

Interview with Raymond Schuler

Interviewer: John Raisor

April 1, 2003

**Interviewer's Notes:** The interview took place at the interviewee's home in his living room. I thought this would allow Raymond to be more open and free flowing with information. I arrived at Raymond's house around 6:00 p.m. and left a little after 7:00 p.m. Before the interview I explained the purpose of the interview and answered several questions concerning where the information would be stored.

**Transcriber's Notes:** There was only one word during the interview that was too inaudible to translate, and I have marked that within the transcription.

**Q:** This is taking place on April 1, 2003. Can you explain to me how you became involved in the military?

**A:** How?

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** I was drafted.

**Q:** You were drafted?

**A:** Right.

**Q:** Did you get to pick the branch that you joined?

**A:** No, didn't pick it. That's what I was in then, the army.

**Q:** What were your first days in the service like?

**A:** I don't remember that. I have no idea.

**Q:** What about boot camp and training?

**A:** I was in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. I took my training and I was there 1 year.

**Q:** One year for training?

**A:** For training. From there on we went to Louisiana maneuvers. And then from there on we went to Fort Sam Houston. From there on we went to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, where you go to go overseas. And then we landed over in Africa.

**Q:** In Africa? Did you like your instructors, your people that were above you?

**A:** Yes, they were okay.

**Q:** They were all right to you?

**A:** They were real nice, nice people. In fact, my company commander I was trained under, after we were there for a while, he made major. He was a captain for the company which I was in. And he made colonel, so he stepped in and we got another fellow, another Captain Lieutenant Carpenter.

**Q:** You liked those guys though?

**A:** Yes, he was a (inaudible). Well, then he got killed and we got another one. He got killed, then we got another one.

Interview with Raymond Schuler

Interviewer: John Raisor

April 1, 2003

**Q:** So, they kept getting replaced?

**A:** Yes, and I was over there two and a half years and then I came home on a furlough.

**Q:** On a what?

**A:** On a furlough. Then I was supposed to go back. But then during that time the war ended over in that section, so I didn't have to go back over. But then, I was home 45 days and then they sent me up to Camp Atterbury. I was there one week and then they sent me down to Fort Benning, Georgia after training school where you train officers, majors, and colonels, classroom.

**Q:** Did you like it there?

**A:** Yes, it was nice there.

**Q:** What was it like there? What was your typical day?

**A:** See Fort Benning, Georgia, was a paratrooper's outfit. That's where they train paratroopers, but our job was to train these majors and colonels for firing range.

**Q:** Where did you go during your service?

**A:** Over in service?

**Q:** Yes. During the wars.

**A:** France, Africa, and Italy.

**Q:** What was France like? What did you do over in France?

**A:** About the same. They were all about the same.

**Q:** Really?

**A:** Combat, yes combat units.

**Q:** What was your job or assignment?

**A:** When I was in service?

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** I was a platoon messenger.

**Q:** A platoon messenger? And what did that entail?

**A:** I had to take messages from the company commander to my platoon, which was the first platoon. In that regiment you had 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> platoon, and I was the 1<sup>st</sup> platoon messenger. And he'd give me a message and I'd have to take it to my platoon. And I had a walkie-talkie. And if there was a mountain in between, it would not carry it

**Q:** So, you had to climb the mountain?

**A:** You had to go to it, regardless of where it was.

Interview with Raymond Schuler

Interviewer: John Raisor

April 1, 2003

**Q:** How was being in combat different from what you expected? Or was it pretty much what you expected?

**A:** It's not like it was trained in the States. But it was much different.

**Q:** How?

**A:** It's not like trained in the States. When you went over there it was much different. When you're under combat, you sacrifice your life one way or another, that's it.

