

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
WILLIAM HAUSMANN IV,
LSM, U. S. Navy, World War II

2003

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Hausmann, William, IV, (1927-), Oral History Interview, 2003

User copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 20 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 20 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

ABSTRACT

The West Bend, Wis. native discusses his World War II and post-war service with the Navy aboard an LSM stationed near Pusan (Korea) and in China patrolling the Yangze river during the Chinese Civil War. He talks about growing up in West Bend, Wis., beginning basic training at the war was ending, having his military records lost twice, and being sent to Treasure Island (California). Hausmann discusses preparing for a Christmas meal at Treasure Island and stealing a turkey from the kitchen, being sent to Korea, assignment to working in the shipboard office, and duty in China. He tells of his impressions of China, interacting with the Chinese army, and problems with the Communist Chinese. He touches upon being called to active duty for the Korean War and deferral because he was enrolled at Marquette University (Milwaukee).

Biographical Sketch

Hausmann (b. June 18, 1927-) served aboard an LSM shortly after World War II ended. His ship was stationed near Korea and he worked as an office typist.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2003.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2003.

Transcript edited by Abigail Miller, 2003.

Interview Transcript

- John: This is John Driscoll, and I am a volunteer with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and today is June 2, 2003. We are at Chula Vista Resort, at the - - what is the name of your outfit?
- Hausmann: This is the Wisconsin LSM-LSMR Veterans Association. [Landing Ship Medium - Landing Ship Rocket]
- John: Okay, we are with them, at their convention at Chula Vista, and this is Bill Hausmann. Bill is from West Bend, Wisconsin, and he is a veteran of World War II. And, Bill, thanks a lot for being the first of this bunch to agree to an interview. That took courage.
- Hausmann: Well, my wife said, "You better do it."
- John: Right! Having been in the service, you know how to take orders. So do I. Early life, Bill?
- Hausmann: I was born in West Bend, and grew up in West Bend.
- John: When were you born?
- Hausmann: I was born on June 18, 1927. And I am seventy-five years old now. I grew up in West Bend. I went to school there, in their grade school and high school system. My father was a dentist and we lived a comfortable life in West Bend. We were very, I would say, insulated from the world a little bit, because we were a very small town and we were about 5,200 at the time. And everybody knew everybody. You played hookey, I played hookey from school one time and my father knew about it before I got home. And so everybody kind of watched over everybody, and you knew everybody in town. When I graduated from high school, which was in 1945, I graduated about the 8th of June and then I had my birthday on June 18, turned eighteen, at which time I was drafted. And by July, I had been picked by the Navy, through the draft, and by July I was in the Navy and serving down at Great Lakes Naval Center. And eventually, I even remember my company number, it was Number 1107. I was, I am a big fellow, and so my head stood out always, so I wound up being one of the student commanders, or whatever you want to call it, of the troop, or the company. And since the war ended and they were pushing recruits through rather rapidly, we wound up with basic training right about, let's see, I think we had six weeks basic training, which was unusual at the time, because usually it was at least a ten week basic training. And after that, of course, we got a short leave, and went home.
- John: Let me interrupt there. Do you remember Pearl Harbor Day?

Hausmann: Yes. On Pearl Harbor Day, I happened to be a paperboy for *the Milwaukee Journal*, at the time. And my family and I were having dinner with some friends, and I got home and met with a very irate man who wanted me to have been out there selling extra papers about Pearl Harbor. So, I remember it very clearly. That was '41. As I said, I had a paper route at the time. So, I was home from Great Lakes, I think. At that time. We've talked about that. I'm not exactly sure exactly what the date was when the dropped the bomb.

John: It was August 6. That's my birthday.

Hausmann: Okay. So, I had been, I was out of basic training by then, but not by much. And, maybe it was right at the end. Anyway, the war was over and I was in the Navy, and the Navy was trying to replace a lot of the men who had plenty of points and I took a, they gave you tests to find out what your specialty was, and it turned out that I had had a very good physics teacher in high school, and naturally they thought I should be involved with either radar or sonar or radio, but they didn't need radar or sonar or radio men at the time, so I wound up as a seaman, seaman second class. And they shipped me out on a troop train to California, to, actually it was called Schumaker Naval Base. Which I think is all houses now. Solid with houses.

John: S-h-o-e?

Hausmann: S-c-h-u-m-a-k-e-r. Anyway, that is where I was. I have often joked at, on that troop train, we went through St. Louis, and I spent the longest two weeks of my life one night in St. Louis, because it was hot, and of course, there was no ventilation in the cars. There was no air conditioning. Who ever heard of air conditioning?

