

INTERVIEW WITH JEROME SCHWARTZ
Co A/379th Inf./95th ID
(Part 3)
Friday Aug 1 AND
Saturday, August 2, 2008

Holiday Inn French Quarter, Toledo Ohio.

Transcribed by David Meyer and Lynn Hall

Date of Transcription: July 14, 2009

Beginning of Formal Interview – Noted on Log as “File 1

MEY: [Ready. Ready. I always – I always start these by mentioning my father. This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Company H 379th 95th Infantry. It’s August 1st, 2008, 8:27 p.m., and I’m in the lobby of the French Quarter Holiday Inn, Toledo, Ohio, or Perrysburg, Ohio. And I have the privilege of talking to –]

SCH: Jerome M. Schwartz.

MEY: [Could you spell your last name?]

SCH: S-C-H- The answer to your question is yes, I can spell my last name, and it’s S-C-H-W-A-R-T-Z. I was in Company A of the 379th, came in through the ASTP.

MEY: [Right, ASTP. What’s your birthdate?]

SCH: June 12th, 1925.

MEY: [And where were you born?]

SCH: Manhattan.

MEY: [Born where in Manhattan?]

SCH: The Beth Israel Hospital – what kind of question is that?

MEY: [Is that downtown?]

SCH: Well, it’s around 14th Street.

MEY: [Yeah, now they have one north, now.]

SCH: Oh, really?

MEY: [Doctors Hospital is now Beth Israel –]

SCH: Oh, I had no idea.

MEY: [(A little aside that means nothing to anybody...)And what were the names of your parents?]

SCH: My father’s name was Dad – oh, no, you don’t want to know that. Daniel! Daniel, David, and he went to NYU! And was an accountant. There were eight men in his graduating class in 1919. I went to

NYU because my father said I should go to NYU and become an accountant; I had no idea what an accountant was. And when I was graduated as a GI baby, 1947, there were 800 men in my class and one woman. And when I taught accounting in the 60s and 70s two-thirds of my students were women – and the best accountants are women.

My mother's name was Frances; her maiden name was Firman, F-I-R-M-A-N. Does that answer your question?

MEY: [Yes. Did you have any siblings?]

SCH: Yes. I had an older brother who was drafted in the peacetime draft, and my sister, who is also older than I am, is still alive.

MEY: [And where did you grow up in Manhattan?]

SCH: I didn't grow up in Manhattan, I grew up in Brooklyn.

MEY: [Where in Brooklyn?]

SCH: Well, I went to Boys' High. We lived, I guess they called it Crown Heights, which is the edge of Bedford-Stuyvesant. I went to Boys' High which was in Bed-Stuy – which was *probably* at that time the best high school in the state, if not in the country. We had incredible students, incredible teachers; it was a fantastic school.

MEY: [What streets were those on?]

SCH: Oh, I don't remember the very street, but it was in Bedford-Stuy.

MEY: [Bushwick, or –]

SCH: No, but not far from Bushwick – I think it was off Kingston Avenue if I'm not mistaken; I can't swear to it. My wife, by the way, went to Girls' High. Which was not too far from Boys' High, and eventually they combined it into Boys' & Girls' High but they weren't nearly as successful as when I went there.

MEY: [How was it growing up?]

SCH: Great! My father was a successful accountant: we had a car, we had a *phone*, my mother had a maid – we were well-off. My father had a *Buick*, which was a big deal in those days. A Roadmaster. Well, he had to have a car, because as an accountant – people didn't use Dun & Bradstreet, so... he worked for a private bank, and if they wanted to do an audit of some-such, they had to send their own auditor. There were very few auditors and very limited means of transportation, so he had to take his car and go all over the place.

MEY: [And growing up, did – you didn't want to be an accountant; what did –]

SCH: I didn't even know what an accountant was! I didn't learn what an accountant was until about my second or third year in college. I had no idea what an accountant did.

No, I was in an experimental class in grade school – this was in Brooklyn, P.S. 210 – we had the same teacher and the same students from 1A to 6B. And I kept, we kept in touch with the teacher until she died, and two of my closest friends today were in that class. And most of the people in that class were very successful... and it was unique, that's the only way I could put it.

MEY: [Was the – I know Brooklyn, just to let you know now, when I was back there last month and I was talking to the police, because I went back to the place where I was first robbed which was Quincy Street, Bedford and Nostrand... I was just talking to the 77th precinct and he said, "Oh, you know, what the real estate people are selling at Bed-Stuy now, they're calling it *Stuyvesant Heights*. And the South Bronx, they're calling it SoBro.]

SCH: All of the slum, for want of a better name, neighborhoods, and around the subway, are now in tremendous demand. All over the city, not merely in Manhattan: the Bronx... My parents grew up on the Lower East Side, which was a collection of slums. Now it's fulla yuppies, with pet dogs – who could afford a dog in the Depression?

MEY: [You're right! Do you remember what was going on, what you were doing when you heard about the Pearl Harbor attack?]

SCH: Yes! One of these fellas with whom I'm still friendly – he was a neighbor of mine in Florida; Howard Reed, his name is – and I were in a Chinese restaurant. I remember that the meal cost fifty cents, it was quite a big deal. And on the radio they announced that they had bombed Pearl Harbor, and we looked at each other and said, "What's Pearl Harbor?" We didn't know what... but the Chinese waiter, who was ecstatic 'cause now we were coming in on the side of them, said, "Pearl Harbor –" (in effect, "you dumb caucasian") " – is in Hawaii, and you will now be joining Chiang Kai Shek," is what he said. And he was right.

MEY: [And what was going on in your life at the time you joined the Service?]

SCH: Actually, I enlisted before I was 18 because of the Army Specialized Training Program. Which gets no publicity at all. There were a hundred thousand men in the ASTP at its height. It had two purposes: the first was, the colleges had lost all their men (no women went to college in those days, very few of course, and very few co-ed colleges), so when the men went off to war, a lot of colleges were in terrible trouble. The other problem that the government had is *nobody* went to college, a high school diploma was something of a rarity, so they had no officer material. And they decided to have this program to send soldiers, and *{_____}* (13:06) as it happens, back to college to become officers. You had to have a high school diploma and take a three-hour test (which wasn't very difficult –

obviously, I passed it), and then if you had a high enough mark you were given a choice. You could be a dentist, you could be a linguist, or you could be an engineer.