**Q:** That's how it's different?

**A:** (head nod)

**Q:** How did you stay in touch with your family?

**A:** Write letters. Well, when I was in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, I wouldn't write home.

**Q:** Really?

**A:** And my family got a hold of us and asked us why I wasn't writing home. I said I didn't want to. Well, my company commander said, "Schuler come over here and I want to talk to you." He said, "How come you're not writing home letters to your family?" I said, "I don't want to." He said, "Well you're going to write home now. Say hello and goodbye, that's all you have to write." And I did.

**Q:** (laughter from both people) So you wrote hello and goodbye? What was the food like?

**A:** The food?

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** Well, it was good in the States. You got your k-rations and c-rations overseas, which that's all you could eat. Of course, one time we were up three months in the front line without any relief.

**Q:** Really?

**A:** You know what I mean? We didn't have anybody to replace us because we lost a lot of them. Captured or whatever.

**Q:** So, what did you do you do for food then?

**A:** The food was not bad. I mean as far as combat.

**Q:** It was probably the least of your worries.

**A:** K-rations c-rations, whatever you had. After I left over there, you know to come back on a furlough at home, and out of our company, there were only two us left.

**Q:** Really?

**A:** Out of 350. I was the lucky one.

Interview with Raymond Schuler

Interviewer: John Raisor

April 1, 2003

**Q:** Yes. What did you guys do for entertainment in the service?

**A:** Well, we had a lot of entertainment, you know, in the States. Overseas, like I said, it was one time over 3 months up on the front line without a relief of any kind. We didn't have any replacements.

**Q:** Right. So, there's not a lot of entertainment?

**A:** When we go back for rest maybe. Sometimes we'd go maybe back for one week and then we'd go back up again. But it's all according to if you had, see if we didn't have enough men to fight, which a lot of them got hurt, captured, killed, whatever, so that's the way that went.

**Q:** Describe the day your service ended.

**A:** When it was over? I got discharged from Fort Benning, Georgia. You know out of the Fort Benning. It's like I told you. I came back from overseas. I wound up down in Fort Benning, Georgia, Infantry training school. We trained majors, colonels, officers and all that. That was our job. From there I got discharged.

**Q:** Did you stay in contact with other soldiers?

**A:** You mean after I got out? Some of my buddies?

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** Yes, I had one. A buddy of mine was John Robert Fischer. That was Dick Fischer's brother. John and I were in the 88th division. I was in the 88th division. They called us the 88 division "blue devil division." The Germans named us that.

**Q:** Why did they call you the "blue devil division?"

**A:** I guess because it was too mean. (laughter)

**Q:** Yes, that's good.

**A:** And see, the 88th division was a 4-leaf clover.

**Q:** Oh.

**A:** It's like that Fischer boy, John, see he was in the artillery and I was in the infantry though, but he was a cook in the artillery. And we left the same day, you know, to go in the service.

**Q:** Right.

**A:** I left from over there, I got discharged. I mean, I was on a furlough and had to go back again and the war ended during that time. So, I didn't have to go back to my outfit. So, then I wound up down in Fort Benning Georgia, in the training school until I got out on points.

**Q:** On points?

**A:** Yes, you had to get out on points. I didn't have enough points. And I got my first combat infantry badge the first day I landed over in Africa.

Interview with Raymond Schuler

Interviewer: John Raisor

April 1, 2003

**Q:** Really?

**A:** Yes, and that was 10 dollars a month more (laughter from both people).

**Q:** So, you were happy to get that.

**A:** When we went in service first, we got 20 dollars a month.

**Q:** 20 dollars a month?

**A:** When they were in maybe 2 months, they raised us to 40 dollars a month.

**Q:** What was it like in Africa? What did you do in Africa?

**A:** Africa was a pretty nice country. And Italy, I can't say anything for. And France was okay.

**Q:** Just okay?

**A:** Yes, but the people, African people were... Africa was a nice country. It was nicer than France or Italy. But I went to see the Vatican, Rome while I was over there. When we slept, when we were in combat, you know fighting, we slept on the streets of Rome one night. We got in there about 7 O'clock, slept on the street, then at 4 O'clock in the morning we pushed off again. We had to cross the Arnold River on pontoon bridges.