John: Yea, sure.

Hausmann: So, and we were parked in a rail yard there overnight, and it was hot. I remember that as one of the hottest nights I've ever spent in my life. And so, as I say, I went to Schumaker, and I got there. And they were ready to ship me out, and they said, "Oh, we lost your records." So, they lost my records. They said they lost my records. Including my medical records. So I had to go through an entire series of shots again.

John: Oh, Jesus.

Hausmann: So I went through an entire series of shots and they diddled around, and diddled around, and finally they decided they were going to send me over to Treasure Island, which is where you shipped out. And I went over to Treasure Island, and when I got over there, and I was around for a while over there, and, what do you know? They lost my records again. And I had another series of shots. Now, since I

was going to go overseas and they weren't sure where I was going, I had been getting shots for bubonic plague, which was endemic over there. I don't know if they still give shots for bubonic, or whether they even work, but I know that I got several series of them. A funny thing happened to me. When you are the new man on the base, of course, you wound up in mess cook. And you wound up scrubbing a lot of pots and pans and that stuff. Well, I don't know whether it was Thanksgiving or Christmas, and I was on duty the night before, and they were cooking a bunch of turkeys, and they were making a big mess, and a whole bunch of fellows went over there, and somebody says, "Does anybody know what basting is?" And I said, "Sure, that is taking pan juice and washing it over the top of something in order to make it juicier." He says, "You are going to be basting the turkeys." Well, everybody else is at the deep sink scrubbing out pots and pans, and I am walking from oven to oven, basting these turkeys. And it was a large base. I think there were probably a hundred turkeys there. So, I'd baste one, and go on to the next one, and keep basting until I got to the end, and by then it was time to start over with the one in the front. So, it got to be about three o'clock in the morning, and everybody had cleaned everything up, and the turkeys were cooked. And so, we decided that we would, the fellows were looking at me, and they said, "Gee, those turkeys look awfully good." And I said, "Well, there is one over here," and I've got my pea-coat here, so I wrapped up a turkey in my pea-coat. And we took it back to the barracks, and we had our turkey dinner at three o'clock in the morning.

John: That's good.

Hausmann: And, eventually, my records caught up with me, and I was put on a naval transport for, well, we went past Hawaii on to, in sight of Japan, and wound up going to Korea. And I was, they took us alphabetically, and the Amphibs needed a certain number of men, and so, I was H, and then there were about six or seven other guys with the name begins with an H. The whole bunch of us were shipped out for the LSM's, and the LSM I was going to wasn't there at the time, so I went to a different LSM, and then my LSM came back from duty. I think they were up at Jimson [means Inchon, Korea] or something like that, and they came back to Pusan. And I was transferred on to the ship. And I got on to the ship, and when they called a muster on the ship, there were about six or seven guys with the name Ha— something odd. So we were a large contingent. Well, I was only a seaman second, I had only had six months, six weeks of training, and so I wasn't, I didn't really know much about what was going on. Luckily I was on a small ship that wasn't very chicken-shit, as we said, so you didn't have to run around saluting the officers, and wear dress clothes, blues, or anything like that. And I eventually learned a little bit about being a seaman. But, then, the man who was in charge of the ship's stores and, oh, I can't think of what you call him now. I'm drawing a blank, and I was talking about it just earlier. But, anyway, he is in charge of ship's stores, and so the captain came around, and, of course, none of us are qualified. But he says, "Does anybody here know how to type?" Well, I had gone to high

school and my last year I had all the credits I needed, so one of the courses I took, my dad said, “Well, maybe you could use some typing, because if you go on to college”—and I was intending to go on to college—“You’d be able to do some typing.” So I took a course in typing. So, not being Navy-smart, I volunteered. Which was something you never did in the Navy. However, it was a good deal, because I wound up in the office, although even in the office you wound up standing watches and doing landing, when you were landing, you were standing on the bow anchor detail, and tie-ups, and so forth, and so on. But we were in Korea, and we were doing lighterage duty for the Army. We were, the waters were so shallow there that they couldn’t bring in their big ships with stuff on them. So, on an LSM, which has an open deck, they would take the materials that they wanted hauled in, they would put on the LSM and the LSM would take them in, and the Koreans and Army would unload it. And we had a ramp that could open, so they could drive their trucks right on. And then, we’d go back out for another load. Well, as it happened, we were doing most of our duty at Pusan, and that is a tidal harbor, which means that you go in on high tide, and they close the gates, and then you unload and then, storekeeper is what I was trying to think of, the term for what I was doing. They closed the gates, and hold the tidal water back. And when the tide goes out, you are in there, there is no way of getting out. If they opened the gates, you’d be on the mud flats. And so you wait until the next high tide comes in, and then they open the gates, and you go out again.

