

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With  
Dale R. Mitchell  
Francesville, IN 47946  
August 17, 2017  
U.S. Army  
Tank Driver

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is August 17, 2017. I am interviewing Mr. Dale R. Mitchell at his home at Room 303, Parkview Haven, 101 Constitution Drive, Francesville, IN 47946. The phone number here is 219-567-9149. 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 alternative contact is his son, Randall Mitchell, 4175 East 300 South, Winamac, IN 46996. Phone number is 574-595-7648.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Dale, 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. What is your birthdate?

Mr. Mitchell:

I was born in 1920.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What month and what day?

Mr. Mitchell:

November 28, 1920.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Mitchell:

I think I was born at home there in the Winamac area.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You had two sisters, is that right?

Mr. Mitchell:

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They were not in the service then?

Mr. Mitchell:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Mitchell:

Star City.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you finish high school?

Mr. Mitchell:

1939.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you finished high school, what did you do?

Mr. Mitchell:

Went to Purdue.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you study at Purdue?

Mr. Mitchell:

Agriculture.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you graduate from there?

Mr. Mitchell:

1942.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what did you do?

Mr. Mitchell:

I came home and farmed for a year and then I volunteered for the draft and I went in the Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you volunteered for the draft?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Would that have been in 1944 or when?

Mr. Mitchell:

I don't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Probably later in the war. It wasn't early.

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went to the Army, right?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, went to Fort Knox.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that?

Mr. Mitchell:

It was pretty stiff, some of it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did they make you do?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, you'd get a lot of marching and ordinary thing they'd make you go out and pick up cigarette butts and they also...you'd get to drive that tank.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You drove a tank then, right?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have weapons training?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you train on?

Mr. Mitchell:

I think it was a 105 on a tank.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have rifle training?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of rifle did you shoot? The M-1 or the carbine ?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah, the M-1.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you finished basic training, then what happened?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, you were ready for battle.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me back up and ask you a question. What was your mother's first name?

Mr. Mitchell:

Grace.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And your dad's first name?

Mr. Mitchell:

Charles.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Mitchell:

I'd say so. They were worse than the real thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had they been in combat?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, some of them had and some hadn't. The best officer we had was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and he'd got his rank in the Army in the war activity. He was a good one. He was fair and if he saw you were having trouble, he'd help you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you finished basic training, then what happened?

Mr. Mitchell:

I stayed there and I helped to train the new ones coming in. I helped to train the new fellows.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, did you? OK. You helped train them. What were you training them on?

Mr. Mitchell:

Oh, studied the Articles of War and all the stuff that went with it. In this class they asked questions too. I was the only one that answered and so they said, "Seems like you know pretty well about this so you're the teacher next week."

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was that at?

Mr. Mitchell:

Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You did the teaching in Germany then?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ship did you go over on?

Mr. Mitchell:

The Argentina.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that.

Mr. Mitchell:

Oh, it was really a luxury boat and the Army messed it all up, changed it all around and they made an Army ship out of it but it was a nice ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there much seasickness on the way over?

Mr. Mitchell:

Pretty much. Captain that was in charge of us says, "Now don't anybody be sick. It's all in your head." The first guy I saw laying on the rail was him.



Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you land over there?

Mr. Mitchell:

At LeHavre.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In France.

Mr. Mitchell:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do when you got off the ship?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, we got scattered all around and assigned to different units.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What unit were you assigned to?

Mr. Mitchell:

This is hard on my memory. I don't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of a unit was it?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, it was a tank outfit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your job there?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, I was a driver.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Driver?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you drive it on the battlefield or anything?

Mr. Mitchell:

Just in training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In training, OK. You mentioned Patton. Were you around Patton anywhere or something?

Mr. Mitchell:

No, I didn't have anything to do with him, just indirectly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

During the Battle of the Bulge, you were not there yet?

Mr. Mitchell:

No, no. I'm sure glad of it. That was a bad, bad battle.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was, right. What else do you recall from your time over in Germany?

Mr. Mitchell:

Oh, just that some of the stuff that we do that was supposed to simulate battle and we were kind of guards and things. I don't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then on April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died. Did you all hear about that?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did people think when that happened?

Mr. Mitchell:

I guess some of them were real glad and some of them weren't. Just like all politics.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then on May 8 Germany surrendered. Did you have any kind of celebration then?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah. We celebrated because we thought the next move was Japan.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Mitchell:

We just kind of put in our time in training and one thing and another and didn't do much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't guard any prisoners or anything like that?

Mr. Mitchell:

Nope.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else do you recall from your time over there in Europe?

Mr. Mitchell:

Some of the good stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was that?

Mr. Mitchell:

Some of the good stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, what was that?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, I got to the music hall and I believe that was Luxembourg or some place or Salzburg. I remember I got connected to a person who was a Lieutenant and he was a buddy of mine all the way through it and he was one swell fellow. When he came home, he started a church in Danville, California and he preached at that same church until he died.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever go out to that church?

Mr. Mitchell:

No, but he came to visit me. He had a couple girls that went to Valparaiso. He was a Lutheran and I went to chapel with him and they had a regular, ordinary chaplain and he says, "Now we're going to have communion and all of you that are not Lutherans can leave." I just never forgot that. It was OK if you were Lutheran but wasn't fit for the rest of us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you come home from Europe?

Mr. Mitchell:

It was 1945 I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

It was after the war though, right?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long after the war? War got over in May. When would you think you came home?

Mr. Mitchell:

I guess I came home some time in November.

Mr. Misenhimer:

November.