SCH: Originally, when they were creating the program, they were gonna include doctors – but the AMA objected, and the spokesman for the AMA made a speech that was on the radio saying, “It’s unfair to the medical profession for the federal government to educate soldiers to become doctors, because when the war is over doctors will be overabundant and doctors will not be able to make a living.” And if you believe that you believe in fairies, but everybody believed it or else the AMA was a better lobbyist than we know – and still is, I suppose. But in any event they took government out of medical schools. Which is interesting because today the government supports every medical school. What’s interesting is they don’t support dental schools and they don’t support veterinarian courses, just medical courses. So you could go to medical school today on scholarships if you’re bright enough, or lucky enough. But if you want to be a veterinarian you gotta pay for it. And if you want to be a dentist you have to pay for it.

But coming back to the ASTP: they offered me, as I said, this choice, and I said, “Okay, I’ll be a linguist. I had three years of high school French!” “Oh no, no, no, we need Russians and Japanese.” And I was so clever, I said, “Who the hell is going to use Japanese after the war, that’s absurd!” [Laughter] Don’t laugh, don’t laugh. And Russian, well, you had to be subversive to be interested in; it was the Red thing in those days. And I had really no interest in either, so I became an engineering candidate. By the way, some rather well-known people, besides me, ha-ha, were in that program. Henry Kissinger. Bob Dole. Kurt Vonnegut. Johnny Carson was in the Navy equivalent, and then don’t forget: Jerry Schwartz. They really suckered us, to tell you the truth, because after I reported to active duty, I was in – the beginning of October 1943 – they sent me to basic training, at the Infantry School? Where the cadre were guys who had flunked out of OCS and were anxious to get back into – I shouldn’t say “flunked out”, they may have gotten sick or hurt – but our cadre were all non-coms that hadn’t made it in OCS. OCS, Infantry OCS was also at Fort Benning. So these guys take a look at – we were all eighteen and nineteen, you were ancient, and we were gonna go to college and become officers, and the guys who were training us in basic training were guys who wanted to be Infantry officers and for whatever reason didn’t make it. So they gave us what you would call a tough time. Which, as my wife points out, probably saved my life.

We had a really tough, gruelling basic training in Infantry school, partly because of the cadre and partly because we were gonna be officers. I don’t know, but they gave us a hard time – which was good. When I got to the Infantry in the 95th, it came in very handy. I think I knew more about a rifle than my captain did. And, not that I’m so modest, but there wasn’t an Infantry weapon that I didn’t fire. And I was the only guy in the company who actually fired a bazooka when the bazookas were part of our organization; that’s how I became a bazooka man.

MEY: [Okay, how long *was* basic?]

SCH: Thirteen weeks in those days.

MEY: [Thirteen weeks.]

SCH: Gruelling thirteen weeks.

MEY: [And those were all with your own ASTP –]

SCH: All, all ASTP – we were in our own battalion. Paul Madden was in the same battalion as I was.

MEY: [He was? Did you know him back then?]

SCH: No, I didn't know him until we got to Carnegie Tech. And as I say, I think I got screwed because I was in Carnegie Tech six weeks when they broke up the program, and put – [laughter] Why are you laughing! – and put us in the Infantry. Three or four thousand men were transferred from the ASTP to the 95th Division alone.

MEY: [That's what, February, March?]

SCH: That was March of 1944.

MEY: [Now, how did they tell you?]

SCH: Well, you're a private, and they say to you, "You will report to..."

MEY: [Were there rumors going on?]

SCH: Probably, I don't really remember.

MEY: [Okay. So you report to Indiantown Gap?]

SCH: Indiantown Gap.

MEY: [And, what, so you're reporting and there are all these people who've been together since Camp Shelby –]

SCH: Yeah. Well, you have to remember that until our arrival, it was denigrating to be put in the Infantry. There were guys in my company when we came in who were put in the Infantry because they had been naughty in something else. Now you're a commander of a... you're Captain Ronald Reagan – this actually happened (this was later), and you're in charge of some movie unit, and the word comes down to Captain Reagan of this movie unit in Hollywood that he has to send, whatever, five men to an Infantry division. Now, he's not gonna send his best five men. He's not even gonna send his mediocre five men. He's gonna send the five idiots he's been looking to get rid of.

Now, we had a theft in my outfit. This was in Shelby after we came back from Europe. And my job was to go through the records and look for suspects. And one of the suspects, who happened to be in my squad, was a guy that was transferred from Captain Reagan's unit to us, and he had a rough – a not-too-scintillating record, so he was a natural suspect. And I called, it was my job to call, and I asked

for “Captain Ree-gan” – I didn’t know he pronounced it “Reagan” – and I spoke to him for about two seconds, that’s my claim to fame.

SCH: And it turned out this guy had a bad record, he could easily have been the thief. We never firmly established whether he was or wasn’t, but I got a lecture from the commander of the company that I should watch this guy, he was in my squad, et cetera, et cetera.

Well that was – there was a Ph.D. from Harvard in the company when I joined, when we ASTP-ers joined, and what was he doing in it? He obviously had been naughty, or had rubbed somebody the wrong way. It was a Jewish lawyer in his 30s; you can imagine what he must have done wrong, and so on and so on. So...

MEY: [So you come in, and you guys must have raised the IQ of the whole...]

SCH: I understood there was... I don’t know if it was a rumor or if it was in the Stars and Stripes that the lowest... I can’t think of the word, uh – literacy! You see, it’s a good thing I was a college professor. – literacy rate in the Army was in the 95th. At the end of the war, one of the jobs I had with a Sgt. Baker... I was then a scout in a rifle squad, and Sgt. Baker and I were in charge of guarding – are you ready for this? A warehouse full of gin! Baker was a very nice guy, but he was not quite literate. He was not illiterate, but I had to read his letters from his wife to him. And it was a little embarrassing, but charming... and I didn’t write his letters to the wife, but I had to tell him what to write. And I had to read his letters because his spelling was not... much. But it was not uncommon in those days to run into people who were certainly not well-educated, to use a pompous phrase, and by and large there were no – very few, I should say – people with high AGCT scores. AGCT was the equivalent of IQ, Army General Classification Test.

MEY: [So what – how did these people, how did the Infantry * guys come in?]

