back to the States. They needed a radioman on the ship from Subic Bay to Guam so they put me on that ship to take it to Guam and it couldn't leave so I got sent back to Admiral Good that was commander at the time, evidently commander of naval forces. He says they had to send me back to Manila and then I flew from Manila to Samar to Guam to Wake Island and then to Hawaii on DC-4s and then I was on a flying ship, a MARS 4-engine seaplane, from there to the States to San Francisco where I got my discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date did you get discharged?

Mr. Neumann:

My discharge was on 27th of April, 1947. I was out for eleven months and then I put fifteen months in the Reserves, Active Reserves. After Reserves I installed radio equipment in Green Bay, Wisconsin for about three months. I was in Great Lakes for three months, put to work as a Yeoman. Then I ended up in Boston where I was at headquarters for First Naval District. But then they put me on a tug and I was on a tug for about three months and then they sent me to Quonset Point Airfield and Quonset Point transferred me to Charleston Naval Auxiliary Air

Station where again I didn't work as a radioman. I ended up transferred to repair section. I stayed there until my time was up and they shipped me back to Great Lakes for release. I got released finally on July of 1949 I finally finished with the Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK. What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Neumann:

After radio school I ended up in amphibious radio training at Camp Bradford, Virginia. I was there for a while and then I ended up in Florida at Fort Pierce, Florida in attack boat ~~staff~~ training. Then for some reason they decided to send me back to Norfolk. The U.S.S. St. Paul was coming in off a shakedown and I was supposed to go aboard that and while I was waiting for that, they asked for all American-born, one hundred percent German ancestry people to report in and then I got taken off that thing and I got sent to New York and I went to classes at Columbia University with some professor there, but then they didn't need us so I got sent to Boston and put on that minesweeper 231 where I ended up. That's basically my thing. I was no hero, I really wasn't in any combat. I spent a lot of time sweeping mines. That was basically my Navy career.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Neumann:

I have to say one thing about it. It got my foot into the door. Without a college degree, it got my foot into the door at General Electric who gave me tests in engineering physics and math and I ended up as an engineering assistant in GE. Six years later I was in supervision and I had thirty-eight happy years in engineering. The last fourteen was as a consultant, still without a degree. So that's what happened to one sailor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to in the Navy?

Mr. Neumann:

I was a Radioman Third Class.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Even in the Reserves?

Mr. Neumann:

That was in the regular Navy. I was still Third Class through the Reserves. The odd part of it was that while I was a radioman I would say out of over four years in the service, I only worked as a radioman maybe six months of that. The rest of the time I was either in schools, working at sea I was a quartermaster signalman, worked as a yeoman, at the airbase I was in maintenance and repair. As far as, what it was, I ended up with American Theater Ribbon, Victory Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Philippine Independence Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific with two stars, and the Navy Occupation Service Medal with Asian clasp and the China Service Medal for the mine sweeping in the China Sea. That was that. So basically that was my whole time – three years in minority hitch and fifteen months in Reserve duty.

Mr. Misenhimer:

With two stars on the Asiatic-Pacific, what were they for?

Mr. Neumann:

The two stars on the Asiatic-Pacific was, well I'll read it right from...I have my service record. That was based on "Served on board U.S.S. 231 during the Kobe sweep operation from 27 November 1945 to 5 March 1946." In other words that was one of the stars. That was signed by Lieutenant Mitchell on YMS 231 and then the other star was "Served on board the U.S.S. YMS

398 during minesweep operations in the China Sea from 2 April 1946 to 11 April 1946.” That was signed by Lieutenant Earnhart.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What date was that typhoon you were in?

Mr. Neumann:

In fact we was in two of them. Let’s see if I can find...I can tell you just about the dates if I can. I have to get the other book. The typhoon started 11/4/45, for Sasebo, Japan. Hit a real bad storm a day or two before the change of orders. I was on quartermaster duty on late afternoon watch. The seas within a short period became rougher and rougher. It was worse than I had experienced up to then. I wrote I crossed myself and hung on to the enclosure. At its worst I watched the tachometers go from 240 rpm to near 500 rpm and back and forth as the screws alternately came out of the water. The ship was being constantly tilted by screws going in and out of the water. I watched the inclinometer which was on the back of the wall. It went from 45 degrees from one side to 45 degrees to the other and back in about fifteen seconds or so. Then we had to change course and that was when we were diving off where both screws came out of the water. Then after about 11/10 we had another storm where we got thrown—we were at anchor without the engines running and we got thrown into a steel destroyer type ship and we had our foc’sle damaged. We ended up having that repaired because it tore off all our railings and knocked a great big hole into our bosun’s locker and we had to get that repaired. So we were in two storms.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The first one – that date was in October or November?

Mr. Neumann:

That was in November. I have down here 45/11/04 so the 4th of November we left Saipan and it

happened about two days after we left Saipan. Basically it must have been about 11/6. During that period. I didn't put down the exact date.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were with other ships when it happened, right?