John: Okay.

Hausmann: Now, in the Korean War, actually, Pusan was a very important thing. They did a landing there, and I can remember what the jetties and everything was like. But, anyway, we were there for a while, and we were doing this lighterage duty and it was pretty boring. We were just hauling stuff. Every once in a while we would get a load of something. I remember we got a load of ice cream machines, so we wound up with an ice cream machine. And another time we hauled a load of beer for the Army, and every ready shell box had a case of beer in it. And the radio shack, they said all the spare parts had bottles of beer next to them. We did have that. But, eventually we got orders that we were going to be transferred to China. So we were transferred to Shanghai, the Yangtze-Wangpoo River. And we tied up, it was right in downtown Shanghai, right along the Bund. We read about the Bund, and the big commercial area. Well, we were tied up four or five ships out. You had to tie up in tandem. They had cargo netting on them and there were ships, you could climb up on the ships and then go across it and go across the rest of the ships to go in to town. And we were there for a while and they said, well, they decided maybe our ship was going to be transferred to the Chinese Nationalist Navy. So they wanted us, before we transferred it, well, they wanted us to have a training cruise with the Chinese crew and Chinese officers. But they wanted us to go up the Yangtze River on this training cruise. So they took our ship up to a shipyard and they cut away part of the front of the conning tower, where the officers and everything stood. There were just portholes there and they

cut out the area where the portholes were so they had a much wider view of where they were, because we were going to be on the river, and we were going to have Chinese pilots, and they wanted to be able to see where they were. So they did that. And we loaded a load of Chinese sailors and put them in the crew quarters in back, aft crew quarters where the soldiers would have been if we had been hauling tanks or something. And took on a load of hundred octane aviation gasoline for a naval air force up in Chunking, which is way inland in China. So we go up the river. It was a tour up the Yangtze River that I would pay thousands of dollars for it now.

John: Yes.

Hausmann: But we went up. I was only eighteen years old, so I didn't really appreciate it. Nobody had a camera. We didn't take any pictures. But we would run during the day and then anchor or tie up at night. Because it was dangerous, but Chinese pilots didn't want to run us up on a rock, or something. But when we tied up, we had to carry on a very heavy deck watch, because there were always people trying to climb onto the ship to steal stuff.

John: Yea.

Hausmann: We had to chase them off as best we could. One fellow saw somebody climbing up the anchor chain and took a shot at him. He doesn't know whether he hit him or not but he had a choice of standing a court-martial or paying for the ammunition. He paid for the ammunition. I think it was a nickel or a dime, or something like that. Because he had fired a gun. He was in trouble. And we got part way up the river and it turns out that the Nationalists and the Communists are on opposite sides of the river, and they were firing back and forth. And they were using tracers. And we had a load of fifty-gallon drums full of hundred-octane aviation gasoline aboard. We were not very pleased with the idea. So we spotted one machine gun nest, and I don't know whether it was Communist or Nationalist, I haven't any idea. But they were shooting at us. And so we got the 40-millimeter gun on the front, which is actually an anti-aircraft gun, and fired about four rounds into where the machine gun nest was. And nobody ever bothered us after that.

John: Put your message across.

Hausmann: They understood where we stood about the whole thing. So we got up to Chunking and beached the ship, and a bunch of coolies came on board and rolled the gas drums off. Everything was carried on sticks or on shoulders, or there would be two guys with bamboo and a fifty gallon drum slung between them. I saw them carrying a refrigerator that way one time. Two guys carrying a refrigerator slung on a bamboo pole. But we were up there for a while, and we picked up, our main duty besides hauling the gasoline, we picked up a naval weather station that had been stationed up there in order to pick up weather

reports to report to the fleet in the Pacific so they knew what was coming. They needed somebody that far away to tell what the weather was coming at them. And we picked up this weather station and brought them back on our ship. And we also brought a load of bags of rice and the bags of rice were piled around a Chrysler staff car that belonged to a Chinese general.

John: Oh, man.