SCH: We were all privates. Which I think the Army made a big mistake about, ‘cause most of the – I shouldn’t say most of, *many* of the ASTP guys were very good soldiers. And we were very young – 19 as I say was an old geezer; and we were well-trained, and basic training... and I think that if I had been in charge I would have had a separate platoon of ASTP-ers. ‘Cause I didn’t make Sergeant till almost the end of the war.

MEY: [Do you feel that, in some ways, your mingling with the rest of the people... ‘cause I’ll read some of the accounts like in Joe Januskiewicz’s book, and there’s initiative, you think... the enlisted man seems to a lot of times take matters into his own hands –]

SCH: Yes. We did that. We did that. As a bazookaman we were pretty much on our own the few times we ran into German tanks – we didn’t run into German tanks very often, but when we did, when I was a bazookaman, nobody told us what to do or where to go or how to chase the bazooka – or, how to chase the tank, I’m sorry. We did it on our own.

MEY: [I'm just wondering whether you, because you *weren't* put in a separate unit, just that you were all the way –]

SCH: Well, I... we resented being peasants, and of course you get the impression that you're cannon fodder, because you are. And particularly when you run into a guy like Patton who makes very strange speeches and *tells* you you're cannon fodder, and you begin to resent somebody like that.

MEY: [Any stories out of Indiantown Gap or West Virginia Mountain Training, anything come from that?]

SCH: Oh, I tell ya, I got my own little tale to tell, because it comes up very frequently. Medals! Purple Hearts, I'll stay with that one. It's a story worth telling because it's not well-known, or at least it's not well-publicized.

When we first went up to the front, in October, the beginning of October, 1944, we were in the 20th Corps, Walker, of the 3rd Army, Patton. And of course they send you to an area where you're [blooded?]*, you're literally put in an area where if you think you're inept, you should see the enemy. The guys we were opposing were fortress troops! Thank God, they were not the best troops – thank God we were not opposed by... in fact, the first batch of prisoners we took all insisted they were Czechs, and they probably were. Czechoslovaks.

But coming back to my soliloquy about medals. When, as I say, we were up in this quiet sector of the front, being [blooded]*, you should pardon the expression, very little is doing. Then all of a sudden, whatever, I won't even go into what happened, and I am caught outside of a two-man foxhole in a mortar barrage in the woods. The trouble with mortars is you don't hear them until they explode – as opposed to artillery, which you can hear in the air. Of course by the time you hear it it's too late, generally, but you *can* really duck an artillery shell; you can't duck a mortar shell. You don't even know. And worse yet, if you're in the woods when the mortar shell – call it a bomb – hits the tree, the shrapnel is wood as well as steel, and you can get killed by a tree branch.

MEY: [They talk about tree bursts, is that 'cause everything rains down and it's so...]

SCH: It's horrific, let's put it that way. Anyhow, I'm caught in the woods ten yards from my foxhole; I'm trying to get my entire body under my helmet, and I didn't really feel it, but something hit my leg, I didn't think anything of it. And when there was a lull in the mortar barrage, I flew into my two-man foxhole, and the man I was sharing the foxhole with pointed out to me that I had torn my trousers. And when we looked, I picked up my torn trousers – we were wearing longjohns – there was a streak of blood. It was not anything of any consequence; maybe the streak of blood was two inches long, not very deep. I was probably hit by a rock. And it wasn't painful, and I said, "Ehh," you know, didn't even want to be bothered. At that point, when he and I were recovering from the mortar barrage, a wounded man from our co – I remember his name, Joe Pantaea* (7:23), he was an American Indian – walked up. We were at the top of the hill, and he was in a foxhole towards the bottom of the hill, and he was holding his jaw. Apparently a piece of shrapnel had broken his jaw. And incredibly, he walked up the hill holding his jaw, bleeding from what looked like his mouth, and off he went eventually to a hospital. He came

back at the end of the war, he wasn't seriously hurt. There was another guy, I don't remember anything about him, but he was carried up the hill in a stretcher.

SCH: But my comrade in the foxhole insisted that I see the medic. Actually, when the medic was through taking care of – there weren't too many casualties, but there were some – he came, looked at my leg, sprinkled some sulfur powder on it and he says, "You're not getting a Purple Heart." I had no interest in a Purple Heart, I didn't – I knew what a Purple Heart is. But it never occurred to me that a scratch like that would – *nobody* at that time understood that a Purple Heart only required a drop – legally, if I were a lawyer and sued, I would be entitled to a Purple Heart. Apparently, I created a great legal problem, because the medic told the captain, and when I was on guard duty guarding the company CP – this actually was an enclosed foxhole, big thing; they brought an actual bed into this and covered it over with metal and so on, the outfit before us. We replaced the 5th Division. And we were – one of the jobs I had as a bazookaman when we had no German tanks to worry about, was to be a runner for the guard, and stand guard duty for the company headquarters. And the captain, with whom I was on pretty good terms, called me in and he said, "We've gone over your case carefully," like... [*laughter*] ... the Supreme Court was called, "and we're sorry, you can't have a Purple Heart." Oh, I left one thing out. The medic said to me, "You want a Purple Heart?" I said, "No!" He said, "It's a good thing, because if you get one, they're gonna send your mother a telegram." I said, "My mother would be hysterical, I'm glad – I don't want a Purple Heart." But I saw the captain, and he said, "Well, if you saw Pantaea*..." this guy was really, oh boy, and the guy on the stretcher, I forget him, his name, and I said, "No, no, I don't want – I understand they're gonna send a telegram to my mother," and he said, "Yeah, I understand that's true," and I said, "Forget about the Purple Heart." He said, "You know what, I'll get you a new pair of trousers. And of course like an idiot I said, "Good deal, sir."

In December, the 1st Battalion, of which in a company I was a part, had its day of fame. We crossed the Saar River, the first bridge across the Saar River we crossed in the assault boats. And that's our claim to fame. We surprised the Germans, captured the bridge. There was an armored car on the bridge, and I'm amused by the fact that the official history only describes the fact that Captain So-and-so cut the throats of these two men, because actually a sergeant had to bayonet them first. He didn't kill them, and that's why the captain had to cut their throats. But there's no mention of the sergeant in the official history.

MEY: [Were you on the bridge?]

