

Interviewer: Let's go ahead and start off by you stating your full name and when and where you were born.

Seibert: My name August George Siebert. I was born in Louisville Kentucky 1924.

Interviewer: What branch of the service did you serve in?

Seibert: I served 17 years in the infantry and 13 years in the general's core.

Interviewer: What were your parents' names and what were their occupations?

Seibert: My father's name was August Frank Siebert and my mother's name was Marie Siebert and my dad was a sales manager for an industrial firm in Cincinnati and my mother was a house wife.

Interviewer: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Seibert: I had four brothers and five sisters.

Interviewer: How long did you stay in school for?

Seibert: I went up to three years in college.

Interviewer: You were in there a good while. Do you have any recollections of the great depression?

Seibert: Yes I do very much so. I was born in 1924 I remember when I was 12 years old I got my first job delivering papers for \$1 a day and giving ten cents back for Social Security and working in a pharmacy for \$3 a week eight hours a day after school.

Interviewer: Do you remember how it affected your family and how did they cope with the hardships?

Seibert: Well put it this way my dad was a very I say stubborn man and he would not take anything he would not take a penny unless he earned it. So consequently we never received any help from WPA or the government at all. And he was a person to always pay his bills we didn't eat so he could pay a bill. If he felt that the other persons they had to make their money when they sold it and they had to eat too so he always saw the bills were paid. He wasn't a drinking man he would have an occasional beer but I mean he didn't drink and everything went for the family.

Interviewer: That's good. Were you doing the pharmacy work and delivering the newspapers before your time in the service or did you have another job before you actually went in?

Seibert: No I graduated WWII came in December 1941 and following that I graduated in June of 42 from high school and I went in the service from there. But these others were part time jobs.

Interviewer: Before Pearl Harbor how seriously did you take the threats to America from the Nazis and the Japanese?

Seibert: Well people must realize in those days the only communications you had was by your local radio and newspaper. There was no television or anything of that nature so consequently you could only

believe what you read in the paper or listened to the radio. And to be perfectly honest I didn't have the slightest idea where Pearl Harbor was at and coming from a German family the only newspaper we saw was the Cincinnati Enquire which was a German owned company. So many things that happened in Europe we never read or we never knew about so it was not a question of how I felt it was just what you could read. And being a high school kid you didn't read that much anyhow.

Interviewer: Yeah that's true. Do you recall where you were and how you heard the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Seibert: Very vividly it was a Sunday afternoon and two friends of mine and myself we were out hunting we used to go hunting on Sunday that was part of the families food supply. And we came back to a 1930 this one boy his brother owned a 1936 Plymouth with a convertible it opened up in the back I don't know what you would call it but you opened it up and there were two seats in the back. And we had this little radio and we turned it on and I guess we were about 30 miles from where I lived and we heard it and we knew something happened but we didn't know where Pearl Harbor was at so that's how I heard about it.

Interviewer: Did you get to listen to FDR's speech the one "A Day Which Shall Live in Infamy."

Seibert: Yes I did

Interviewer: Did you guess that the war would reach America's shores and touch your life?

Seibert: Not in reality because really Pearl Harbor was not part of the United States it was a territory and you really don't feel the impact until you start feeling the casualties and a few days later when they start coming on the radio in the newspaper.

Interviewer: Did you approve of the way FDR handled his office at the beginning of the war?

Seibert: At 18 you really don't you go on what they tell you you're not really politically minded at 18.

Interviewer: That's true when did you realize well let me ask you this did you get drafted or did you volunteer?

Seibert: No myself and my two other friends we all volunteered. I went in the Army my pal from across the street went in the Navy and the one who lived next door went in the Marine Core.

Interviewer: Did you have a preference for the branch of service or the kind of military task you would perform like infantry, artillery, engineers what you wanted to do?

Seibert: Not really no.

Interviewer: No when did you actually enlist?

Seibert: In June 1942.

Interviewer: 1942 did you get to go to an induction center??

Seibert: Yes Fort Thomas Kentucky in the 10th infantry.

Interviewer: Were you tested for skill and IQ levels?

Seibert: Oh yes

Interviewer: Ok and let me ask you did your civilian job have anything to do with what you did in the military?

Seibert: No because I just well I'll say one thing my graduation from school and I had received a scholarship from the University of Zabeer of Ohio. Although I couldn't do it because I went in the service it did have a play on the assignments you got later on when I went to officers school when my IQ was pretty good.

Interviewer: That's cool where did you do your basic training?

Seibert: This you will enjoy Camp Siebert Alabama.

Interviewer: Oh really

Seibert: Yes Siebert see mines Seibert. That's the camp at Gaston Alabama.

