Transcription: Linus Schmidtberger

Good morning. Today is Wednesday, December 3, 2014. My name is James Crabtree, and this morning I'm interviewing Mr. Linus Schmidtberger. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. I'm at the General Land Office building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Schmidtberger is at his home in Corpus Christi. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for our program. Sir, the first question that I always have with these interviews is please tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you entered the service.

Linus Schmidtberger: Okay, I was born in Dallas County, Kansas, on a farm about seven or eight miles north of Gorham, Kansas. Grew up on the farm, and had regular farm life which I've always appreciated having grown up on a farm. I think a lot of people missed that.

What type of farm was it?

Linus Schmidtberger: It was a wheat and cattle farm. Small farm. I had three brothers and two sisters, and did the usual things that farm people do, and up until about the age of 19, World War II come along.

Let me ask you real quick, sir. You said you grew up near Russell, Kansas?

Linus Schmidtberger: Gorham, Kansas.

Okay, Gorham, Kansas. So then tell us, sir, where you were on Pearl Harbor Day. Do you remember that day, December 7th of '41?

Linus Schmidtberger: I really don't. I can't really say where I was on that day.

What was it then that caused you to enter the Navy? Were you drafted or was it something you signed up for?

Linus Schmidtberger: Well, my number was coming up shortly for the Army, and I had an older brother, five years older, that had just enlisted in the Navy, and I was following his footsteps more or less.

Did he talk to you about why you should go in the Navy or was it just something you decided you wanted to do?

Linus Schmidtberger: I just decided on my own. I kind of thought I'd rather sleep in a ship's bunk instead of in a slop pit or foxhole.

Sure, that's understandable. So where did they send you for your basic training?

Linus Schmidtberger: I went to San Diego, California.

Was that your first time away from home?

Linus Schmidtberger: No, it wasn't really. I had traveled with a buddy of mine through some of the central states previous to that.

What were your thoughts of boot camp when you got there in San Diego?

Linus Schmidtberger: Very confused.

Tell us why it was confusing.

Linus Schmidtberger: Well, everything moved quite fast in those days, and it just seemed like during training you'd be one place where you should have been in another place. You just didn't have time to finish everything that come along.

I would imagine most of the other guys you were in boot camp with were also young and from across the country.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes.

Is there anything that stands out about the training, any individuals or any certain things you did that stand out in your mind?

Linus Schmidtberger: Well, one thing comes to my mind quite often was our company commander. He was probably a 16, 18-year Navy man at that time, and he could get up on the stand out of the grinder, blacktop grinder, and he could do the manual of arms with a rifle all day long and never tire, never put the rifle down.

When you were there in your basic training, did you have any idea what your job was going to be once you graduated?

Linus Schmidtberger: No, no, I didn't. That was kind of a fast ordeal. When we graduated, we were lined up four deep, and probably about 200 to 300 recruits, and the barracks officer was in front of us and he took about four steps to the side and he said, "All of you from here over are going to torpedo school." He took another four steps and, "Y'all are going to quartermaster school." Another four steps, "Y'all are going to gunner's mate school." And I happen to be in that line. And he said, "The rest of us are going to sea."

Okay. Where did they send you for your gunner's mate school?

Linus Schmidtberger: It was at the training station in San Diego.

What was that like? I imagine at that point you were actually a sailor so, was it a little bit better than being in basic training in terms of getting liberty and that sort of thing?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, it was better than basic training. Let's see, the school lasted six weeks the best I remember, and we were taught basic ordnance, rifles, guns, and anything connected with ship ordnance.

So you learned how to fire all the weapons that would be aboard?

Linus Schmidtberger: Mostly, mostly. A gunner's mate's job is to keep all of those guns operating, and take 'em apart and learn how to service them, and the ammunition that went with them.

Then once you finished your six weeks of that school, where were you sent to next?

Linus Schmidtberger: I was sent to Bremerton, Washington, and I arrived there and was assigned to my first ship. It was a yard minesweeper, YMS-132. It was a small ship. It was 128 feet long, had 26 enlisted men and four officers on board.

It was a very small crew.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes. Well, that was the size of most minesweepers in those days. Went aboard and it was very eerie. It was about nine or 10 o'clock at night with a heavy fog. It was tied up to a dock, and that was my first experience stepping on a U.S. ship.