Hausmann: So, and these bags of rice, I think they were a hundred kilos. They were two hundred and twenty pound bags. They were big and heavy. And these little Chinese just swung them around like they were nothing. So we brought those back down to Shanghai, and the general got his car, and the Chinese unloaded the rice so somebody would have something to eat. But on the way back down the river, we had put rations on board for everybody, but the rations we put on board presumed that the Chinese were going to eat a certain amount of rice, and stuff like that. Well, the Chinese captain said whatever the American crew got, his men were to get. So, the cooks had to cook for everybody the same. I don't think the Chinese liked what Americans ate but that didn't matter. They were eating the same as us. So about half-way down the river, we ran out of meat and we ran out of a lot of things. But one thing we had a lot of was noodles. And we had noodles for three meals a day, for about a week and a half. And we even made up a little song about it, "Noodles in the morning, noodles in the evening, noodles in the afternoon." So, we got back to Shanghai and the ship was to be turned over to the Chinese, and we had to stand at attention while a bunch of brass showed up to decommission the ship, and give it back to the Chinese. I never had much use for admirals, anyway. Especially since I was only a seaman first, storekeeper striker. So they transferred us to Tsingtao, and Tsingtao is, well, they call it the Chinese Riviera, actually. Beautiful place, they've got a lot of swimming, and they carried good beer. It was a nice place to be and we waited for transport there. There were Chinese Communists in the hills around Tsingtao and actually, there were some marines up there, kind of guarding against the Chinese. When I got back home I found out that my cousin had been in the Marines and he was at Tsingtao at the same time I was, only he was up in the hills and I was swimming on the beach. So I took the transport ship back and got back to San Francisco. And I had a couple of Japanese rifles I was bringing back. Everybody had to have a souvenir, and a couple bayonets, and a couple of rifles, and stuff like that. We got to San Francisco and they said, "Oh, they're going to x-ray that stuff, and they are going to take all those rifles away from you, and everything." We got to the place where they were going to x-ray and they said, "Well, the x-ray machine is broken." So, I had the rifles to take home. I did have an American rifle, too. That I threw off the side because they said if you had an American rifle, or a .30 caliber carbine, why, you were in deep trouble. So I didn't want to take a chance on that, so it's in the bottom of San Francisco Harbor. And I bet there are a lot more of them there, too.

John: I'll be there are.

Hausmann: Anyway, and so most of our gear was shipped out by freight and we just had a ditty bag and we had a couple days of liberty in San Francisco and when I had been in China I had my dress blues all fixed up with dragons on the inside of the sleeves and the inside of the flap in back, and the inside of my P-coat, I had a great big dragon. Well, they were really death on that in San Francisco. I don't think the SP's had anything else to do so they were after dragons. And they didn't catch me, and I am glad they didn't because they probably would have tossed me in the brig for having a dragon on my uniform. Well, they shipped me back to Great Lakes again. And I got into Great Lakes, and somewhere along the line I had lost my glasses. And they said, "Well, we can give you new glasses. It'll take about three or four days. Or, you can get discharged now." And after a certain length of time in the Navy, I was willing to go home. So I said, "Forget about the glasses." So I went back home. And when I got my papers, discharge papers, it said I had been in the Navy exactly eleven months and twenty-seven days. So, I went home, didn't think anything about it. Went to school. Went to Wisconsin, then to Marquette, then to Marquette Dental School. I am in Marquette Dental School, and the Korean War starts. And I get a notice that I am 1-A. I have not put in a full year of service, which means that I am subject to the draft. I was three days short. If I had stayed to get the glasses, there would be no problem. However, since I was in dental school, I got a deferment and by the time I got out of dental school, why, they weren't drafting any more, at least they weren't drafting dentists. So that is the story of my career in the Navy.

John: When I was going to get out, at Treasure Island, I had a tooth, and I wanted to have that taken care of before I got out. And they said, "Fine, but it will be a week or ten days." And I didn't stay, I went, and I have a bridge there where that is now. I should have stayed in. Ah, then when you did get out, okay, you had reserve time. They were able to call you back but you were...

Hausmann: I was in the Naval Inactive Reserve. They had us sign up for that before we got out. Actually, you weren't officially in the Reserve. It was called the Inactive Reserve. I've got the lapel pin, and nobody ever knows what that is, because it is--

John: What about after you came out, the GI Bill? Did you ever use that?

Hausmann: Oh, sure. I used the GI Bill. I held out because it paid a certain amount of tuition. It paid, what was it, it paid per day, for whatever your time was. So I held that out until I went into dental school and had big bills for tuition, big bills for instruments, all kinds of stuff. And I used it then. And I paid for about, well, it amounted to about a year and a half of dental school. And I used that. And I also used 54-20, where you got \$20 a week for a year, when I was in school.

John: What about, other than this organization, what about the VFW, the Legion?

Hausmann: I never joined any of them. I have never been much of a joiner. I'm a Rotarian and a Mason, but I never joined the veterans organizations. Except for this one.

[End of Interview.]