

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With

Maynard R. Saugstad
St. Petersburg, Florida

April 5, 2019

U.S. Navy

Pacific

Storekeeper 2nd Class

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is April 5, 2019. I am interviewing Mr. Maynard R. Saugstad by telephone. His phone number is 727-527-5924. His address is 5010 41st Avenue North, St. Petersburg, Florida, 33709. 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.

Maynard, 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. Saugstad:

All I can do is say that I had to do the stuff that time and I didn't do much, but thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Everybody's job was important. Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is okay with you.

"Agreement Read"

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Saugstad:

Yeah, as I say to me I have done nothing really spectacular. I was just a number in the service and it's what I did and did what I was supposed to do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Saugstad:

Yeah, I have several sons that are available as far as locating me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Which would be a good one, give me a first name.

Mr. Saugstad:

One is by the name of Steve.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for him?

Mr. Saugstad:

Yes it's a Wisconsin phone number, they live up there in Wisconsin.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, if you have his number I'd like to have that.

Mr. Saugstad

I think it's 414-774-6567 I think is the number.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Hopefully we'll never need it, but you never know. Now what is your birthdate?

Mr. Saugstad:

5/12/25, May 12th.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Saugstad:

Yep, I had two brothers that are no longer living. But I had two brothers, they both were in service.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were they in World War II?

Mr. Saugstad:

One was in World War II, the other one was not quite old enough for that matter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Saugstad:

My mother was the name of Bertha, my dad went by Old Ray.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And where were you born?

Mr. Saugstad:

I was born in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you grew up during the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Saugstad:

It was tough, I look at it now and I wonder how they ever did it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Saugstad:

He was a wood pattern maker, but he did not have really a steady job until '39 and then after that he had to look for a job. But until then he did anything he could to get the money.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go to high school?

Mr. Saugstad:

I went to high school in, the high school is no longer in existence, it was West Milwaukee High School.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year did you graduate from high school?

Mr. Saugstad:

From '39 to '43, I graduated in '43.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On December 7, '41 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Saugstad:

I recall it and I didn't quite know where it was at or that or anything else. It was all news to me, I didn't follow the news as far as anything goes. But after that I kind of had an idea where it

was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And when you heard that how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Saugstad:

Well I knew that at that time that the way the draft was going that I was going to be drafted as soon as I got out of high school. In fact all of us were looking at the same thing, looking at how long is it going to be before we are drafted after we get out of school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So when did you enter the service?

Mr. Saugstad:

I entered the service probably about July of '43.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Saugstad:

I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And which branch did you go into?

Mr. Saugstad:

Navy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a choice of that branch?

Mr. Saugstad:

Ah yes somewhat of a choice, I went down there and they asked what I wanted. I said the Navy and they sent me to an Army Sergeant and I ended up in the Navy, so.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And why did you choose the Navy?

Mr. Saugstad:

The conditions of living and I felt that I could have a better chance of getting in to where I wanted to with my background.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for your boot camp?

Mr. Saugstad:

I went out to Farragut, Idaho.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that training?

Mr. Saugstad:

It was just a regular boot camp out there and service school out there, I mean it wasn't, I was a little surprised I went out there because the rest of my family all took their training on the Great Lakes. So that was the only changes from my other family members.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Saugstad:

Well I don't know, I just took, see I took what they told me what to do and that's what I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you finished boot camp what happened?

Mr. Saugstad:

Well after boot camp we had the leave and we went back and we had the test taken and we were told back to service school and I did that out at Farragut too. And then got sent out to Shoemaker, California and was sent overseas and ended up at Pearl Harbor. Stayed there for awhile and then was transferred to another base. I went down to Pearl Harbor and then I was sent to Palmyra Islands.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you went to Pearl Harbor you say?

Mr. Saugstad:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what did you do there?

Mr. Saugstad:

I was working out of the base, out of the home base down there doing different things in the ship service line, I was a store keeper, so I was in that line.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were in Pearl Harbor were there still a lot of damage there?

Mr. Saugstad:

Oh yeah, the damage was still there. You could see it, you could see the ships. We were right off of Hickam, we could see the buildings, they were burned up and so on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how long were there?

Mr. Saugstad:

A short while, maybe a couple of months then they found another spot for me and then I was transferred.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then what happened?

Mr. Saugstad:

I was put on another island for nine months and after that then I came back up to a station at Maui, being Honolulu air station at that time was a military base. And I stayed there until after the war and then I was rotated back to the States. And then I ended up on a lake cruiser for the last part of my service, about the last three months and then was discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say you went to Maui?