Where did your ship go from there? Were you deployed in the Pacific as a minesweeper?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, we were. We departed shortly after that and went up the coast of Canada, and we traveled in the daytime and go into port at night. The first port was Prince Rupert in Canada, and then on the next day to Ketchikan, Alaska. And from there just island skipping, and ended up out in the outmost Aleutian island of Attu.

Okay.

Linus Schmidtberger: And that's where our ship was stationed.

Were you out there, sir, in the Aleutians when there was fighting going on with the Japanese?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, Attu was occupied by the Japanese, and the day before we arrived at Attu, the Japanese had also occupied Kiska which is the island next to Attu. And during heavy fog at night, they come in to Kiska, loaded everything up and deserted the island, and all the rest of 'em were over on Attu.

How was your minesweeper used? Can you describe for us, sir, a little bit about how a minesweeper would work, especially around the islands?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, I'd be happy to. A minesweeper is made to detect and destroy mines that were laid in harbors, and any area where ships go through. And we had all of the facilities on that minesweeper to destroy, cut and destroy these mines, and that was our primary job was to sweep the waters of the Attu Bay and free 'em of any magnetic mines or floating mines, and we had all gear on board to do that.

Did you have other minesweepers that you worked in conjunction with?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, there were probably four or five other minesweepers in that same bay or area where we were.

Did you find many mines?

Linus Schmidtberger: Not a lot of mines. We pretty well had them cleared out within not too long a period of time, and it wasn't a real big problem later on. As we was clearing the mines, the Japanese would send their bombers up from the outmost islands of theirs and bomb the area of Attu, and we had bombers that would take off from Attu bombing the Kurile Islands which is the northmost islands of Japan, and we really didn't have a lot of good air support back in those days. I remember there were . . . The Navy had a few of these PBY flying boats, and most of

them were in pretty bad shape, and a lot of times they'd be loaded with bombs and take off, get up about four or five hundred feet in the air. I remember at least three or four that we saw that usually exploded or had a malfunction of some kind. And, let's see, we'd grapple the crew out of the water with grapple hooks. Of course, nobody survived in those days in that cold climate and cold air up there. Another time I remember the Japs got lucky and dropped some bombs in the harbor where we were, and it didn't hit our YMS but it was close enough, it raised up the stern of that ship. It looked like it was straight up in the sky for a few minutes, and then . . .

Too close.

Linus Schmidtberger: Of course, it went back down. No one was overboard so we had quite a few scary moments like that.

How long did you spend all together, you think, up in the Aleutian Islands?

Linus Schmidtberger: Nearly two years.

Two years up there.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes.

So you had to deal with the very frigid winters as well I'm sure.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes. The climate up there was very . . . It varied lot, especially the williwaws, they called them. They were winds that just take up, come up from just nothing and just blow in one direction for a length of time and then just cease, then come from the other direction. We used to try to anchor, ride 'em out, and usually cross anchor. That's one anchor in one direction, one in another, and usually those winds would tear our anchor chains.

Wow.

Linus Schmidtberger: So what took place then was that we'd stay underway until usually a day or two, probably no more than three, we'd ride those out. And, of course, everyone aboard that ship was seasick.

Oh, I imagine.

Linus Schmidtberger: Except one gentleman. He was a gunner's mate as I was later, and he had about 25 years in the Navy, and he was at the helm of the ship, and he would keep it off of the beach, and we'd ride those things out. I remember seeing the ship's captain laying in the bridge house, his gold braid hat was laying in the garbage can there, and he's rolling around from the ship heaving and rolling, and everyone aboard that ship but that gunner's mate was sick.

Yeah, that had to have been horrible.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, it was. Of course, we had crew on watch, and I remember one time I was on the watch above the bridge and I was to be relieved at midnight after my four hours so the sailor that was gonna relieve me was sick in the bunk and I got somebody to help me and we took him up to the bridge and got him . . . Lashed him to the bridge edging, put the headphones

on him, binoculars over his neck and I went back down. I was sick as a dog myself. So that's kind of that nature of that. But that gunner's mate at the helm, he never got sick.

He was a lucky guy I guess.

