

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With  
Charles L. Mazoch  
College Station, Texas  
February 5, 2016  
127<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment  
32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division Red Arrow  
New Guinea  
Philippines

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is February 5, 2016. I am interviewing Mr. Charles L. Mazoch by telephone. His phone number is 979-690-3197. His address is 13887 Alicia Court, College Station, Texas 77845. 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. His daughter Theresa Phinney is helping with the interview.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Theresa:

Thank you. I told him that a while ago.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now I read you the agreement with the museum and that was OK with you. Is that correct?

Theresa:

It was fine. It was understandable that it was to be an oral history and whatever we say is open to the public for educational purposes and we are fine with all of that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, good. Now, what is your birthdate?

Theresa:

Daddy, what is your birthday?

Mr. Mazoch:

October 12, 1921.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Mazoch:

I guess it was Ammannsville, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you had seven sisters and two brothers. Is that correct?

Mr. Mazoch:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was either one of your brothers in World War II?

Mr. Mazoch:

My older brother was in World II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is he still living?

Mr. Mazoch:

No, my older brother is no longer living.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you know what he did during World War II?

Mr. Mazoch:

He was in the artillery in the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Mazoch:

My father's first name was the same as mine, Charles. My mother's first name was Mary Marie.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Mazoch:

Not really. We always had enough to eat because we raised all the food on the farm. All we had to buy was like sugar, coffee and stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Mazoch:

Actually I went to high school for only two years and then we was on a farm and I couldn't get to the town where I would have had to go the last two years so I didn't go. I stayed on the farm and worked.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your last year in school then?

Mr. Mazoch:

I stopped when I was 16, probably in 1936 or 1937.

Theresa:

I have to tell you, when he comes back from the war, he does go and get an associates degree. He used the G.I. Bill.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On December 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Mazoch:

My brother-in-law had an old car and it had a radio and he liked to listen to it.

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Theresa:

He had four older sisters and some of them were married. His brother-in-law hears it on the radio. He's listening in his car. They interrupt with a bulletin and said that it had happened. He came over and told them all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you heard that, how did you think that would affect you?

Theresa:

I guess he misunderstood you. You thought the Japanese would be bombed. He asked you what did it mean to you personally. What would happen to you afterwards, not what was going to happen to the Japanese. How would it affect you as a young man when you heard what happened to Pearl Harbor. What did you think was going to happen to you?

Mr. Mazoch:

I

Theresa:

I don't know. He answers the best he can. He said they knew it was going to be bad, he knew it was going to be a bad situation for everybody.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did he go into the service?

Theresa:

When did you go into the service? Do you know the month? Go ahead and say it.

Mr. Mazoch:

Theresa:

1942. He went into the service on August 22, 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which branch did he go into?

Theresa:

He went into the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he drafted or did he volunteer?

Theresa:

He was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he have any choice of the branch?

Theresa:

They told him he was going Army. No choice.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did he take his basic training?

Theresa:

Mineral Wells, Texas. Camp Wolters.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that basic training?

Theresa:

Terrible.

Mr. Mazoch:

One of my bunkmates said you have to do what they tell you and you had no choice.

Theresa:

Not much fun.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When he finished basic training, what happened then?

Theresa:

He went into Michigan for a couple of months. It was like Army, Marine, Air Corps training and then he went to Camp Meade in Maryland, Ranger training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Theresa:

They put them on a train, first class, real nice and they went out to California. Where in California? They took them by train to San Francisco. How long were you there? A few weeks in San Francisco and then what happened. Then they put them on a ship and shipped them out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

To where?

Theresa:

Where did your ship go? It went to Sydney, Australia.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that trip down there?

Theresa:

21 days. Terrible. You used to tell us how lots of guys were seasick. Did you get sick or did the other guys get sick? Daddy didn't get seasick but some of the guys did. He says they were

worried because they were out there alone on a ship by themselves. Worried about the Japanese getting them. They didn't go straight; they zig-zagged the whole way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened when they got to Sydney?

Theresa:

He was in Sydney about a month. Then he went to Brisbane, Australia and joined up with the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened? Have him tell me what all he did down there. What all happened down there?

Theresa:

What were you doing when you were in Australia? They were doing jungle training. He said they would listen to Tokyo Rose and she would ask them about where the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division was and her propaganda would say they had just finished a bloody battle on Buna. They were all joining up for next time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was that at?

Theresa:

He was in Australia. He was in Brisbane. He was trying to tell you that they were always listening to Tokyo Rose who was doing the propaganda about the American troops. He said she was always telling them about the bloody battle that they had just been in where they lost a lot of men. So he wasn't in that, he was just trying to tell you what Tokyo Rose was telling them all the time. Where did you go after Brisbane? After Brisbane he headed to New Guinea.



Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did he go?

Theresa:

New Guinea.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did he go in New Guinea?

Theresa:

They were just chasing them all over New Guinea, so many places. He can't really give you a town. So the last thing they did was attack Japanese airport people at Aitape.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Theresa:

Can you say it louder? Where did you go? Louder. Say it louder. Where did you go after New Guinea. He spent two months at Leyte in the Philippines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Just have him tell what all he did down there in New Guinea.

Theresa:

Chased Japanese around in New Guinea. The biggest part of his adventures were really in the Philippines. I told you what he did in New Guinea. They just kind of jumped around, trying to chase the Japanese around. They ended up capturing a lot of Japanese in their airport in Aitape. When you send it to us, we'll fix it up. I have an article attached written about him. I guess I'll share that but then he went to the Philippines and went to Leyte and for two months they didn't change their clothes or take off their shoes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what?

Theresa:

What else did you do in the Philippines after Leyte? Then he went to Luzon, northern Philippines. The Villa Verde Trail.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened on that?

