

**Stanley C. Heidenreich
Veteran**

**Michael Russert
Wayne Clarke
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on January 12, 2007, 10:00 AM
Saratoga Springs, New York**

Q: Alright this is an interview for the New York State Military Museum Saratoga Springs, New York. It is the 12th of January 2007, Approximately 10 am. Your viewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clark. Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth please?

SH: First name is Stanley and last name is Heidenreich. Born in Albany, New York.

Q: What was your high school education prior to entering the service?

SH: I went to Milton High School.

Q: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

SH: Yes. Matter of fact I was at home and I heard it on the radio at that time. That of course just blew up everybody and that was the news of the day of course.

Q: Do you remember your own personal reaction?

SH: Well yes, please excuse me. I guess it came as a shock but I guess at that time when the Japanese getting into the war it wasn't inconceivable, let's put it that way.

Q: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

SH: No, well I say when I enlisted the interesting part here is that when I turned 18 of course you weren't being drafted until you were 18 at that time. As soon as I got out of high school I went to the draft board to find out if I was going to be drafted. I wanted to be ensure that I was able to go into the tenth because I do know some of the people have already in the tenth that were skiers and good friends and what I had to do was I had to get three letters of recommendation I knew and that I want to ensure that with the draft board that's where I was going to be sent. Interestingly enough when I came home that day when it was just right after school, I'm still in school right or the end of the season that my dad had asked me what I had done that day and I told him well hey and he said you did what, but anyhow I went into the service that fall September of forty-three.

Q: So you knew you wanted to be in the tenth Mountain?

SH: Yeah.

Q: How long before you went into the formed before you?

SH: well I know you had to had three letters of recommendation and that was skiing was a big part of my life even back then and that's what knew I wanted to do.

Q: Where did you go for your basic training?

SH: basic training was out of the camp called Camp Hail Colorado which is located in the Rockies of course. Out there the elevation of the camp was at 9,500 feet. Like everyone else knew that went out there that wasn't used to the elevation it took you pretty near a month to acclimate yourself to being able to breathe and walk and exercise and do whatever without getting out of breathe. I was drafted and went out there in September of forty-three. That's where I trained out there and their withdrawal training was from that elevation and on up as high as 12,000 feet.

Q: Describe what your basic training this would have been different than others because of the type of unit you were in.

SH: Well we did a lot of skiing of course nothing was about it was fast or anything but we learned and did various maneuvers on skis and how to attack. You might say it depends when the fins were fighting the Russians were able to sneak up on the Russian camps and some stuff like that. Because they were on skis and could do it quietly offense and this is the type of training we were receiving at that time.

Q: Did you train with snow shoes also?

SH: Yeah, well of course the snow shoes had to be used because we had mules, mules but the only way of carrying small artillery and things like that and also equipment and so snow shoes were used by certain segments of the division, yes.

Q: What kind of weapon did you use?

SH: there was all rifles m21s and machine guns like machine guns of the sorts. But especially we used rifles.

Q: Now because of the weather and the altitude sign did you have to do anything special with them to keep them from freezing up and for giving them any problems?

SH: well let me tell you this, that when you camped out at night when you worked in the barracks you took your rifle with you right into the sleeping bag with you because otherwise everything just froze up solid through the mechanisms just froze and so forth. What you did to dig quiet a deep trench in the snow and you would late your sleeping bag down in it for the night. You never took your boots off or anything else because you could never get them back on in the morning.

Q: What was you winter gear like?

SH: It was good equipment for that time I think I mean I think they have different types of material today than they used to but at that time it was good equipment. Of course you wore one or two underwear particularly even to bed at night when you were in the barracks because the barracks were only heated by wood stoves and the things of that nature. All the equipment was good, the parkas, everything thing, all of our gear that you had to have. Boots at that time were good and everything was alright.

Q: Let me ask you something, did you wear a combat boot when you skied or did you have a separate type of boot you wore?

SH: It was like a combat boot, yes. It came up over your ankles but it was not a rounded toe it was a squared toed type of boot so that it could fit the binding on the skies and so forth.

Q: Did you wear that boot also when you weren't skiing?

SH: No, you wore regular combat boots at that time.

Q: Did you wear white camouflage at all?

SH: Well while in training yes, when we worked out up at the Cooper Hill which is just outside of Leadville, Colorado which is near the camp. It was our basic training area for skiing anyhow and we wore that type of equipment, yes. White suits to blend in with the snow and things like that.

Q: Now did you have to wax your skis?

SH: oh yeah. Skis back in that time had to be waxed.

Q: Did you have to burn the old wax off every day?