Linus Schmidtberger: He had been in enough of those or situations of that nature that he could take it.

He had gotten acclimated to it I guess.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, yes, you do. I remember after that, why, I never was seasick again or playing sick, either one.

Sir, during that time, those two years that you were up there in Alaska in the Aleutians, did you have a chance to get any letters from home or news from home, that sort of thing?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, very good. My mother wrote, was a good writer, and I wrote home although probably the letters that I wrote probably looked like confetti when they got 'em because of all letters leaving the ship were scrutinized by one of the officers aboard the ship.

Yeah, they were all censored, I know that.

Linus Schmidtberger: It was all censored, and we tried to keep them . . . The other thing was that in those days nobody knew where you were. I mean the people back home. My parents didn't know where I was for probably nearly three years. But it was very, oh, I would say, lonesome up there in the Aleutian Islands. There just wasn't anything to do. There wasn't anything ashore of any interest. Spent most of the time on the ship.

How would the sailors pass the time?

Linus Schmidtberger: Well, actually during that time, a third of your crew is always on watch and along with that you done your regular eight-hour day, and you really didn't have a lot of time to do anything else except keep up the equipment. We had a fair amount of ordnance on that YMS. Had a three-inch gun on the forecastle, two 20 millimeters on each side of the bridge, and 50-caliber machine gun on what we called the watch station above the bridge. We had quite a few what we called depth charges for submarines, and that was another part of our duty was to . . . We had what we called sonar in the base of the ship that detected any . . . It was an echo device that would give us an indication of a submarine or something of that nature, and that's when we would go after them and drop our depth charges. We also had two what we call Y-guns. They would fire depth charges off of each port and starboard side of the ship. Pretty well loaded with . . .

Sounds like it, yes sir.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yeah, they were well equipped. That YMS was a good ship. It was a completely wooden ship.

That's interesting. Was that because of the mines?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, because of the mines, because of magnetic mines primarily. And it was a strong ship to take those storms that we went through. Like I said, there's very little on the beach. The Army was on the beach. A lot of Japanese on the beach yet, and we spent very little time on the beach. There weren't any piers to tie up to so usually if we were in from our regular duty, we were anchored in the bay, Attu Bay there. I was on the beach a few times but there wasn't anything over there to amount to anything.

Was there much in the way of civilians or people still living in the area or were they all . . . ?

Linus Schmidtberger: You know, that area must have been very sparsely populated.

I think you're probably right.

Linus Schmidtberger: I don't recall any civilians of any kind on that island. These were just barren islands more or less.

During the two years you did there, did you know when you were going to leave the ship, when your time was going to be up?

Linus Schmidtberger: No, no, there was no time limit of any kind that I know of. One interesting thing about the island was that there was one Japanese soldier that evidently had run on to or killed another American soldier and got his outfit and dressed in it. Most everybody dressed in camouflage, and he would make the chow line that the Army had.

That's pretty amazing.

Linus Schmidtberger: Pretty amazing yet he ate in that chow line for quite some time before he was recognized and caught.

Wow.

Linus Schmidtberger: That's probably easy to understand though because all you had to do was show up in the chow line, and in heavy camouflage with a face sticking out, everybody looked the same.

They didn't recognize him.

Linus Schmidtberger: And there was no reason for any conversation, and I guess after he ate, he went back to his lair wherever it was.

That's an amazing story.

Linus Schmidtberger: It is. I thought it was. But he was finally, they finally caught him or recognized that . . . Evidently somebody probably tried to converse with him or thereof. I really don't know the basis of that. The other interesting thing was that General Buckner, I believe he was in charge of the Army part of that war up there. But he came aboard our YMS to . . . We shuttled him around to another part of the island, and he was onboard one afternoon or whatever until we arrived where he was going. I thought that was kinda neat, transferring him. There were no roads to amount to anything on the island I don't think, and that was about the only way he had of getting around.

Makes sense, sure. So after the Aleutians, were you still aboard that same ship when you left the Aleutian Island area?

Linus Schmidtberger: I was aboard ship until I left, yes.

Okay, so tell us then . . . I guess at some point they decided that the Aleutians had been secured and they decided to move your ship and others into other operations, right?

Linus Schmidtberger: Well, no. I left the ship in Attu.