Mr. Saugstad:

Yeah I went to Maui, I stayed up there, I was up there, in fact I was on Maui when the war

ended. And I stayed there for awhile and then after awhile I was shipped over on rotation leave.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was it you did on Maui?

Mr. Saugstad:

I had, was in charge of a couple of warehouses. I was the storekeeper, so they had to get a lot of their supplies through me when they headed to other

Mr. Misenhimer:

And about how long were you there?

Mr. Saugstad:

I must have been there probably seven, eight months. I don't know, I don't know the track of time, I mean I know I was there before and after the war was declared safe. After the war was over with I was rotated home, I wasn't discharged but I was rotated home. So I spent almost, oh let's say about six, eight months down there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Saugstad:

Well then I was rotated home, got aboard a ship, they put us aboard ship. Stayed on the ship for about three months and was sent home for discharge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Keep going, what happened then?

Mr. Saugstad:

Well after my discharge I got home and the next thing I had to do was look for a job. I had a job for a year and then I decided to go to college and I went to college for four years. After the war was over with I was rotated, I spent about three months or so on a light cruiser cruising around the Japan area on more or less patrol duty. Came back home and then got myself a job for a year and then went back to college for four years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now where were you when the war got over?

Mr. Saugstad:

I was stationed on Maui at the time the war was over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And when you heard about the war being over did y'all have much of a celebration?

Mr. Saugstad:

No, it wasn't because we were not allowed off the base except during the daytime hours and things were pretty quiet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Saugstad:

Well after rotation there I was sent home, heading back on a ship when we were reassigned then and stayed there for about three months. And then was three, four months and then was transferred back home to, I got my discharge in June of '46. Well then after working a year, I took my four years of college and then I started teaching. I taught high school for thirty-two years before I retired.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what date were you discharged?

Mr. Saugstad:

I was discharged from Wold-Chamberlain Air Field in Minneapolis. It was the air field in Minneapolis that was at that time turned over for an Army base and that's where I was discharged.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you'd been in for about three years then, right?

Mr. Saugstad:

I was in yeah, just basically, I call it three years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Saugstad:

Storekeeper 2nd.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Saugstad:

Not really too much because my service time was really inactive, I was not a partying man, I was not a drinker, not a smoker. So I just more or less kept myself busy while I was there. So during my time in service really there was not too much that I can really say anything that I've done worthwhile.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what outfit were you in?

Mr. Saugstad:

I was in no outfit. I was transferred from wherever they needed me from one base to another. And we transferred individually, it's not like an Army or the Marines where they transfer you as a group. We were transferred individually.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there any time that you felt frightened or anything?

Mr. Saugstad:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Saugstad:

It all depends upon the time of year and what was going on and what we were allowed to do. Most of the time I can't say it was too bad, because there's basically nothing there that we had to worry about as far as a lot of regulations because we weren't anywhere in a war zone, so we were pretty much

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of the officers you had over you?

Mr. Saugstad:

Some were good, some were bad.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any particular experiences with any of them?

Mr. Saugstad:

No, not really. I'd say most of them let us do the job and we had to follow the rules and regulations and there was really no problem with any of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your worst time in the service?

Mr. Saugstad:

The lack of area or time in which you could really go out and do anything because everything was regulated. So you really wasn't able to try to, I don't know whether on island duty we were no place to go, you were just there and so on. No, I can't say it was very exciting, it was three years of duty and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you get home from World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. Saugstad:

No, no there wasn't any place to, like where I was there was no place to pick them up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Saugstad:

No I can't really say I've been any place where we had them. Like I can't say you know I saw any of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Saugstad:

No, but my neighbor's son had it, his experience with the Red Cross was not very good.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got out did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Saugstad:

No. No because I went right back into the normal routine that I had, as I say I was not any party boy or anything else so I just continued on the life I had. I went and got a job and did my job, and after awhile, a year I told them I was going to go back to college and that's what I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were overseas did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Saugstad:

No, not too often because I don't listen to the radio, I never did do it. When you're aboard ship it's something that you don't have and then in some of these places you don't have the facilities to get what you want.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you think of her when you heard her?

Mr. Saugstad:

Her propaganda, of being it's just like anything else just like you get now a days.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now April 12th of 1945 President Roosevelt died, did you all hear about that?