SCH: No, no, I was at the other end of the column. We were facing outward, and I won't go into what we did; we did very little until the bridge was taken. There were very few... we really took the Germans completely by surprise, because the west side, the side we were coming from, had not yet been settled. There were still plenty of Germans on the west side of the Saar River, and we really surprised the hell out of them. I was then in charge of a bazooka team because I was the only survivor of the bazooka team after the Metz campaign, and I had with me two raw recruits, both of whom became friends of mine; in fact, I saw them after the war. And we were told to go find a place to watch for the road that led to the next town, *[Frahlau?]*. The town we were in was *[S_____]*. And we picked a beautiful spot in an apartment house that overlooked the road, and I said – of course it's never my fault – I said to

Warren and Junior that, "I'll take the first shift, and you take the second shift, and you take the third shift and wake me up in four hours."

SCH: And the next thing I knew, it was dawn. And my brilliant recruits – I blame it on them, I really don't remember what actually happened, but I do remember that I took the first shift. That I swear to. Whether I told Warren to be first or Junior to be first I don't honestly remember. Apparently I didn't do it too successfully. We wake up in the morning and there's a solitary German tank coming straight down. Without going into the rest of it, which isn't... The next day, I mean that day, the fourth of December, I was wounded and went to the hospital in Metz and spent ten days there. I had shrapnel wounds on my hands; my arms and hands, both arms, both hands were bandaged from my toes to my elbows, et cetera, et cetera; I won't even go into that. But the second or third day I was there, I was in a cot in a huge room that probably was something like the gymnasium of the University of Metz – that's what it was, the University of Metz – and a captain who was not a doctor but a medical administrator comes, and you could see he no use for what he was doing, or maybe he had no use for me, I didn't know him, and he *throws* the box containing a Purple Heart on my cot: "Here, sign here, soldier," and, idiot that I was, "Sir, I understand that if I get a Purple Heart you're gonna send a telegram to my mother, and if that's the case then I'd just as soon not have the Purple Heart." He had already started to write something, and I think that's what made him made because he had to change his records. In any event, he picked up the box and without a pleasant word, went off. The next day he comes back and now he's all smiles. He says, "I fixed it, we're not gonna send a Purple Heart to your mother." I said, "Great, I'll take the Purple Heart." He was right! They sent the telegram – I said "Purple Heart", they're not gonna send a *telegram* to your mother. He was right; they sent the telegram to my *father!*

MEY: [Holy cow...]

SCH: And of course that was my fault, I should have remembered, you know, you have to name a beneficiary and I had named my father, not my mother. Anyhow, my mother got a telegram, or my father got a telegram.

Now, when I returned to the outfit, we went... then the Bulge started, about a day or two after we went, when I returned. I think I returned on the 14th; the Bulge started on the 16th. We were pulled off the bridgehead we had developed on the Saar River, and we were digging defensive positions on the west side of the Saar River, when we were called to the strategic reserve. One of the things that General Bradley and General Eisenhower announced that they had learned from the Battle of the Bulge was that they needed a strategic reserve, and they would pick one division – and as luck would have it they picked the 95th Division. We were in strategic reserve, which put us back by Liège, nowhere near the front, and we stayed there for most of the month. We did actually have to go up to Holland. We were up in Holland a week; we replaced the 6th Scottish Commandos, but very little happened in Holland that's worth mentioning. And we came back to Liège, and then we started... I think we started to the Rhine. We actually reached the bridge across the Rhine, which was blown up with our engineers on it. When that happened, we're back in action, and now I'm no longer a bazookaman; I'm transferred to a rifle squad. And we're taking casualties, and somebody comes around and says, "Would you like a Croix de Guerre or a Purple Heart? You can have one or the other." About two or three days later, you can have both.

SCH: And when they came to me, they said, “You already have a Purple Heart, I can’t give you another one.” I didn’t ask for another one! By the time we got to the Ruhr, if you wanted a Purple Heart you just had to ask for it. If you wanted a medal for valor, you had to write up your own citation. If I wrote up a citation saying that I had won the war single-handed, and got somebody to sign it and an officer to approve, I would have been declared the sole winner of the war [*laughter*]. In other words, there was a certain – disrespect is the only way I can put it, for medals. And that included Purple Hearts. The medic that was attached to our platoon most of the time would write himself up for Purple Hearts, and actually he had six when the war ended. And then of course the point system went into effect, and every medal was worth five points. So if I had been smart, I would have had at least five more points, and probably ten more points because I should have got one for my scratch and I should have got one when I was in the platoon.

MEY: [Where did you... so after Liège and the Bulge, did you go back –]

SCH: After the Bulge we went into strategic reserve. We were in a town called Eben-Emael, which is very famous from World War II. That’s where the Germans in 1940 split the Belgians from the French. It’s a key part of the Maginot Line, which connected almost – the Belgians would not openly cooperate with the French; they were afraid that the Germans might invade. And guess what, they did. And of course they were not coordinated, so the Germans had no trouble – I shouldn’t say had no trouble, they had less trouble going through the Ardennes. And in an incredible battle, I think it was sixty-two German paratroops captured this enormous, critical fort at Eben-Emael that held over two thousand men. There were actually sixteen – I looked into this very thoroughly, and read many accounts – apparently sixteen Germans actually got on top of this fort and dropped explosives down ____ (19:19)* chimneys, or whatever it was, and caused the entire garrison to surrender in a matter of hours. And that was the most important penetration of the Maginot Line. So we were stationed in reserve in Eben-Emael doing not much of anything except, as I say, once they sent us up to Holland, and then we started for the Rhine and we were not one of the fortunate ones, in that the bridge that our engineers reached blew up with a bunch of our engineers on it.

MEY: [Were you there when –]

SCH: No, no, I was nowhere near them. I was in the Infantry and we were – well, there were Infantrymen around of course, but not my unit.

MEY: [And then, were you in the Ruhr Pocket when –]

SCH: Oh, yes, the Ruhr Pocket was, that’s a lifetime experience. You never knew what was gonna happen the next day, whether you were gonna take three hundred prisoners – which I actually did, I actually took three hundred prisoners... by waiving my own [?]*

MEY: [Where was that?]

SCH: Oh, I don't know the name of the town, but we were riding on tanks, which was very unusual for us, and we didn't particularly enjoy riding on tanks, because Shermans were a disaster. Whoever permitted Shermans to be used should have been arrested.