In Attu.

Linus Schmidtberger: I had put in for . . . I was trying to figure out a way of getting out of that area, and I put in for a gunner's mate school in Washington, D.C., and I was accepted, and I flew out of Attu along with another gunner's mate that was on another YMS, and we flew out of there into Seattle, Washington, aboard a DC-3 mail plane. That was our first sight of any civilians in about two and a half years or thereof.

That's a long time.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, it's a long time. I was real happy to get out of there and be accepted to the Naval Gun Factory school in Washington, D.C. And I recall the trip from Attu to Seattle, we were on a mail plane. It had the . . . The DC-3 had the metal seats down each side and was loaded with mail bags, and the other sailor with me, Mel Johnson, and I were laying up in the mail bags and the only other two passengers was two Navy captains, and one was a medical officer and one was a line officer. We ran into some turbulence coming back, and the two captains started getting seasick from the turbulence, and the medical officer had luckily brought a couple of medical blankets with him. He laid 'em down on the base of the plane there and when he's going to lay down, he'd get real sick and about time he got 'em all laid down and placed there, the other Navy captain said, "Well, I want to lay down there. I outrank you. I'm a line officer," which outrated a medical officer. And sure enough, he did. And Mel Johnson and I were laying up in the mail bags smoking a cigar which didn't help any for getting them seasick. It was hilarious. I don't think either one of them realized the cigar smoke was helping 'em get sick. Anyway, kind of an interesting episode.

I was curious, sir, when you were in the Aleutians and you got the notification you were going to get to leave there, how much advance warning did you have? Did you know a couple weeks ahead of time? A month ahead of time?

Linus Schmidtberger: Oh, no, no. Probably a day or two.

A day ahead of time or two you found out, hey, you're actually getting out of here.

Linus Schmidtberger: Things moved real fast in those days. Probably just a day or two.

Okay. And I was curious too, sir, that you spent two years aboard the ship and obviously you didn't get paid very much but you had to have gotten some sort of pay.

Linus Schmidtberger: Well, yes, we did.

Did they give that money to you or did you have a way of sending it home? How did that work?

Linus Schmidtberger: All right. Well, my first pay was 21 dollars a month, and that was when I was in training in San Diego. About three months later we got a big raise. I think it went up to 28 dollars a month. And the way this worked, each month if you wanted to draw some money, you filled out a chit of what you wanted, and then the purser would . . . You could claim that money that you put in for. If not, it just stayed in escrow.

Okay, so you had an account, the Navy had an account for you.

Linus Schmidtberger: You had an account, uh-huh.

Okay, because I was thinking there probably wasn't that much stuff that you needed to buy if you're only aboard a ship for that two years.

Linus Schmidtberger: That's right.

And so that . . . I was just wondering how that worked.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, I usually would send money home, and that way, you were right . . . There was very little . . . We had no ship stores on the YMS.

I'm sure you didn't have a purser either, right?

Linus Schmidtberger: I didn't have a purser either so all of those accounts were kept somehow. I'm not sure how but they managed it. The best I remember there wasn't much ashore there at Attu to buy, or there wasn't anywhere to spend any money.

When you got back to Seattle, were you able to eat a regular meal again and that sort of thing?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, yes. It was just a daze more or less to see the civilians, especially the female part of it.

Sure.

Linus Schmidtberger: I doubt whether we saw any females, maybe once . . . I got to see one USO show in Alaska and that was it.

Yeah, I bet that was a nice thing to get back to the States for a bit.

Linus Schmidtberger: It sure was. It was just, well, you get to thinking about those that were left behind though. As far as I know, the YMS remained at Attu.

So then you went to a school in D.C. Tell us a little bit about that school.

Linus Schmidtberger: All right. It was a school and also a factory where they made components and reburnished components of the large guns on the battleships and the cruisers. And we had nothing to do with the manufacturing of those or any part of that. Our schooling was mainly ordnance. It was range finders and all components of the small arms, and of the smaller caliber guns that we'd be familiar with in the future. It was a six-month schooling.

So a very long school then.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, it was pretty well organized and there were a lot of students there. Particularly we enjoyed . . . One thing that I remember, we arrived there about five or six days before the next class was to begin so Mel Johnson and I decided we wanted to go to New York and look it over so we did, and took in the sights of New York for four or five days.