SH: no. you either wore it off or when you climbed that's what you called skins that you used for climbing. If you were going to be doing a lot of uphill things that were strapped to the bottom of your ski. Actually it's what they called seal skin which is when the hairs on the skin went back stuck in the snow so you wouldn't slide back.

Q: How long was your training in Colorado?

SH: well when I went in it was September of '43 and we trained that winter and in the fall, the spring of fort-four. In late spring they shipped us down to Texas. I honest don't think they knew what they wanted to do with the division at that time. We were in Texas for about two to three months doing various training and stuff down there and at that time of course the Japanese were having all over the place and things like that and we began to wonder if they were going to ship us down to one of those places which we weren't trained for basically and then all of a sudden we got the orders to pack up our gear and loaded us on trains and send us up to Norfolk, Virginia where we went overseas to Italy.

Q: How did you go overseas? Did you go in by convoy or single ships?

SH: well no there was a big liner, matter of fact I'm trying to think of the name. It was the second largest liner at the time that we were on but it was in a convoy and where she zigzagged back and forth across the ocean and things like that. We landed in Italy and were camped there for approximately three weeks so we got all of our gear and equipment together and things like that and then they shipped up directly up to the front. That's where we fought the war of course until it ended in the spring.

Q: What war was the first time you were under fire you recall?

SH: it was just before either late November or very really early in December.

Q: How did you feel?

SH: Well I tell you it's no fun. I mean here you've been through a lot of training and told you were to expect all of this but you never fully appreciate it until it happens. I'll tell

you our training was great and the people that were in our division and my company and squad and regime that I was in.

Q: What regime were you assigned to?

SH: I was assigned to the 86th, company G.

Q: The Germans you fought they were mountain troops also?

SH:— yes some of them were, yes because of where we were we went up through the foothills of Italy to cross the Po and then right up into the boarder of Switzerland on Lake Garda. So we were in mountainous fighting, yes all the way through.

Q: What did you think of them as fighting men and also their equipment? Was their equipment good?

SH: The Germans?

Q: Yes.

SH: Oh yeah they had good equipment and the hard part about understanding, not understanding but trying to overcome it is the two greatest fears you have is that of course you were in the woods a lot being in the mountains and they would shove, but they could directly shove so they lobed shells over you and they would hit the trees and burst and when they burst they scattered this way, the shrapnel was hitting the ground and come this way so if you were on the ground somewhere or in the trench box the shrapnel went over you but when they burst in the trees that came down you can be in the foxholes and you still got hit unfortunate.

Q: What was daily life like?

SH:— you mean in the actual combat?

Q: Yes.

SH: We were on the move continually. I mean they didn't let you sit around too long in any one place because the Germans were retreating at that time so we continually had to keep right on the move to keep right up to them and keep fighting, yes. And crossing the Po was probably one of the you might say more dangerous of the situations simply because the drought and open water and boats and movement any way you could get across the way they had of course to get across. Right out in the open to get shelled and shot at and everything else.

Q: What kind of boats did you use to cross?

SH: well they had some combat boats they had brought up from down below I say somewhere down in Italy and brought them in and they also of course had to use some of the bridges. They had to help rebuild the bridges to get across. A lot of it you waded out into the water to get into rowboat type things and so forth.

Q: Were you ever injured or wounded or have any illnesses while you were there?

SH: no, I was extremely fortunate. I'm very thankful for that because we lost roughly a thousand men killed and over four thousand wounded while we were there in the division.

Q: Did you ever suffer from frost bite at all?

SH: no, no if I did I didn't know it.

Q: How would you rate your officers?

SH: we had good men. They were all well trained and most of them were of course mountain men of some type or another. Many of them came from ski areas and many of them are Europeans, people like Herbert Snyder, Austrian whose father went over the air technique and so forth. Many European people are skiers and mountain climbers and rock climbers and so forth. They were all good so we were trained extremely well.

Q: Could you describe some of your combats that you were in new world of Riva Ridge and so on?

SH: Yeah and our company was based at the Riva Ridge. This is a ridge and if you can picture a ridge a mountain coming like this and they were at the top and of course he who holds the high ground controls everything underneath it. The Germans were pretty well entrenched up there although I won't say heavenly but they had a good number and they had their guns up there that they shot over at advancing troops coming up through to PO and that way. We were stationed at the foot of both sides of the Riva Ridge and the Germans of course didn't expect anybody to come up the side of a rock wall type thing. You might say like the side of these walls here almost. So they had no centuries or anybody out to expect any type of attack that way. At night we used to go up and draw Pitons into the rock so that we could put our ropes up through there and everything but we had to drive the piton in. of course when you hear a big clank so we would have to wrap cloth or patting over the heads of the ice axes and hammers to join the pitons so they wouldn't make a big clang and set off a warning to set off what was happening down below.