MEY: [Why, because they were bad tanks?]

SCH: Ah! That's the understatement of the... If you fired a bazooka, as I had to, at a German tank, there's only two places you could hit it that would do anything. And that was the tread, you could knock the tread off, or if you hit it in the back where the radiator was you might disable the engine and you might not. And some of the tanks, you couldn't even hit in – you couldn't do any damage in the back. If you hit it anyplace else, like the turret – the first G.I. in my company to fire a bazooka at a tank – Pat Thornton – hit the tank in the turret, and I think he gave them a headache. The German tanks' armor was so superior, the cannon was so superior – they used an 88. It was designed as an anti-aircraft gun; it had superior muzzle velocity to anything we had. By the time we got to the Ruhr most American tanks had 90 millimeter anti-aircraft guns that still didn't have the muzzle velocity of an 88. The German equivalent of a bazooka was a Panzerfaust; it was a shoulder weapon. The disadvantage to a Panzerfaust is it was a one-shot deal – a bazooka, you could... as many rockets as you could carry, you could fire. But a Panzerfaust could knock out a Sherman tank. And if you ever go to Bastogne... they don't have statues – well, they have a statue of a couple of guys from the American Army – but usually in the town square you have a statue of a general or a mayor or something. They have knocked out tanks, in Bastogne. And most of the knocked out tanks are Shermans that were repainted; they look brand new except there's a hole in the turret where a German shell had penetrated the turret. Now, we had nothing that could penetrate a German turret. As a matter of fact, the 3rd Armored Division had Pershings, which were the improvement of the Shermans, but for reasons I still don't understand (I haven't really looked into it), they were forbidden from using them for quite a while. It wasn't till almost the end of the war that Pershings were used – which were far superior to Shermans. Maybe they still weren't any good. But there was no comparison between a Sherman and a German tank. The Shermans were called Ronsons, for the cigarette lighters, because if you hit the Sherman almost any place it would burst into flame. And you had to be crazy to be an American tanker. I remember: in the Ruhr we were – my platoon was to lead an attack to some German village, and we were told that we would have air support; we had a forward observer from the Air Force; we had a forward observer from some corps artillery battalion; and we were gonna have ten tanks. I think they were from the 8th Armored Division. It doesn't matter because most Sherman tankers knew that it was suicide. Four of the ten tanks actually got to where we were gonna jump off, and all four of them were immediately driven into a ditch. These guys were not stupid; they were not gonna kill themselves. This was not unusual – we came to understand that the last place you wanted to be was in a Sherman tank.

MEY: [That's interesting. Speaking of the bazooka – what was it like to fire a bazooka?]

SCH: It was funny, because it's a rocket, and in order to load the rocket there was a wire that came out of the tail that you had to twirl around the rear of the tube, and when the rocket came out of the front end of the tube the wire would fly back and invariably it would hit you in the mouth. Because, you know, you held the bazooka in such a way that inevitably the wire... I don't know if you're – you must know that the first thing you had to get rid of to prove that you were a veteran was your gas mask. In order to show that you were an experienced soldier, you did two things: you got rid of the contents of your gas mask container – you kept the container because you could keep things in it like Hershey bars, letters from home – but you never kept the gas mask itself because as it turned out you didn't need it. In the package was plastic eye goggles. Every bazookaman kept the eye goggles, because when the wire flew back, it might hit you in the eye. So you could tell an experienced bazookaman, because he had a bruise around his mouth or a black eye or something. Of course, you didn't get to fire a bazooka very often. Usually you fired it once and that was it; either you hit or you ran like hell.

MEY: [How... is one person firing?]

SCH: It's a three-man team, with only one man who's necessary to fire it. The other two guys carry the rockets in a canvas bag – which was very awkward to carry.

MEY: [So every place you're going –]

SCH: One guy carries the tube, usually the leader –

MEY: [Was that you?]

SCH: That was me. And the other two guys carry the ammunition. Of course, when you become friendly, you rotate. For an hour I carry the ammunition and you carry the tube, and so on. The rockets.

MEY: [What did you think of your commanding officers?]

SCH: Ah, the company commander was a fellow I was pretty close to, because in West Virginia Maneuvers his runner got sick and I was chosen to replace him. I obviously didn't please him – I couldn't keep up with him, the truth. He was a very interesting guy; he had just immigrated to the United States, he was gonna be a cop. He hadn't quite gone on duty when the war was – when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. He was something of a Gaelic scholar, he was brave to the point of insanity. He was a very tough, tough, tough guy... I understand, before we joined, he had fist fights with some of the enlisted men. He'd take off his shirt, you know... he drank a lot; he was unquestionably brave. And the only thing that really I remember after sixty years is that he enjoyed shooting prisoners.

MEY: [Prisoners?]

SCH: Yeah, he thought that was his duty. There was a very famous incident – famous to us: the day we captured this bridge, as I say the A Company, my company, was the tail end of the column (and rightly so, because the enemy would be coming from where we were, the rear end; we would get the enemy attack first, it would be coming from *Frah!____ (28:14)). At a turn in the road, there was a landmark – a baby carriage factory, a huge one. I didn't know it was a baby carriage factory, it was a factory. And the first fire-fight the day we crossed the bridge, by my company, took place actually inside the baby carriage factory – which is rather unusual; you don't like to shoot your rifle inside a building because it ricochets. But there were, I dunno, I'm gonna say a dozen probably, eight, Germans in this baby carriage factory, and a platoon – almost a platoon, certainly twenty men from one of our platoons, went in and actually had a fire-fight, which fortunately they won, and they took a bunch of prisoners. I don't even know the number, I'm gonna say six or seven. And the lieutenant in charge of that platoon was a Texas schoolteacher (sounds like an oxymoron), very nice, well-thought-of guy named Jim Hart.

And he called on a walkie-talkie – which was unusual because we had terrible walkie-talkies, they were useless; we relied on field telephones – but he called the captain to tell him that he had a bunch of prisoners, and where should he send them? And the captain kept hinting about, "Shoot 'em!"

And now, this was on a walkie-talkie that everyone could hear, which is why it became common gossip among the troops. And Hart was heard to say, "If you want me to shoot these prisoners, you'll have to come here and shoot them yourself." But I was present when Captain Lydon broke the stock of an M-1, a Garand rifle, over the head of a German prisoner. He hit him so hard he – he broke his skull, of course, killed him – he broke the stock of the rifle by hitting this guy over the head.