That's great.

Linus Schmidtberger: And it was the only large city that I've ever been in that really was scary when you saw the skyline of it. I'd been in other large cities, Tokyo and a lot of 'em in the Pacific, but it was just mindboggling. Anyway, we spent four or five days in New York, come back and started to school.

Where was the school? Was it at the Navy Yard?

Linus Schmidtberger: It was just across the Potomac River at the Naval Yard, yes.

Okay, so it was the D.C. Naval Yard.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, basically they called it the Naval Gun Factory.

So you did your six months, and then were you put back aboard another ship at that point?

Linus Schmidtberger: Then I got a leave to go home. That was my first trip home.

Oh, that's good.

Linus Schmidtberger: In, let's see, pretty near three years I guess. Nobody got leave in those days, especially aboard ship. The only way you could get off the ship is have a replacement, and, of course, they were short of that, and there was nobody . . . Nobody got leaves, even after basic training, and we went straight into other things. Yes, Washington, D.C., was interesting. It was, of course, the place where our government subsides, and I remember one interesting thing was I happen to meet a friend that was going to school there, and she had worked at the Pentagon. She said, "Why don't you come up to the office where I work some time. I want you to see where I work and meet some people up there." And I said, "No, I'd rather not. I'd get lost in the Pentagon." Kept on and I finally agreed to go, and I said, "How am I going to find where you're at?" And she said, "Well, just give me a call on the telephone and tell me where you're at and I'll come down and get you," which she did. Went up and I never seen so much brass in all my life.

Sure.

Linus Schmidtberger: There were four-star naval captains and Army generals, about eight or 10 of 'em, and come to find out she worked for the officers in what we'd call a think tank. And she was the woman that related and sent the messages to the officers over at the front, what the other officers had agreed on there and how they were going to manipulate their forces, and I was well received. And, of course, being a second-class gunner's mate in this mob of officers, they passed a box of cigars around and everybody lit up and visited, and treated me real nice.

That's great.

Linus Schmidtberger: I felt a little out of place though. That's the first time I was ever around that rank of people, and anyway, interesting things happen.

Sure. I wanted to ask you, sir, because I know on the one sheet that your son had sent us it said you were also at Okinawa, and I was wondering if you could tell us about your memories of Okinawa and what ship you were aboard there.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, this was after I had boarded another ship, after gunner's mate school. I went aboard a new ship. It was the ATA-168. That was an attack transport auxiliary. That's what the ATA stood for, and it was a pretty large ship. It was an invasion ship. It was about 800 feet long, and we carried troops and all of their equipment on that ship. I went aboard at Astoria, Oregon, and down the Columbia River, and we made a number of trips from the west coast to the orient, and those trips were 16 days and nights. Going we always steered a zigzag course, and always traveled alone. On one of those trips, we always hauled Marines because they were usually the first ones in, and we had enough landing craft on that ship to put 'em on shore, put their guns and their tanks and their trucks and all of their equipment on shore. And anyway, on one of those trips we were slated for the invasion of Okinawa, and that was after we got over there, we were with . . . We traveled alone going over but got in a flotilla over there that were getting ready to invade, and it was kind of interesting. The Navy had outsmarted the Japanese for putting a bunch of obsolete ships on one side of the island. And, of course, there were a couple of battle wagons there, cruisers on that side, and the invasion force come around the other side and landed where the Japanese had moved nearly everything over to the side where the fake ships were. Of course, the two battle wagons were shelling the island, and that was a beautiful sight to see those 16-inch ball of fire in the air. Anyway, we moved around to the opposite side of the Japanese side of the island of Okinawa, and that's where we landed our troops. And it took us three days and nights to make that landing. The reason was that we were so close to Japan that their air power were coming over, and every time there was an air alert we would up-anchor and head back to sea. And then as soon as the all-clear was sounded, we'd be back in and drop anchor again and either unload or pick up the ones that we had on the beach. I wasn't involved in the process of landing or on the landing craft. We were the regular ship's crew which part of the boat crew were also part of the ship's crew but our job was to keep all of our armament in order and keep everything firing.

Yeah.