Mr. Saugstad:

Yeah, well it was on the radio, yeah. Generally speaking we got the news of the major portions, but there was really nothing a lot of times anything that was really done.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Saugstad:

What year, 1945? I don't think I really call the time that we may have had it, might have had a

little bit of silence and so on, but nothing really out of line.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on August the 6th of '45 when they dropped the first atomic bomb, where were you at and did y'all hear about that?

Mr. Saugstad:

We heard about it. I eventually saw the area that it was dropped in when we were stationed over there at my last part of duty. And later on after, in about 1982 I went over with a USA ball team and played ball over in that area for, it was about four different years just in a tour of Japan. And I wanted to go back and see some of the area where I was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On August the 14th when Japan surrendered did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Saugstad:

We didn't really have any celebration in service at that, because your drinking and everything was not really that much allowed. So some of them went off, they had liberty if they could, some of them did but I didn't really celebrate any of it. It was just a case of waiting for the end to come, we knew when it was going to beat us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were in the service did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Saugstad:

No. I got close to it, but I didn't cross it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now since you've been out have you had any reunions of people you were in the service with?

Mr. Saugstad:

No I've had no contact with any of the individuals I was in service with, I never really had a close buddy in service. I was pretty much of a loner.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what would you consider was your worst day when you were in the service?

Mr. Saugstad:

Just the fact of being in there once in awhile because there was at times you didn't have really your ability to do what you wanted to do. You were living it and so therefore just had to adjust to the situation.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got out did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Saugstad:

I went to school under the G.I. Bill.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to college?

Mr. Saugstad:

At that time it was Whitewater State Teacher's College, which is now part of the University of Wisconsin system.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you graduated from there?

Mr. Saugstad:

Yeah I graduated from there in '51.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did I ask you about the officers you had over you?

Mr. Saugstad:

Yeah you did, I mean it was some good ones, some bad ones, just there isn't much, you don't have a choice of who you have. But their attitudes differ and there are some didn't like the idea that they were in, some felt that was it and they used their authority accordingly, so. No I had some officers I would say I enjoyed working for and then there's others I really didn't particularly care for.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you been on the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.?

Mr. Saugstad:

No, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were overseas could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Saugstad:

I had no problem with the mail, with letters that I got from home.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was the highest pay you got, do you remember?

Mr. Saugstad:

No, all I know is was a 2nd Class Storekeeper with sea pay, so that was the, I just collected the money and I didn't, I know what it was gonna be and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you were overseas were you ever in any typhoons?

Mr. Saugstad:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No storms?

Mr. Saugstad:

No, no big, the only one was late in my career we had to chase a hotel that broke loose from a tow. They were towing it and they broke loose in a typhoon and we had to go out there looking after it. And we had some bad weather trying to locate it and get it back, tie it up to the tug. But other than that, no we didn't run into any storms except the one we had to at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Saugstad:

None.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You got the Victory Medal I'm sure.

Mr. Saugstad:

Well yeah but I mean in the tour, in the section but see I was nowhere near any time a couple of battles of any sort of all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Saugstad:

Yeah, boy that was all over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Everywhere you looked, huh?

Mr. Saugstad:

That was all over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Saugstad:

No, my time in the service was very mild and I didn't really, it was just a case that it was three years of my life taken away. And it helped me get the college education which I may not of had otherwise. And I can't complain on the fact that after I'd retired from there I've had a good life and I've had a good marriage. I've had two of them, but the second one was the good one, she passed away about two years ago so right now I'm by myself.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now I understand you visited the Nimitz Museum probably last fall in Fredericksburg, Texas is that right?

Mr. Saugstad:

The one in Fredericksburg?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yes.

Mr. Saugstad:

Yeah, I've been down there once a few years back and then I was down there again earlier this year. And the thing that really, I liked about it is the fact that they have the carts that you can sit in, motorized cart as you go through and as long as you were a veteran you were able to use it at no charge.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So that's a good museum isn't it?

Mr. Saugstad:

For me yeah, because I couldn't have walked it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Saugstad:

No. You had to realize sir that that service was a while back, I'm over ninety years of age right now. There were some places that I saw something that I wouldn't of seen before and so on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you did not regret your time in the service then?

Mr. Saugstad:

I don't regret it, no. I mean I got to the point near the end of almost re-enlisting but some of the personnel that I was working with I felt if I've got to work with this type of individual I'm not staying. So I got out.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Saugstad:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thanks again for your time today and thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Saugstad:

Okay, thanks for your time.

(End of interview.)

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