MEY: [Was there any provocation?]

SCH: Well, it depends on whose side you're on. We had captured this farmhouse, and – we didn't notice it because we were not exactly the best troops in the world – but outside of the farmhouse, to the rear of the farmhouse, there was a row of foxholes, which we didn't see. And in one of the foxholes was this German non-com, I forget whether he was a sergeant or higher but he was a non-com, and he was in – I guess you had to call it a dress uniform, it wasn't the ordinary one. And he had hand grenades on the edge of the foxhole, he had a Schmeisser, which was a machine pistol, in his possession, and so on. And somebody went out, I think to take a leak, and spotted him, and he was taken prisoner, brought to the captain – who was furious at the idea that this guy was sitting outside his company, ready to throw hand grenades, shoot Schmeissers or whatever – so he killed him. But he killed him out of sheer anger. Nevertheless, aside from this small flaw in his character [*laughter*], he was, uh... he was in the right place. I learned after the war that he and the battalion commander hated each other. Which seemed very strange to me; why would you keep a company commander that you can't stand? Oh, I should mention that the regimental dentist becomes an aid-man in the infantry. When you're in combat, the regimental dentist puts away his drill and he becomes an aid-man, so you find him in the first-aid station; the regiment always has a first-aid station. And I looked him up after the war, because he came from New York, his name was Harold [Barsch?]*, and we became fast friends – we played bridge

together, we even played touch football together – but we played bridge together for years, we didn't play touch football too long – and he was my dentist until he died. And I got all the gossip from Harold, SCH: in fact that's how I learned about the reunions. Because apparently Harold was a sort of * _____ * (32:47) – everybody kept in touch with Captain Barsch*. And frequently when I would go there, there would be somebody there from the old outfit. In fact, one day the guy who was the executive officer of my company, Dumer* (33:03), he was a postman, was visiting Dr. Barsch* – and he had been kicked out, literally kicked out of Company A by Lydon, didn't like him... but then again I don't think Lydon liked too many people – and apparently Dumer* thought I might have a low – I knew nothing of what was going on the battalion commander and the company commander and the executive officer. And I wondered why he seemed so unfriendly. In fact I had spent some time with him as a bazookaman; when you don't have a tank to worry about, you're with company headquarters. You're the captain's personal protectors.

MEY: [That's not the same as a bat-man, is it?]

SCH: No, he was the executive officer. He was a first lieutenant, and had the captain been disabled, he would have taken over the captain. When he got rid of him he was transferred to C Company, and I know he finished the war in C Company. And of course I knew nothing about him until I ran into him in Dr. Barsch's* office.

MEY: [And then did you become friends with him?]

SCH: No. He didn't wanna have anything – it was him, not me. "Oh, you were in A Company!" as though I was a pariah – as though *he* were a pariah. He assumed that I knew why Lydon had had him transferred out. I not only didn't know, but had I known I would've had no interest: I had to worry about my own rear end, I didn't care about his.

MEY: [What did you do for relaxation when you were there? You played bridge at all?]

SCH: Yes, we did, as a matter of fact.

MEY: [You played bridge.]

SCH: Yeah. When we weren't on the line. Yeah, we played, oh, a lot of crap games, poker games...

MEY: [Did you enjoy those too?]

SCH: Oh, yeah, sure. Most of the men that played poker were terrible poker players, and with any card sense, you don't have to be a skilled gambler, you could make money playing with these guys. Drinking was a big thing. Drinking, smoking, cursing. Which, for an 18-year-old, was not something I was used to. I could curse, but not as well as I learned to curse in the army. I didn't drink.

MEY: [When you came back, was there any period where you had to watch yourself because you might slip and use profanity?]

SCH: Oh, yeah. I still slip and use profanity. But I now think it's acceptable. Well, I don't know whether it is or it isn't, but you come to the point where you think that it's necessary to throw in a few four-letter words to be macho. But I didn't smoke until we got K-rations, and C-rations, because in each ration was four cigarettes. Each meal had four cigarettes in the can or in the carton. And that's how I started to smoke.

MEY: [Do you still smoke?]

SCH: No, I stopped smoking when I had my first heart attack... thank you!

MEY: [Oh, good. Good.]

SCH: Good what? I had a heart attack?

MEY: [No, no... good that you stopped. I smoked for thirty years myself. My father would say, "Dave, you shouldn't smoke," and then for Christmas he would say –

SCH: Give me a carton.

MEY: ["Give me a carton of cigarettes." So that's the way...]

SCH: After the war ended, in May when we were still thinking we were gonna be part of the army of occupation, we were in the Ruhr. A truck pulled up loaded with nothing but cigarettes, and the driver announced that we were entitled to a carton a week.

Apparently it was standard, I guess in the peacetime Army, for Infantrymen to get a carton of cigarettes a week. Now remember, you're getting twelve cigarettes a day in the rations, and of course there were other cigarettes that came up here and there, and of course people sent you stuff from home... and what we did with the cigarettes is of course we used them as blackmarket barter.

MEY: [What sort of barter – what would you barter?]

SCH: Well, actually, guys in my squad robbed a German bank, which is a great story –

MEY: [Why?]

SCH: There was nothing to do! We were in the Ruhr, we're not allowed to talk to civilians, there was no fraternization – which was nonsense, cause everybody was... you were getting your laundry done, you were having your pictures developed by Germans. There were guys shackled up with German women, et cetera, et cetera. And with a carton of cigarettes, of which we had plenty, it was better than money. The Germans would accept anything: script, marks, cigarettes, K-rations.

SCH: You had to be very careful not to give somebody that you wanted to help a D bar; it was too rich. D bar was a chocolate bar, and if you gave a civilian a D bar he could very easily get sick because it was much too concentrated. And it wasn't unusual for us to give cigarettes to people who were liberated, give them something they'd get sick from.