Mr. Mitchell:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were still in Europe when the war got over in Japan then?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When they dropped the first atomic bomb, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think about it?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, what would you think? They said it was terrible and I don't remember that I had feelings. Of course I did. Truman was a great devil for dropping it, killing all them people but it really turned out that it wasn't that way. He really stopped the war and saved people.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, he actually saved more lives than he killed.

Mr. Mitchell:

That's right. He did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

If he'd have to land in Japan, you'd have been there and I probably would have been there and we probably wouldn't be here.

Mr. Mitchell:

That's right. We'd been buried in the sand somewhere.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when did you get out of the service?

Mr. Mitchell:

I don't know that I can tell you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was it late in 1945 or 1946?

Mr. Mitchell:

1945, late. Cause I got married the second day of November.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In what, 1945?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were back here then.

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you still in the service or had you gotten out then?

Mr. Mitchell:

I was kind of in limbo, kind of in and kind of out, both.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you got out sometime maybe in December 1945? Got out, something like that?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Mitchell:

Not much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do when you got out?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, I got married.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, but then after you got married, what did you go?

Mr. Mitchell:

Went back on the farm and helped my dad farm.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How big a farm did he have there?

Mr. Mitchell:

1200 acres.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he own it all?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you helped him farm? For how long?

Mr. Mitchell:

Quite a long time. I don't know just how to put a date on that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you farmed with him all that time, right?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah. I'm still there on the same farm.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's where I knew you when I was in the fertilizer business here. That's where I took you for that helicopter ride.



Mr. Mitchell:

(laughing) Yeah. I remember that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah. That was a lot of fun. Did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Mitchell:

Insurance. That's all I know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any U.S.O. shows anywhere?

Mr. Mitchell:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Mitchell:

Oh, telephone call or two. Ate lots of their donuts.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they charge you for the donuts?

Mr. Mitchell:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Gave them to you, huh?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Mitchell:

It was OK. I'd say medium or ordinary.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Mitchell:

I didn't bring any.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Didn't bring any.

Mr. Mitchell:

No. Some of the guys brought guns and so on but I didn't do that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were over there, did you have much experience with the German people?

Mr. Mitchell:

No too much only the lady who owned the house where we stayed. We got to be good friends.

Mr. Misenhimer:

This was in Germany.

Mr. Mitchell:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were the people friendly?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah. You thought it was superficial.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were they pretty bitter about losing the war?

Mr. Mitchell:

They never acted that way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Mr. Mitchell:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

She was that propaganda girl.

Mr. Mitchell:

Saw some girls over there. They called them CATS. Civilian Actress Technicians. They were everywhere. Of course you didn't get close to them. The officers had them all cornered.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else do you recall from your time in Europe?

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, I was there in the house and a guy knocked on the door and said, "We heard you went to Purdue and were in the Glee Club." "Yes." They says, "Well, we've got a show troupe and we need somebody that can sing." So they got out a hymn book and we sung right there in my house and I got me a pretty place surroundings that way. I graduated with a T-4 and social science, social something.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank when you were in the Army?

Mr. Mitchell:

T-4.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On December 7, 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Did you hear about that?

Mr. Mitchell:

Oh, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that.

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, I just heard the news just like you hear now.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you hear it?

Mr. Mitchell:

Oh, we had that newspaper and had some radios around.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were in Purdue at that point, right?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Mitchell:

Well, just expected that's where we are going. Didn't work that way.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Mitchell:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You said you got married.

Mr. Mitchell:

Got married and that changed things in a hurry.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right. How long were you married?

Mr. Mitchell:

64½ years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did she pass away?

Mr. Mitchell:

February 21 just about four or five months ago.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Just recently? This year?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah. She and my mother both died within a short time. I was pretty lonesome.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you say she and your mother died at the same time?

Mr. Mitchell:

There was five years between them. I do miss her.

Mr. Misenhimer:

We're very happy. We have a good marriage, right. Have you had any reunions of the people you were in the service with?

Mr. Mitchell:

I was in the outfit called the Chapel Airs in the Army and we got together in Louisville. I don't know when that was but it was a long time ago but we put on some programs in a church down there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

These were people you were in the service with.

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your mother's first name?

Mr. Mitchell:

Grace.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Your dad?

Mr. Mitchell:

Charles.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else do you recall about your time in the service?

Mr. Mitchell:

Oh, we landed at Le Havre and it was cold as anything there and when we bivouacked in an old castle of some kind and it was made out of stone had to heat it with a fireplace and the big strong guys got the fireplace and some of us got pushed back. I didn't like that very well. Never did get over it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you were in the service, was there ever a time you were felt frightened?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yes, there was. I had to stand guard in the night. I thought that was kind of scary.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was where?

Mr. Mitchell:

Some of this is hard to remember.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In Germany?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get from World War II?

Mr. Mitchell:

I got a Good Conduct. I got a ribbon I think for serving in time of war. I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I imagine you got the EAME, Europe/Africa/Middle East ribbon. You probably got the Victory Medal.

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Things like that. Nothing special particularly.

Mr. Mitchell:

I don't think about it or talk about it much. All of my soldier life. Some fellows, they can't talk about anything else but I'm not that way. That's past history.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Mitchell:

No, that's all blurry and in the past and I don't much remember it. I knew I got mail from home pretty often.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You could get your mail with pretty good regularity then?

Mr. Mitchell:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good. I want to thank you for your time today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.



Mr. Mitchell:

You're welcome. I didn't do anything that millions of other people didn't do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You did and I did. We did what we had to do and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right.

*End of Interview*

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