Interviewer: Okay when were you selected for more specialized training? Did you get the option to do that?

Seibert: No we spent 10 weeks at Camp Siebert then we were shipped to Hawaii joined the 7th division in Hawaii.

Interviewer: What was your impression of your fellow mates recruits?

Seibert: Well when you come from a small town I think you enjoy what we refer to as big city fellows. You were quite impressed by them because I had never been on a train I had never been over 50 miles from my home and I used to ride a bus from Kentucky across the river to Cincinnati Ohio. That was about the limit of my experience.

Interviewer: Did you get to participate in like maneuvers stateside?

Seibert: No

Interviewer: How good did you think your training was for the task that you were getting ready to face?

Seibert: Well I thought it was I thought what I received in Hawaii of course the other was basic here but when I got to Hawaii it was very very good.

Interviewer: Did you feel well prepared to fight?

Seibert: No one's well prepared to fight. I did what I had to do but no one's prepared to fight.

Interviewer: That's a pretty hard task to just be able to say yes I'm ready to do this. How good were your living conditions at your camps?

Seibert: Well at basic training when we went there they put us in a truck and in the center of the truck was a tent and we went out into the woods and that's all there was there were no buildings. And they dumped the tent on the ground they said when you ten people get it up that's your home for the next ten weeks.

Interviewer: They just kind of left you out there.

Seibert: You were going to have to get it up. Pretty primitive.

Interviewer: So you didn't get to travel overseas then did you stay specifically in Hawaii?

Seibert: No no I went to the South Pacific later on.

Interviewer: Oh okay when and from which port did you depart?

Seibert: Well from the states I went from San Francisco and from Hawaii of course Honolulu and we went south to Quadralene Islands Saipan and I fought in those battles there.

Interviewer: How long was your trip?

Seibert: To Hawaii it was about a week I guess and then we were onboard a ship I guess about close to a month before we went to Quadralene he circled around I guess.

Interviewer: How many soldiers were onboard with you?

Seibert: I think on the ship from Hawaii, I don't know how many on the ship from San Francisco but there were about I guess about a regiment I guess about 3,000 on the one from Honolulu down south.

Interviewer: Were you able to have civilian contacts?

Seibert: Well we wrote letters back home but that was about it.

Interviewer: I guess being out in the woods you wouldn't get to see very many people huh. Did you see combat soon after arriving or was there a prolonged

Seibert: My first combat was in February of 44 that's on the Island of Quadralene and then a couple of months later we were on Saipan and fought there.

Interviewer: So were you still in the same unit or had you been reassigned?

Seibert: Same unit.

Interviewer: You were. What was your impression of the officers and the NCOs in the command?

Seibert: I thought they were very good. Most of the ones in the command where I was at had been regular army sergeants and lieutenants and captains and they were well versed.

Interviewer: What kind of equipment and arms did you train with and how well did they operate in combat?

Seibert: Well I took my basic training believe it or not with English NPO riffles then when we went to Hawaii they gave us the Springfield 1903 riffles and we didn't receive our M1 until following the Quadralene battle. But the I enjoyed them I thought they were alright.

Interviewer: You thought that they operated fairly well?

Seibert: They put me with the mortar unit and the mortars they were very good I liked the mortars.

Interviewer: Where was your first experience with combat and what reactions did you and the others in your unit have?

Seibert: Well as I said my first experience was on Quadralene Island in the South Pacific. And I went to shore with the first group because I was in a forward observer unit with the mortars and I can't say I was maybe I was too dumb to be too scared but it was a nervy type I mean you're nervous but you didn't know just had to do your job that's all.

Interviewer: How did it feel to be shot at or to shoot back?

Seibert: Well it's kind of a hard question to answer it's not the greatest feeling in the world but you do it more of instinct than you do of fear or you know. And the enemy as far as I'm concerned didn't become a person it just became an identity like you would be shooting at targets or something. I mean you don't think that they are human beings just like we are. You just do your job.

Interviewer: How would you describe the feelings inside the unit itself during that time?

Seibert: Well I think it was a mixture some were scared which we were all scared. But some people were I guess we were its pretty hard to tell because everybody keeps everything inside of them. My dad had a famous expression that he gave to me when I went in and I've always carried it. The biggest battles in the world are fought in people's minds.

Interviewer: I've heard that before I think a lot of people believe that.

Seibert: Yeah so he was my dad spoke about 35 words a day and 30 of them meant something.

Interviewer: That's good. Did you feel close to the other soldiers who shared your time in service?

Seibert: Yes quite a few of them, when I was an enlisted person, they were much closer than they were as an officer. I had some very good friends some of them I still communicate with. There's one up in New York up in Younkers I still write to occasionally send him a card or something. Most of them are dead.