But coming back to the bank robbery: we're in this town in Germany, the war has ended, my job with Sgt. Baker is to protect the gin warehouse. And one of the fellas in my squad was an inveterate gambler, and a very good one – he came home with several thousand dollars, which in those days was, wow. He came from Nevada! And I guess I'd better not mention his name. But he came to me one night and said, "Let's go rob a bank!" I said, "What are you, crazy?" He said, "Well, there's a bank in town, it's guarded by two little old men..." He thinks one of them has a shotgun hidden – they were not, German civilians were not supposed to have weapons. He said, "I'll go in there with a BAR," he was a BAR man. You know what that is –

MEY: [Browning Automatic Rifle.]

SCH: Right, that's the oversized rifle; that's the basic weapon in the Infantry. The whole Army was built around the BAR.

MEY: [Was the M-1 a step up from the BAR?]

SCH: A step down. The Army was built around the Browning Automatic Rifle; it was a marvelous weapon. The only thing wrong with it was: too heavy. For somebody like me – I weighed 148 pounds! – carrying a *bazooka* was a job. They would never let me carry a BAR, I probably would have fallen down fourteen times.

MEY: [How heavy was a BAR?]

SCH: It was about twenty pounds, as I recall, where a rifle was about... twelve? Or eleven. But it was big, and it had a bi-pod, a metal bi-pod on the end. It was not easy to carry. If you see pictures of it the entire Infantry was built around the bazooka. Each squad had one bazooka. Er, not bazooka, I'm sorry. BAR. So there were three BARs in a platoon, and so on. So there were nine BARs in a rifle company and so on. In the Marines I think – I don't know when they stopped, but the last time I looked, which was about ten or twenty years ago, they had three BARs in a squad. So there would be three times as many BARs. Of course now they have better weapons, lighter – they use even a lighter bullet. But my friend decided that he would go rob the bank. And I said, "Well, the best I'll do is I'll be lookout." So three or four of them went to this bank. And these two old geezers of course were scared silly _____ ,

and they gave them a duffel bag full of German marks. Now, we were told that German marks were worthless, and we were not supposed to deal in them because we had script. So my friend said, "Would you like some German marks?" "What am I gonna do with German marks?" We get to Le Havre to ship out, to go home, and somebody announces that he knows how to sneak out, and there are blackmarketeers from Le Havre that will trade you for cigarettes or anything, rations, for Chanel perfume. Whether it was Chanel or not, it looked like Chanel.

SCH: And they had other stuff, like nylon stockings. And I snuck out with my cigarettes, and we swapped cigarettes for perfume. I still have – I should say my wife still has – an alleged container of Chanel No. 5; she never used it up – or used it; it's still in the house, I saw it the other day. And when we got through with this guy – they would take me along whenever they were sneaking out because I spoke French – and at one point the black marketeer said in French, "Do you have anything else?" And I said, "German marks." He said, "Oh, sure." So I reported to my friend that those German marks were accepted in France at ten cents a mark. So before he had a chance to go out and barter his German marks, we got on the ship. And as we get on the ship, he's got two duffel bags – his normal duffel bag, and his duffel bag fulla marks. And some officer decided that it was not proper for him to have an extra duffel bag, and he said, "Soldier, you have a choice. This duffel bag or that duffel bag." So he took a handful off the top – he gave me some, he gave his buddies some – and threw the duffel bag full of German marks over the side. While we were at sea, we would get a mimeographed newsletter from the ship's crew. The Army announced that they were gonna recognize the German mark at ten cents a shot, and I had about twenty dollars worth of marks left. And I think I was ahead of everybody else. But my friend cleaned out the crew in a poker game. He won three thousand dollars playing poker against the Navy sailors. *We* didn't have three thousand dollars, *they* had three thousand dollars. But he was down to playing the officers – he was so good that he wiped out all the enlisted men aboard the Navy troopship.

MEY: [Speaking of which, the boat ride across, were you on the Mariposa or the America or –]

SCH: The America. That wasn't bad; coming back I was so seasick, I didn't go on a ship for about forty years. We were on a troopship, we caught a summer storm, it was an absolute disaster.

MEY: [Ah... were you sleeping five in a bunk, like on the way over?]

SCH: Yeah, yeah. Oh, it was worse than that. When we came aboard, the *rooms*, for want of a better word, had – the bunks had about three inches of what was once water, but for the most part was vomit! And the place stunk, and if you had any ability to resist mal de mer, the smell would get you in no time at all. Inside of twenty four hours, I would say just about everybody, almost everybody, was sick to the point where you couldn't do anything. You couldn't eat, you couldn't even get up. And that lasted five days. So I never went on a cruise ship until – I think it was our... I think my fiftieth wedding anniversary, we went to Alaska.

MEY: [Oh, I went there. Did you like it?]

SCH: It's okay.

MEY: [Yeah.]

SCH: It's kind of funny to go to a state capital that has exactly one traffic light. Juneau has one traffic light, *had* one traffic light.

MEY: [What did you think of the food? Is there any food that you'll never eat again?]

SCH: Food?

MEY: [Yeah, the food.]

SCH: Well, my mother was probably the world's worst cook, so I enjoyed Army food. It was a step up.

MEY: [It was a step up...]

SCH: And towards the end of the war, and even after the war before we were discharged, there was a great deal of competition among the mess sergeants, Company A... because they knew that they weren't gonna have one mess sergeant for every company, they were gonna consolidate, so some of the mess sergeants were gonna lose their jobs – and God forbid, be put into the Infantry. We still thought we were going to Japan as an occupying force. So we had a chance to go from Company A's mess to Company B's mess, and they treated us royally. In fact, it was standard breakfast to line up with a plate and go directly into the kitchen and watch them make eggs any way you like it. And as you walked out of the kitchen with red-hot eggs, you would pick up what else, potatoes, cereal...

MEY: [Was that in Europe, or was that –]

SCH: No, no, this was in Shelby. (*i.e. Camp Shelby, Mississippi*)

MEY: [So when you go back to Shelby, you expect to go to Japan?]

SCH: Yeah, sure! We were told that General MacArthur had asked for the 95th specifically, that we were gonna lead the charge – which was all nonsense, because in the actual plan we weren't gonna land until the second island was taken; we were not even in the first wave taking the second Japanese island. We were in the second wave of the second island, and we weren't gonna see any action until March of 1946. And we thought we were gonna leave to charge the shore, not knowing that only the Marines did that in the Pacific. We didn't know that.

MEY: [Do you remember what you were – what was going on, where you were when you heard that Roosevelt had died?]

SCH: Yeah, we were in Germany.

MEY: [How did that affect you?]