**Q:** On pontoon bridges?

**A:** Yes. It was waiting for us over there.

**Q:** What made you like Africa better than Italy?

**A:** Ah, Italy. Couldn't say too much for it. It was all right, you know what I mean. France, I liked France, but I didn't care too much for Italy. No.

**Q:** What are some of your most memorable experiences?

**A:** Over there? A lot.

**Q:** Well, what's your most memorable one?

**A:** Well, it's hard to kill people, and it is. It's not easy, you know it. But it's you or him. You have your choice. You can let him kill you or you better get him first. But that's choice.

**Q:** So, you think those are most of your memories from over there?

**A:** Yes, there's a lot of them. When you get in combat over there it's a lot different. A lot different than what you get. Your training helps you a lot. When you get over there on the combat, it's a different story. A lot different. You don't, like in the States, you don't have all that shelling artillery and all that stuff, but over there you do. Then Italy, we were in the southern part of Italy. And when they made that invasion of Normandy, they pulled us off of the front line and put us on a boat for two days. And if they didn't make that invasion into France, we had to come in as the second wave. And we didn't have to. They made it, so they put us right back up to the front line again. But the Germans, the German prisoners were a lot of different people than the Japanese.

Interview with Raymond Schuler

Interviewer: John Raisor

April 1, 2003

**Q:** Oh really? How?

**A:** They were more civilized in my book. You know, the Japanese they mistreated all prisoners bad. The Germans didn't. The only problem was that when they captured our prisoners, they didn't have enough to eat. Maybe got a piece of jelly bread and a glass of water. Which was better than none; they didn't have anything to eat neither. But they were good to our prisoners, real good.

**Q:** Really? But you said the Japanese were bad?

**A:** Oh yes, that's why I have no use for them. Those Japs, that's out. That's why I won't buy a foreign made car either. That's like they're fighting over there now, that's terrible. Taking those prisoners and killing innocent people. Well, you can expect that a lot of innocent people getting killed overseas, civilians. That can be expected. You know it's been proven you know this war right here.

**Q:** How did your military experience influence your thinking about the war or the military in general?

**A:** Than America? It's a lot different. Wartime is a lot different than peacetime. In the military, when its war time, it's a lot stricter than it is in peacetime. Well, it can be understood.

**Q:** Oh yes.

**A:** And it's true.

**Q:** How do you think being in the service affected your life?

**A:** Well, when you're in service, it's different. It's a different life, a lot different, than being you know. But in service, it's not a bad life. It's not bad. It's no different than it is when you're right here at home. You do the right thing, there's no problem. But if you think you don't want to do the right thing, you don't get by with it, there's no problem. When you say to somebody, "you're going to do this," and "I ain't going to do it." You don't do that in service. (Laughter from both people). You always say, "sir this", "sir that."

**Q:** And you do what they say?

**A:** Oh yes. But as far as what I mean, service is no bad life. It's not a bad life. It isn't any different than it is in this day, right like this. It's a different. . . I think that it's kind of a little different, you know, to go back to your own life to where you were living. You know.

**Q:** How was it different? How was it difficult to go back to your normal life after the service?

**A:** Well, in some ways it's, you know, different. I don't know. They change your way of living.

**Q:** How?

**A:** Wartime is much different than peacetime. You know, it's teaches more.

**Q:** Did you join any veterans' associations?

**A:** Yes, I belong to VFW, 1114<sup>ff</sup> down here on Wabash Ave. I've been with them through the years, life member.

Interview with Raymond Schuler

Interviewer: John Raisor

April 1, 2003

**Q:** So, you attend reunions, and... ?

**A:** What?

**Q:** Are there any other stories you'd like to tell about the service?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Well, I'd like to thank you a lot for sitting down with me and talking to me about this.

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Well, thank you sir.