Mr. Neumann:

There were six of us. We didn't see them because we was going down and they was going up. How we six survived that, I don't know, because every time when we dove off the breakers every time our bridge smacked into the water, diving, it was just like a shotgun crack. The ship went down to the bottom and then there was like a period of time where the ship was sort of standing still almost at the bottom before the screws took over and started to move us again.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you go to Australia?

Mr. Neumann:

Australia, I can get that one. Left Manila for Australia. That was U.S.S. Rehoboth AVT 50. We left Manila on 8/26 for Australia.

Mr. Misenhimer:

8/26 of what year?

Mr. Neumann:

1946. I have here we crossed the equator on 8/29 on the way to Australia. Crossed the equator at 6:14 on 8/29. We arrived at Freemantle, Australia, which is outside of Perth on 9/5/46. That was all 1946.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you in Freemantle?

Mr. Neumann:

We arrived in Freemantle on 9/5. Left for Manila on 10/14. The plane took off toward the United States on 9/29, the plane took off from the airport in Perth. It arrived in Columbus, Ohio on 10/1. Then we left Perth on 10/14 back to the States. I've got down here also, on 10/19 a Dutch ship came alongside while underway in the Indian Ocean for medical aid. Ship by the name of Vivelanbny 13, a Dutch minesweeper. So we took care of somebody for three hours, our doctors worked with somebody on that ship. Then we got back to Manila on 10/26. In fact I just seen the original letter in the cover on that flight. I got back on 10/26 I got transferred from the Fleet Weather back to Commander of Naval Forces Philippines and on 10/27 I was transferred to the Fleet Weather Central NPO5 at Ft. McKinley. I was officially transferred on 10/28 to the Fleet Weather Central to do...and then on 10/29 being broken in as supervisor on NPO5 Fleet Weather Central. On 12/05 I have down here Radioman Second Class came out to Fleet Weather Central to relieve me. I was supposed to go back to the States and I got orders to go to Subic Bay on 1/16 to report to U.S.S. Buckeye AN for duty to take it to Guam but then I was supposed to be back in the States in February. I have down here on February 3 the Captain of the ship sent a letter air mail to authorize to hold me but two days later they were supposed to get me back to Manila so I was put on the guard mail truck back to Manila. Then on the seventh I was sent to Clark Airfield Base on the way back and they put me on a DC-4 cargo plane in a passenger bucket seat. While I was in Japan, when they surrendered the Skipper brought back a Samurai sword which I got. And after carrying that sword around for that whole year, I left it. I didn't pick it up with my seabag and I left it at Clark Airfield Base. From Clark I went to Samar, arrived there at 1425 it says. I arrived at Samar and then I arrived at Peleliu at 2255 and arrived at Guam the next day at 530 in the morning. I left Guam at 2130 on a DC-plus job and arrived at

Kwajalein at 8 in the morning and left Kwajalein at 955 and arrived Johnson Island at 815. Left Johnson Island at 2045, arrived Honolulu at one o'clock in the morning with one of the engines gone. We came in with three engines. What happened was I didn't have my health certificate along and they wouldn't let me go to the States without knowing that I had all my shots. They held me over in Pearl Harbor until I got all my shots. So I left Pearl Harbor on 2/16 on a four-engine Mars. On 2/17 at 1500 we landed in the bay after three water approaches through a fog. In other words he tried to bring in the plane and he evidently saw something so we made three passes before we landed. That's basically it. Then came the end of my first hitch.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me ask you some other questions here. When you were going to Australia, and you crossed the equator, did you have any kind of ceremony then ?

Mr. Neumann:

Going down there?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, sir.

Mr. Neumann:

I don't remember much except we crossed the equator and we had one odd circumstance on the way. We came up somewhere in the Indian Ocean the water was a little bit rough but there was like a stripe of water maybe a couple hundred yards wide that was completely smooth. It was like a ship passed through or something and it was just a smooth section between rough seas both sides. Our Skipper stopped the ship because he didn't want to go through that calm section without knowing what was causing it. We put on the sonic gear and there was nothing and we finally went through it and there was nothing. It was an odd situation and the other odd thing, we

was ahead of schedule. Ever hear of water polo? They went to work and they put a couple pipes out from the side of the ship with a sledge hammer hanging from it and dropped some cases that we got stuff in, floating and the officers took turns going round and round, trying to hit the floating cases in the water with the hanging over anvil hammer. You know you think back about all those things and I went through my cross the equator exercises. In fact I was the first enlisted man through. Our Skipper wasn't even a polliwog at the time. But he instructed that no haircuts. In other words, nobody was supposed to mess up any hair but he had a mustache and they cut half of it off.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Neumann:

No, I don't remember that because basically we didn't get into the Pacific until the war ended and I never heard her.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Neumann:

The scariest part was the typhoon I told you about. But then remember I mentioned about that refueling thing. That was sort of scary too because we was basically had lines over to the fueling ship and they had everybody, all of us, out on the deck, all in life gear and I remember being out on the deck and they were trying to steer away from the ship that was fueling off of and the waves threw us into the side of the ship repeatedly. And it tore off part of our fender and it put two holes in where the bolts had held the fender strips into the generator room. That was scary and then basically doing your duty I was uncomfortable on those LCVPs sweeping mines in

Kobe. In other words, it was sort of scary because while you didn't think about it, you thought about what you were doing and it was mostly after it was all over, you started to think about it. You know what I mean. Basically those were the two things and the night when we almost got hit by that ship, saved by a flash of lightning. It wasn't until after it was basically over and I can still picture that ship missing the front of our bow on the opposite side now of our ship and looking up at it. I actually looked up at the ship alongside of us. The thing was, I couldn't say it was scary at the time. It was scary when it was all over. I remember never seeing before people move as fast as they did. In other words I was on the flying bridge with the officer and two lookouts as the quartermaster signalman. I don't remember ever seeing people move as fast as they did and the response that the officer did when he hollered down the tubes for sharp starboard engine to reverse. I can still picture that yet for some reason.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Neumann:

The only ones that I had left, I left my samurai sword lay in Clark Airfield which was...it was an unusual one. It had the handle on and you took the handle off and it was all written in Japanese underneath the handle. Must have been a history or something. But the only thing is I have is when we was in Kobe we was on a patrol in Kobe there was an old warehouse, empty, that was a bunch of junk laying in it and there was a whole stack of stamps that Japan had issued for Japanese occupation in different places and they were all soaked and clumped together but I got some of them and I brought them back aboard the ship and I took them home and soaked them apart to find out that if they were valuable I would have had a fortune if I was taking those back. I just took a few. Then I found a Japanese code key which I still have. It was sort of unusual.

Then I have a Japanese ammeter. In other words it's got ohms and voltage meter. I have that.

That's about all I have left from over there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your ship?

Mr. Neumann:

I belong to Warfare Minesweeps Association which I only attended one reunion which was in Chattanooga a few years ago. U.S.S. St. Paul which I was supposed to go aboard, gave me a lifetime associate member because I had sent them, I found their association on the internet one day and I sent them what was written in my orders where I was supposed to go aboard it on one date so they made me an honorary association member, lifetime one even, and they've been real good to me. In fact they invited me to reunions which I haven't gone to. That's about it. I hope I gave you something that was of interest.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes, you did. Now I've got some more questions. Did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life when you got out?

Mr. Neumann:

No, not really. When I got out, I got out after basically after most of the guys did. By 1947 most of the guys were out and most of the jobs were filled. So I ended up when I first got out, I was going to go to college. I put it in and then I changed my mind for some reason. I took a job as a statistician. I never had any problems when I got out. I basically just got out and went back into civilian life as I planned. One of the reason I turned down the OCS and the schools in the Philippine Islands, I was supposed, they asked me to extend for two years and return to my former command. The reason I turned them down was not because I had any trouble in the Navy,

I wanted freedom that the Navy didn't give me you understand and I had the freedom and I was satisfied with that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Neumann:

On the G.I. Bill the only thing I used of that, I think I had three and a half of what they called the 52-20. That's the only thing I used there. I built a new house about two years after I got out the second time. The way I built it, I didn't need any G.I. Bill money so I built it on a conventional loan. I didn't even have an FHA loan. When I got transferred I bought the second house, I did take that under the G.I. Bill but only because they gave me a half a percent less interest. I didn't need it. Basically the G.I. Bill I didn't really use.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK. I think that's all the questions I have. Anything else you've thought of?

Mr. Neumann:

Without a college education and what I learned in the Navy, having to get along with people, was what was maybe one of my biggest assets because I had 38 years with good working relations and I had a enjoyable working life because of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good, good. Well, Walter, I want to thank you again for your time today and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Neumann:

Yeah. I'm not rich and I'm not poor. I live comfortably. I do get forty percent disability and I have ear and leg. I was in a Naval hospital for about a month with a leg. So between that and my

two different pensions and Social Security, I live comfortable in Florida. I wrote in my diary "Hope to never see Florida again" and here I am in Florida for twenty-five years and my final resting place will be the National Cemetery in Bushnell. I went to see the plane, the P2V which is hanging in the museum in Pensacola. You're closer than I am to it. Once you get to Pensacola in one of the big hangars you'll find a large two-engine Navy bomber hanging from the ceiling. I only played a very small part in it. I copied radio, coded weather for about a month and a half, which determined the route it took but I played a little piece on that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good, good. All right. Well, thanks again, Walter and we'll talk to you later.

Mr. Neumann:

OK. I hope it was of some worth. What are they actually going to end up doing with it?

Mr. Misenhimer:

It's been good. I've enjoyed it.

End of Interview

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