Interviewer: Being out in the woods and what not but what did you do in your free time?

Seibert: Well when I was in Hawaii I did a lot of you wouldn't believe it now but I used to be a good swimmer. And I used to whenever I got time to go they used to give us time off at the beach every Wednesday afternoon and I'd do a lot of scuba diving and I liked fishing so whenever I could fish I'd fish.

Interviewer: That's a nice place to do it lots of water.

Seibert: Oh yeah

Interviewer: Did you write a lot of letters or receive mail from relatives and friends there?

Seibert: Well I used to write occasionally I'm not a writer but I'd write my parents and my brothers and sisters. Particularly my sisters of course my brothers were younger than I, I was the second oldest of the ten. So my brothers were really little guys so they didn't write that much. I wrote to my mom I wrote to my dad I guess more than anybody.

Interviewer: Did you get to have any leave time while in your branch.

Seibert: Well after I came back to the states. I came back to go to officer's training school and I had about two weeks there.

Interviewer: What did you do while you were in your off time?

Seibert: Well mainly just loaf I guess go to the library. I used to do a lot I love to read so I used to go to the library quite a bit.

Interviewer: When you were in the field did you get to get hot food?

Seibert: Oh yes yes we got hot food we got c-rations and k-rations and we never I came really say during WWII I ever went hungry. But Korea was a little different thing but WWII whatever they fed I ate you know when your 18 you eat.

Interviewer: So it's not much you don't care for huh.

Seibert: My favorite was these navy beans they used to have onboard ship.

Interviewer: Do you like them now?

Seibert: Oh yeah I still eat them.

Interviewer: I just know sometimes when you eat something so much eventually you kind of get tired of it.

Seibert: Another thing I used to eat a lot of was apricots and spam a lot of people liked. I could eat that I could eat it anytime I never missed a meal because of what they had. When you come from a family of ten whenever you get a chance to eat you eat.

Interviewer: Did you get to take showers shave or wash up often when you were out in the field or not?

Seibert: Oh yes when you're in acts of combat you can't but when you're on board ship they have and in Hawaii they had beautiful facilities.

Interviewer: Did you ever feel like you were deprived of sleep or over worked?

Seibert: Well in combat of course your well you get tired sometimes but everybody else does too so you are equal on that score.

Interviewer: That's true. Were you able to get any promotions during your service time?

Seibert: Oh yeah yes I went I made PFC then Corporal then Sergeant then made Second Lieutenant.

Interviewer: Okay did you feel that the promotions were received by those the deserved them?

Seibert: Oh yes I think they no one ever objected to it in fact they were all congratulatory.

Interviewer: Were the officers and NCOs in your unit recent recruits or were there still prewar career Army, Navy and Marines you served with? And could you tell the difference?

Seibert: I couldn't tell you when you're enlisted you don't look at the backgrounds of others. But they were all every one of them I associate with they were gentlemen they were I thought they were good people. In fact one of them when I was in Vietnam this is a little strange thing but I had this lieutenant by the name of Them in Hawaii in 1943. When I was in Vietnam he was a Colonel also and he came over to be in Vietnam and I it was kind of a strange meeting I hadn't seen him since 44 it was kind of a strange thing.

Interviewer: Yeah coincidence huh. Do you remember the qualities of the enemies I mean I hate to say this but do you think they had good leadership, tenacity, bravery, ability to withstand hardships?

Seibert: Absolutely they were fine soldiers. Having been three wars particularly if the Japanese would have fought us in Korea we would have probably got kicked off the island in two weeks. They were outstanding soldiers. Their equipment may not have been compared to ours may have been a little lower but they used them very well and they had excellent leaders. I would never fault them for their leadership quality.

Interviewer: So would it be safe to say that you actually probably could respect the average enemy soldier?

Seibert: Absolutely some of them got drafted just like some of the people here did.

Interviewer: Yeah what about civilians and refugees did you get to have much contact with them?

Seibert: Not much in WWII.

Interviewer: Were you part of an occupation force amongst civilians?

Seibert: No

Interviewer: No you weren't. Were you ever wounded and how good was the medical treatment you received?

Seibert: Well I was wounded in Quadralene in my legs and my back. And I was wounded again in Korea of course you know pretty bad and they sent me back to the states. But WWII wounds they didn't send me back but the Korean War ones they sent me back. I can't complain about the service they did everything they could. They were good people.

Interviewer: Would they give you medicine or anything if you were in pain or would you just have to bare it?

Seibert: Well they gave me what they could you know some of it I'm allergic to codeine, morphine and demurral so.