Q: Obviously that worked pretty well?

SH: Yeah it did and they were able to string the ropes through the pitons so forth for the climb up. It was rugged because it was done at night and it was moonlight. One way they created that we were able to, I say we the divisions of it were able to create the moonlight so that you could see better so we didn't have to shine big spotlights up in the clouds and it would reflect of the clouds and come back down. so you had pretty bright light to move actually.

Q: Did you yourself, were involved in that attack?

SH: yes I was.

Q: Could you describe how you felt and what you did to turn that?

SH: well you see what I felt was goosebumps all over you all the time. That's one of the things you worry about. A lot of the time you didn't have time to think even after you try to remember what you have to do and where you have to go and what you're going to do. You really don't have time to think about being hit or anything else. As I say I was quite fortunate. I never received any injures of any type. I was just one of the few that didn't because everybody seemed to get hit and many of course were killed and it's unfortunate but unfortunately that's what war is about too. The Germans were completely taken by

surprise up there and when they could no longer observe what was coming up from the south with the Allies coming up from the south. Basically they were in retreat after that point. Realizing that the enemy was going to be taken. So we ended up on Lake Garda and of course they had fortified the tunnels and either blocked them off. You know exploded the tunnel so you couldn't go through them. The only way we could get around that would be to get back on the road again or to go out on these ducks that they brought up from Italy from the ocean somewhere. That is a scaring thing because you are out there and the Germans are shooting at you and you have no way of escaping it if you got hit. If you got hit you went down because you had a pack on and everything else. You couldn't swim and the water was you know freezing and things like that so. You just prayed to God that you survived and I was one of the fortunate ones that did, yes. That's how we got around to keeping the Germans pushed forward until we got out to Riva Ridge which is where the war was ended. We heard the war had ended. It's right on the edge of the border that goes into its Switzerland, Austria.

Q: What was the reaction of the unit when they heard this?

SH: Oh pretty good. Yeah, I think we all got drunk actually.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Italian people at all?

SH: Not really. Interestingly enough some of the men did. One interesting story is that every three years we have always won. I say we the division has won going back went on the route that we brought on and one of the fellas had slept in a barn and you have your drinking cup on your canteen. He had hung it up on the side of the wall of the barn and of course he had scratched his initials on the canteen you know so no one else could swipe it. He had forgotten it and he went back on one of those trips. Here now you are talking about forty some years later and went back into the barn. He went back to see where he had been. They went into that barn and that cup was still hanging up on that wall. The farmer used it to feed the chickens and whatever to scoop out the deal or whatever to throw out to them and then he hung the thing back up. Matter of fact it made it to Ripley's Believe It Or Not. When he came back he was so proud of that. They wrote to Ripley I guess and he put it in the paper.

Q: How many times have you gone back?

SH: I've gone back three times. I enjoyed every minute of it. It brings back a lot of memories, things like that.

Q: Did you scale the ridge?

SH: No. I'm getting a little too old for that stuff.

Q: Do you still ski at all?

SH: Yes I do except for the last year. I have developed arthritis so to speak. It sort of held me back and I have held off. I'm going to try it again this year. I think I'll go cross country.

Q: If we get some snow.

SH: If we get some snow, you're right.

Q: After the war ended, did you go home right away or were you assigned to occupation?

SH: No, we thought we were going to be there but we went back. At that time and I think although we never heard I think the reason for that was that they were getting ready to send us down to fight the Japanese. We were just about two days out of Norfolk. Before we landed in Norfolk, the war was declared over. The Japanese threw up their hands. So in a way why we weren't the oldest troops in Europe, we were the first back home. Simply because I guess my thinking is that they were going to ship us to fight the Japanese on the islands or wherever they were. So we were fortunate to be home earlier than many of the troops that were still in Europe.

Q: When the troops are still in Germany they had held a sail to surrender of units. Did you have a lot of Germans surrendering to you?

SH: oh in Italy, yes. That there were quite a few. A lot of them were individuals but they were surrendering and they retreated. Actually they were able to retreat back up into Germany because we were pushing them pretty hard.

Q: When did you arrive back in the states?

SH: Let's see. The war ended what in 45' was it?

Q: Yes.

SH: We got back here in I think it was august. The war ended in the spring in May. We got back around here in like august.

Q: When were you discharged?

SH: Well I guess, I got shipped out to Colorado. I was discharged; I guess it was in the fall. The fall of 45'.