Linus Schmidtberger: I remember seeing the little suicide boats with one Japanese in it heading towards the ship. We'd have to blow 'em out of the water, and, of course, the sky was just loaded with planes of ours and also theirs. One particular incident of putting the Marines ashore, one of the Marines that landed was proceeding up the beach a ways, and one of the Japs jumped out of a foxhole with his samurai drawn and got it straight up in the air, and the Marine cut him in two with a machine gun. As the Jap dropped forward, he clipped the Marine's helmet and cut half of his ear off. And that same Marine came back on one of the other landing craft and was taken care of aboard the hospital that we had onboard ship. Kind of an interesting thing. That shows you how sharp those samurais are.

Oh, sure. Absolutely. Razor sharp.

Linus Schmidtberger: Just the weight of the guy dropping caused that damage. That was kind of interesting.

I know, sir, as well that you were on one of the first ships that went into Nagasaki after the bomb was dropped.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes.

Can you tell us a little bit about that.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, that was . . . I'm not sure. Just previous to that we had picked up a load of 600 Army nurses on the island of Tinian. This was . . . There had been a large hospital, temporary hospital, set up on the island of Tinian with the expectation of us invading the mainland of Japan. A lot of this was done beforehand in anticipation of the landing, and, of course, in the meantime the second bomb was dropped and the Japanese had surrendered. We'd picked up this load of 600 Navy nurses, and I believe we took them on our trip to Nagasaki. And the best I remember, it was about two weeks after the bomb was dropped and the all-clear was sounded where ships could come in. And I believe we had these nurses onboard then, and probably they disembarked there at Nagasaki. Nagasaki was a pretty large city that was built right in between, in a valley between two mountainous areas, and it looked to me like it had just burned everything that was in that valley. As far as you could see. Things like concrete pillars and things of that nature would be broken up but you'd see rebar sticking out of the top of 'em, and the other thing I remember was the floating bodies in the water. Seemed like they were just all over. And that was about all I remember of that trip but it was . . . It's easy to understand why they gave up.

Oh, sure. They were obliterated.

Linus Schmidtberger: And I would mention this, just from my standpoint of thinking, if it hadn't been for the two atomic bombs, I probably wouldn't be sitting here talking to you on the telephone today.

You may very well be right, yes sir.

Linus Schmidtberger: Just a good possibility because we had already sensed that it was going to be a bloodbath.

Oh, yes sir.

Linus Schmidtberger: To land on Japanese land.

That would have been a horrible invasion to have had to conduct.

Linus Schmidtberger: It would have been . . . Okinawa was bad enough but it would have been worse than that.

Yes sir, I think you're right.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, a lot of people were against that atomic bomb but . . .

Of all the interviews I've done of World War II veterans, I've not met one yet that doesn't think Truman did the right thing. I think it's people that haven't read history or are just ignorant of what the war was about that think that the bombs should not have been dropped. I think anyone I've talked to who was in that war fully supports what was done to end it.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, that's right.

Definitely a case of, you know, people were killed because the bombs were dropped but more were saved because of that.

Linus Schmidtberger: That's right. It saved many a life I'm sure.

Especially Americans who were in the line of having to make that invasion.

Linus Schmidtberger: That's right. Well, it's just a shame that some of these people that are against things of that nature, it's a shame that they have never been over there to see what things are like. And it's pretty interesting in the Pacific aboard the ATA. I was to China twice. I don't really recall what we went there for but China was an ally of ours during World War II. I didn't think too much of China. It was very . . . Japan was a clean country but China was just the opposite. I remember what kind of fascinated me was going ashore, we weren't allowed to eat anything or drink anything ashore, but the dead bodies laying in the curb. I asked someone about it. They said, "Well, the wagon comes by once a week and picks 'em up. They're mostly homeless people or people without any family or whatever."

That's tragic.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yeah. I remember a meat market there that had a big ol' four or five hundred pound hunk of fish on a little table outside of the meat market, just covered with flies. And people would come buy a piece of fish, you know, and cut off a hunk, and things of that nature.