Theresa:

He said it was hot. The problem was it was very rough and very jungle and they didn't have a trail so they tried to cut them some roads. A lot of times they were on foot because there weren't any roads for the vehicles.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Theresa:

So then they were just chasing Japanese wherever they could find them, going after them. They did that for a month or so and then the war ends.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He was on the Philippines when Japan surrendered?

Theresa:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they dropped the first atomic bomb on August 6, did he hear about that?

Theresa:

He didn't hear about the bomb dropping for two weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you heard that, what did he think?

Theresa:

He said they heard and they were just thinking and praying that maybe that would be enough.

That the Japanese would quit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When Japan did surrender, did they have any kind of celebration?

Theresa:

They were told not to shoot their guns or make any kind of noise because the Japanese that were still in the jungle might not believe it was over and they had to be prepared for those that were still there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did he stay in the Philippines?

Theresa:

You know what Richard? It's hard for him to pull that out of his head, the number but if you write this down we can tell you when we have it on paper. He knows all this stuff. He has a lot of it written down already.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When he left the Philippines, where did he go?

Theresa:

He was saying that a high-ranking General wanted to surrender and he was all dressed up. He

wanted to sign a surrender to an officer of his equal rank and some Captain or Lieutenant or whatever shows up to pick him up and he didn't want to get in it. He wanted like a fancy car or motorcade or limousine, you know something nicer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When he left the Philippines, where did he go?

Theresa:

He left the Philippines in October 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He stayed in the Philippines all that time?

Theresa:

Til October of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did he do there, then?

Theresa:

I guess he's sounded like he took a little walk to get it all figured out, who was staying, what was happening. I would imagine it's not like today or even if it was today, you know there's thousands and thousands of young men there, it takes a little while to logistically figure out how to get them home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Does he know when he came back to the States?

Theresa:

He said October. He didn't mean October. The war ended, you said you were in the Philippines until October. You weren't. You just said September. Daddy, you're all confused. When did you

get home after the war? There was one guy from China. They were all so, so happy. There was one guy that was singing and making up songs because they were so happy. Dad wishes he could remember all the verses but the only line he can remember and they sang it over and over on this ship coming home was “We’re coming back alive in ‘45”.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When he got back to the States, what did he do then?

Theresa:

Got to San Diego and then what? He was in San Diego for a few days then they put them on trains and shipped them to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Theresa:

This is a true story and I actually know this one. He got to Fort Sam and was there about a week working through all the discharge stuff and then there were guys who were finding rides home however they could. There were guys just finding rides home however they could get home and one guy had a car. This guy had a car and he volunteered to take the people to Houston from San Antonio. He would split the gas or something. Daddy says the problem was that the Greyhound buses were on strike. So what happened was there was this guy in Fort Sam who said the guys could split gas and go on to Houston. So Daddy agreed but then when they stopped in a little town called Schulenburg, Texas, (you probably been through there) Daddy told the guy, “I’m going to get off here. I’m not going all the way to Houston. This is close to my home.” And here’s one of the coolest things ever. There was no communication with your family except for a few letters through the years. When they dropped Daddy on Highway 90, in Schulenburg, got

off, he looked across the street and there was a gas station. And he saw this man at the gas station and that man was there because he'd poked a hole in his tractor tire and he had to get it fixed and Daddy looked across the street and sees that man and it's his father. He walks up to him and he says (and this is old Texas and they're not real emotional) but his old man was pretty happy to see him. Then he got to ride home with his Dad in the truck. He was there because he had a flat tire on his tractor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Quite a coincidence.

Theresa:

It was a pretty nice one.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Theresa:

He said yes. You told me one time you were kind of lost and didn't know what to do but then somebody tried to...he bought you some wood and he started teaching you to be a carpenter. Who did that? Who helped you? But you told us before that you didn't really know what to do with yourself because it was a little bit of an adjustment. He had a hard time because he was kind of undecided. It was an adjustment to think about the jungle, the Japanese. It was a little while for him to work through all that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he use his G.I. Bill for anything?

Theresa:

He used his G.I. Bill to go to Blinn Junior College, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he graduate from college?

Theresa:

He got an Associates' Degree from Blinn Junior College.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Theresa:

You know, not too many. He brought home some pictures and some money. Very little. Guys were taking stuff but he didn't. He was kind of worried about just getting his guns and his stuff home. He didn't want to mess with other stuff. He said they'd break the Japanese rifles and use the wood for firewood.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When he crossed the equator going to Australia, did they have any kind of ceremony when they crossed the equator?

Theresa:

No, he did not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What outfit was he in?

Theresa:

He was in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division, Red Arrow.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your outfit?

Theresa:

He went to one in Wisconsin. He was a farm boy from Texas but he ended up with a lot of boys from Wisconsin. The Wisconsin National Guard. Is there anything else?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Theresa:

Yeah, in Brisbane they heard her all the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did they think of her?

Theresa:

Dad said they knew her job was to spread propaganda.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's fine. On April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died. Did they hear about that?

Theresa:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the reaction?

Theresa:

Well, they couldn't do anything about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did he get?

Theresa:

He can't answer that but we have them all written down.



Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Theresa:

He said pretty good but really he's worn out on me so he's gone in the other room.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, OK.

Theresa:

I will ask him and we'll have a little more time and I'll have him tell us about that. I've written a lot of this before so I'll ask him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Theresa, I think that's all the questions I have unless you've thought of anything else.

Theresa:

Right. No, I'll give you some stuff and we'll fill it in really good and we'll send it back to you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Theresa, I want to thank you and him again for your time today. Thank him for his service to our country.

*End of Interview*

Transcribed by:

Janice Conner

Winamac, IN 46996

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Oral History by:

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, Texas 78333

Home: (361) 664-4071

Cell: (361) 701-5848