Interviewer: You were kind of limited.

Seibert: But the injuries I received were not great pain producing injuries you know what I mean I had my leg shot out of my back. But when they fixed them up it wasn't like you lost an arm or a leg even when I was in Korea my neck a bullet went through my neck but it wasn't that painful is what I'm saying. They gave me a lot of penicillin and stripped ice and that stuff but as far as pain I never was in any.

Interviewer: They were worried about treating infection.

Seibert: Yeah right

Interviewer: Well I guess it's safe to say I suppose you were recommended for medals since you have quite a few of them here. What do you think is the one you are most proud of?

Seibert: Well I've got the silver star I've got two bronze stars I have two Purple Hearts those are combat and the others are all primarily service type awards. But I guess the Silver Star is the one I'm most proud of and the combat infantry badge I have one with a star.

Interviewer: Did you have fellow soldiers that were killed?

Seibert: Do what?

Interviewer: Did you have fellow soldiers that were either killed or wounded that you were close to during that time?

Seibert: Well I had one and it's funny you mentioned that I just thought of him the other day. A boy by the name of Hoffman Woody Hoffman from Baltimore Maryland and he was in the same squad that I was in. And he was the, a funny thing you say that he always professed that he was an atheist. And he was our first casualty in Quadralene where an artillery shell took his head completely off and it rolled into the foxhole. And he had a gold tooth looked like he was smiling with that gold tooth sticking out. I still remember that it gives me chills every time I think of it. We were very good friends we played on the baseball team for the company and it is kind of funny that would happen to him. And I lost more friends in Korea than I did in WWII.

Interviewer: Did you kind of have a sense of the big picture did you know the strategy involved in beating the axis powers or

Seibert: Not really when you're in a squad you take care of what's going to happen the next day. You don't hear all of this other stuff you only hear what they want you to hear.

Interviewer: So I suppose that omitted you from being involved in any of the famous landings or any of the battles of the war? Did you get to be in any famous battles?

Seibert: Well Guadalcanal the Battle of Guadalcanal.

Interviewer: That's pretty popular.

Seibert: Well that was the first island in WWII Guadalcanal was a German protector for one of the islands and after the treaties in WWI that was mandated to the Japanese. So that was the first Japanese mandated island that we retook after WWII. I mean what I'm saying it's one of the first things we got from them that belonged to them.

Interviewer: What do you remember most about WWII or what had the most impact on you?

Seibert: Well I don't know I guess the main thing is just growing up. Going from a young of course I was a Lieutenant at 19 so you grow up at 19 so a little later on I was able to I became the Rifle Company Commander at 23. And I was married at 23 a lot of people now a days as 23 have no responsibilities at all. And I guess to learn responsibility was the biggest thing I learned in WWII.

Interviewer: Well do you have any last comments or last things you would like to add?

Seibert: Well as I said there have been an awful lot of good men that were killed in WWII. An awful lot of families that suffered but there's one thing and I know you may not want to put this on but I fear the Germans more than anybody and I'll tell you why. After WWII they were dismantled everything we helped them get back together in today's world right now the Germans are offering troops to go into Afghanistan all that is is a pretext for them to start building their army up again. Maybe you think I'm absolutely crazy when I say this but in 10 years from now if they do because they still have a draft over there. They'll be the strongest country in Europe.

Interviewer: That's an interesting final thought.

Seibert: Think about it for a minute that's how it happened after the World War. They had to have war troops because there was unemployment then they made their little ships then they made their planes then they finally then they wanted the Sudentenland back because it was German. Then they wanted Austria back then they wanted Czechoslovakia back. And it's the same thing today once they submit troops outside of their own country like they've got them in Kosovo know that will be their excuse to start drafting and start we need more people we need. And they've got beautiful equipment and German army is different from the American army. They send their sergeants to schools to become officers so in case they have to expand all of the sergeants become officers. That's the same thing in WWII so it's my own thought it's not. They will probably say he's nutty but I don't know I just have a feeling. And they are a war like people they are not individual type like American's are. They'll follow a sheep if he hollers loud enough just like they did with Hitler. Who would follow Hitler? You know who

Borne who would follow Himmler but if they yell enough and they tell enough lies people will listen to them

Interviewer: And when you have the charisma of someone like Hitler or Joseph Stalin and all of them their just

Seibert: If they can get the army on their side mark my word 10 years from now you will be wondering what happened. Just like Hassan in Iraq he just bellows a lot and everybody believes him. He has no skills except a loud voice so that's they will probably think I'm absolutely nutty but.

Interviewer: No not at all that's why I asked for you opinion.

Seibert: You might want to put that film in the basement.

Tape ended