

## TO HIROSHIMA AND BACK

### Ervie Richard Schroader

I was drafted in the Army in April of 1943; it was my birthday present from Uncle Sam. I went to Ft. Benjamin Harrison in Evansville, Indiana, for outfitting, shots, and aptitude tests. I was then sent to Camp Siebert, Alabama, for training in chemical warfare. I was trained in poisonous gases, such as mustard, white phosphorus, phosgene, etc. I was there for about seven weeks, and after a five or six day train trip, we ended up in Camp Stoneman, California, in July of 1942.

We embarked from Camp Stoneman and headed for Sidney, Australia, on the ship *Monticello*. This trip took about seventeen days. Then from Sidney we went to Brisbane by train, and then arrived in Townsville on Thanksgiving Day. We stayed there about a month. I was in the 41st Infantry attached to the 163rd unit.

We moved from Townsville, Australia, to Port Moresby in New Guinea, then to Biak and to Mindoro in the Philippines. From Mindoro we went to Shikoku, Japan, and on to Hiroshima. All of this time I was with the infantry and used a flame thrower, repaired gas masks, decontaminated the area of chemicals on clothes and the grounds, etc. My duties also included mixing the gas the flame throwers used, and today I could still mix fuel for one that would throw a flame seventy yards.

A lot of the Philippines was jungle and only our army trucks could get through it. Some of the boys who had been out in the field for weeks would be in dire need of a bath. One of the trucks in our unit had a five hundred gallon water tank on it, and another boy and myself were sent into the jungle to give the boys in the field a shower; we even had clean clothes to give them. We were shot at by snipers on the way in and had to abandon the truck once, but got some help and went on our mission. When we got there, the soldiers had taken their machetes and chopped out a circle for their bath. They were so thankful that we came and said they didn't think we would make it. About 250 soldiers stripped off in the circle—some of their clothes could almost stand alone—and we took the hoses and stood on the back of the truck and gave them their shower!

When Hiroshima was bombed and the Japanese surrendered, I had moved up in the army to a truck driver. We evacuated poisonous bombs and gases that the Japanese had stockpiled and hauled them off to be destroyed. In Hiroshima after the bomb had been dropped, I walked the streets and saw human shadows imprinted on the sidewalks. I saw shadows of people on horseback and people on bicycles. The heat was so intense it burned their shadows where they had been. There were steel structures standing but warped; then there would be one thing standing in the middle of everything else destroyed.

There were thirty-six in our unit, including truck drivers, and we lost only one soldier and that was in a Jeep accident. There were a lot of bad memories over there, and even now loud noises make me jump, although after fifty years I am some better about that.

I left Japan to come home in December of 1945, and was discharged January of 1946 in Tacoma, Washington. I was in the Army from April of 1943 to January of 1946.

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This article was adapted by daughter-in-law Nancy Schroader from a video tape interview.