I was going to ask you, sir, once the war ended, how long did you spend there in Nagasaki before you got to go home because I'm sure you had quite a few points by that point to allow you to be one of the first to come home?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, well, the catch to that was that I was . . . My brother and I both joined the U.S. Navy. We weren't reserve. We both signed up for a six-year hitch, and consequently I was . . . When the ATA come back to the States, I was transferred off of the ship to the naval base at Yokosuka, Japan, and I was put ashore and was assigned to the security department. That amounted to looking for contraband on the base and black market and things of that nature. And I was teamed up with another sailor that had been there a while, and we traveled in a Jeep and made the base . . . A pretty large base, and I rode with him. The security officer kept asking me if I was ready to take over, and I said, "No, I got too much shellshock yet. I need more time." And then one night the fellow I was with, we were shore patrol, we picked up a load of cigarettes, cartons of cigarettes in boxes, and it was a black market thing. We turned 'em in and this was on a mid shift at night. Next morning I saw my buddy. We got to sleep late after doing the midnight shift. The next morning when I got up, I saw the fellow that was in charge, and he was in charge of the cleaning detail out in the barracks where we slept. I was asking him, I said, "Well, what happened to you? How come you're out here?" He said, "You know that load

of cigarettes we picked up last night?" He said, "That belonged to the security officer." Of course, after that I never did recuperate enough, as I told 'em, to take over. I figured if that's the way they were gonna run it, well, I didn't really think I needed to have any part of it.

So then in 1946 you were able to finally come back to the States?

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes. What happened was after the peace was signed, if you had four years in on a six-year hitch or three years in on a four-year hitch, they give us a chance to get out. And that's what I put in for, and after that come out, I had put in for it and was flown back to the States, and ended up at the Naval Training Station in the Great Lakes. And that's where I was disembarked.

What was it like getting to come back home and be a civilian again after that time?

Linus Schmidtberger: Well, really I wasn't a civilian for a while because I had quite a bit of leave buildup, and I really didn't, for about at least two or three months, I was still a sailor even though I was back home. And the other thing was, we had to wear our uniform. A lot of people don't realize this but during wartime, there were no civilian clothes on military people.

That's right. You had to wear a uniform everywhere.

Linus Schmidtberger: You wore your uniform until you were discharged. I had been in long enough where I was able to come back and along with some other people that weren't reserve and get out. Actually I spent four years, eight months and 23 days in the Navy. I'll never forget that.

Yeah, that's great.

Linus Schmidtberger: Just things you remember. My serial number, that comes just automatically, 34269. Anyway, it was pretty interesting. Anyway, ended up in the Great Lakes and had to wait about a week or more for our official papers to get back to be on the way out of the service. But going back home, it was just different. I remember the first leave that I did get, the five or six days when we went to New York, I had been away from home so long that I didn't care if I went home or not.

That's a long time.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, anyway, it would have been two days home on a rail, two days back. Well, I'd only had a day or two at home anyway so the planes were not available in those days, and rail traffic was sporadic, so anyway, it was just different.

Yes sir.

Linus Schmidtberger: But we and all of my buddies that I knew of, none of us had any problems. Didn't have the problems they have today when they come back.

That's great.

Linus Schmidtberger: For some reason or other, I never have figured that out completely.

That's good. Well, sir, our time is up for the interview for what I have reserved in this room. I really want to thank you for taking the time to let us record your interview. We're saving these interviews for posterity. We have documents here that go back to the 1700s, and so our goal is to save this interview with those so that people can listen to them years from now. It's an honor for us to be able to talk to you and to record your story. In a couple weeks we're going to send you copies of this interview on CD so you can give them to your family or friends.

Linus Schmidtberger: I appreciate that.

Yes sir, well, it's really just a very small way of the State of Texas saying thank you to you for your service to our nation.

Linus Schmidtberger: I appreciate that and I appreciate the visit we had.

Yes sir, absolutely. I really do thank you and, again, thank you for your service. Again, of course, it's getting close to the holidays but sometime soon we're going to get these CDs made and we'll put them in a mail to you along with a nice letter and certificate signed by Commissioner Patterson.

Linus Schmidtberger: That sounds good.

Yes sir. So thank you very much and thank your son again as well for putting us in touch with you.

Linus Schmidtberger: Yes, thank you very much.

Yes sir. It was an honor. Take care.

Linus Schmidtberger: Thank you. Bye bye.

Yes sir. Bye bye.