Q: Did you have any remembrances that stick out more than others?

SH- Not really. The once remembrance was up on Lake Garda. When we were out on those boats. We were scared as hell because you're out there and you can't do a damn thing. You're being shot at and all you can do is hope you're not hit because you're cramped into there and you're standing side by side just as full as you possibly could and if the duck itself got hit and sank there's nothing you can do. You'd go right to the bottom and I think that was probably I guess the worst fear of any that I can think of that I've experienced. I mean you were always afraid of getting hit and so forth but when you're in a situation like that knowing that you don't stand a damn chance. It's one of those things.

Q: Did you make use of the GI Bill at the end of the war? After the war did you use the GI Bill at all?

SH: Yeah, I went over to the Wesleyan in Connecticut for a year. Then when I came back from there I went right to working at my dad's laundry. We had a laundry that my grandfather actually has started and we had trucks that went out to your house and picked up your laundry and so forth. Delivered it and then had become when laundromats and things came into being the business that drove our business out of business. That's when I went to work for the state with in the conservation department which we white face core and Bel Air**. So I had charge of the ski schools in those three

areas. You know hiring to get the ski school operation going and so forth and things like that.

Q: Did you join the 52-20 club?

SH: I can't even tell you what that is.

Q: That is an ad employment of twenty dollars a week for fifty two weeks.

SH: No. you **

Q: Okay, did you join any veteran's organizations?

SH: Well I belonged to the tentas [?] which have their own organization. Yes, I belonged to that.

Q: Okay, you don't belong to American Legion?

SH: I've gone to the Legion, yeah. I don't attend their meetings so to speak.

Q: You're active with the tenth mountain division?

SH: Yes. Yeah, there is about five. There is one Upstate chapter. There is one New England chapter and a lower chapter. There are chapters all over the country. I belonged to of course the Upstate chapter. All of their meetings are mostly of them anyhow. I've gone to North Conway and New Hampshire going to some of theirs because I visit some friends to ski with. I usually go with the facility of Herbert Snyder. We go to the meetings and drink a little bit, you know. Devil Eyes.

Q: So have you always stayed in contact with then men that you served with?

SH: Yeah, well there's basically three of them that we drop notes to each other each time or each year and Christmas cards and we call on the phone occasionally and see how things are going. Unfortunately that list is getting lower and lower. We are at that age now where, you know not much longer of life left unfortunately. But we do keep in touch, yes. The division has been active. Matter of fact they have a junior division. It's the children of the tenth mountain division guys that form their own basic group to keep track of things and so forth. Apparently doing quite well.

Q: Do you ever see any USO shows?

SH: Very few. Very few. Other than the skiing and the friends that I have that were in the tenth and things like that and the association with the meetings that they have because I'm a part of the Upstate chapter. Actually I belong to the New England chapter. There are also new chapters. We go to their meetings and things like that and that's about it.

Q: How did your time in the service and especially your time in the tenth mountain, how do you think that had an impact on your life?

SH: I think it had a good one. It taught you to number one; obey orders and all of that. You're going to do this, you're going to do it. This is where you found out if you had it or not. Darn good training. When you came out of it, you came out of it you came through it and became a man. I tell you, I think the training was hard as you may think it was at the time. Had to be that way for you to survive.

Q: Do you think in retrospect that the training you received was adequate?

SH: I think so, yes. I am disappointed in a way. All the alpine countries in Europe all have specific mountain troops. Of course we have one up in Upstate New York, here. What they call a lite tenth. Then of course the work is different today than it was back then too. But they have sort of disbanded. I'm sorry to see that they disbanded having a complete regiment of the mountain troops. Transpacific warfare. Some of the lite tenth if course, there are units that are trained that way but there are also units trained for sea duty, land duty, boat landing on the shore and things like that. I think that was a good move that they made in World War Two to have a mountain division. As it turned out I think they felt they did the right thing or the government did the right thing. I would like to see us or the country have a complete division of training like we had. Specifically for that type of warfare then the warfare is totally different today well entirely everything.

Q: There is quite a bit of Britain on the tenth mountain lately. Have you read any of the books on tenth mountain division?

SH: Yeah, I have some. I can't even tell you their names now but I do have a pretty good library of them.

Q: Do you think most of the books are accurate?

SH: yeah, they're written by the people that were in it of course. They might have been in a different unit, battalion, regiment. But they're good. I think it's a good thing that our grandchildren have books and so forth to be able to read about in the future.

Q: Okay, well thank you very much for your time.

SH: You're very welcome and thank you for having us up here and I hope you understood what I have told you or whatever.

Q: Yes.