SCH: Not particularly. No... most of us were kind of sad, we looked up to him. He was quite a father figure. I was not political at that time at all, and I didn't have any great affinity or dislike – to me he was part of the furniture... you spoke of the President, it must be Roosevelt.

MEY: [When you look back, who do you feel was the most important person to you during those years, whatever that means to you?]

SCH: That's – I don't think I can answer that question.

MEY: [Well, who were the most important people? Any come to mind, any idea...]

SCH: Well, when I was in a rifle squad, it was the other members of the squad. You had to rely on them, and the idea that you could not rely on X, as opposed to Y, was a very important thing.

MEY: [You already touched on some things... can you recall a time when you felt afraid?]

SCH: You feel afraid *all* the time. Nobody's – anybody tells you he's not afraid, he's crazy. You can't not be afraid. *The one thing they couldn't teach us in basic training is the noise. When you take basic training, they may fire a few weapons at you, and you know, you go through these things where they shoot machine gun bullets over your head – one machine gun. When you get up to the front, the noise is endless. And you can hear an artillery piece go off twenty miles away. So you're hearing endless noises from guns, rockets, rifles, everything you can name. And when you're in combat, actually with the enemy right in front of you, the noise is deafening. If you have artillery support or mortar support, if you're firing your own weapon, which isn't a bad idea, the noise is – it is loud.*

MEY: *[So if you need to communicate with your friend, do you have to shout?]*

SCH: *Oh, yeah.*

MEY: *[So people were shouting all the time, with the noise?]*

SCH: *Screaming, cursing, you know, all sorts of stuff.*

MEY: *[That's something that people forget to mention, is the level of sound –]*

Well, to me, the overpowering thing – the most, what do you remember most about combat?

SCH: The noise.

And if some guy gets hit, what amazed me is everybody screams for their mother. I never thought that, that they'd – nine times out of ten, if somebody is hurt, he'll yell for his mother. Even if they're married, they'll yell for – rarely will somebody ask for his brother, his sister, his priest, his wife; he'll ask for his mother. And I have no idea why, but I can guess of course.

MEY: [Sure. Sure, I know when my mom was dying in a hospital in Hamilton, Ohio, one of the things she asked for near the end was, "Mom." She didn't know that her mother had died a month before, and that's what she asked for. And I thought, I could see it*... Did you carry any lucky charms?]

SCH: Oh yeah.

MEY: [What was your lucky charm?]

SCH: I carried a mezuzah. And I can't honestly say that I'm very clerical even then or now.

MEY: [Where did you carry it?]

SCH: Around my neck. And I prayed every day. I haven't done that in quite a while. And I somehow came to believe that I was special, that God would protect me because I was meant for better things. I talked myself into that [*laughter*]. Which really helps. And when you're in a situation where you have to go forward and somebody's gonna shoot at you, and you feel you have no choice, you say, "Well, God's gonna take care of me. I am special. The bullets will miss me." And part of this, by the way, came from several incidents. For example, I once had the camouflage net on my helmet cut by a machine gun bullet. And I'm walking along, and I hear nothing – I hear everything, but you really hear nothing – and all of a sudden, my camouflage net is down like an African... kepi? No, that's not the word.

MEY: [No, I know...]

SCH: And I really didn't know what happened, but when we finally stopped, one of the other guys in my outfit said, "I saw it, it was incredible – " "What, what?" He saw a machine gun – a burst of machine gun fire, and he saw at least one bullet touch the top of my helmet and cut the camouflage net. Of course, it was pretty shabby to begin with because you sit on it.

MEY: [Yes. I was gonna ask you, the area around the foxhole... I asked someone, what was – someone told me about jumping out of a foxhole and stepping into something less than –]

SCH: Oh, we were pretty careful about that.

MEY: [Were you careful?]

SCH: Whenever we could be, yeah.

MEY: [Okay. Because I didn't know whether around every foxhole –]

SCH: Well, no... you – there were things you had to do, I mean – I can say that there were times when it was difficult to do, but I never had that problem. I went with a little shovel, we all had little shovels, a considerable distance away. We had an area marked that was a public latrine, and you took your little shovel and that's where you went.

MEY: [And that's where you went, okay.]

SCH: If you could.

MEY: [Would you recommend military service now?] (page 23)

SCH: Yes.

MEY: [And why is that?]

SCH: Well, I think that it's an important part of my character, having been in the military. I think there's a lot of good things you can get out of being considered dirt. Which is what we were! Cannon fodder, if you prefer. There was an article in Life Magazine about the French Foreign Legion, "How could you get these guys to be brave soldiers when they were treated the most miserable way imaginable?" If you were in the French Foreign Legion there was something wrong, so they treated you like *scum*, not like dirt. Worse than dirt. And the attitude was, "I'm the lowest thing in the world!" said a French Foreign Legionnaire, "and therefore I am the best."

MEY: [How did the war change you?]

SCH: I gained weight.

MEY: [You gained weight?]

SCH: I say, my mother was a terrible cook. I did not have any psychological problems. None. I thought I had done what I was supposed to do. I considered myself a good soldier. I had no interest in medals, and until – except I wanna get that second Purple Heart. I was gypped out of that Purple Heart. And that's something of a joke... I think it's accurate to say that if I had to explain to anybody why I'm alive, it was for one day: December 3rd, the day we crossed the – actually, December 3rd and 4th, when we crossed the Saar River and captured the first bridge across the Saar. After that it was all anti-climactic. And everything after that, even thirty six years of teaching is nothing compared to –

MEY: [To those two days.]

SCH: Yeah. 'Cause I did what I was supposed to do. I chased a tank with a bazooka.

MEY: [Speaking of which – because I know you... during that time, the December 3rd and 4th, coming up to the bridge, did you chase the tank that was – was that the tank that you woke up in the morning and it was there?]

SCH: Yes, the following morning. We knew nothing. The night of December 3rd we crossed the Saar River, the morning of December 3rd. We had very little contact with the enemy. There was a great deal of contact, but not by my group – there were no tanks, we were bazookamen. We were with company headquarters. That night, the Germans counter-attacked. We slept through it, my bazooka team. We didn't even know that there was a column of German soldiers led by a tank, going right by us! They went right by us! Had we been awake, I would have had an easy shot at that tank. We weren't awake, and... how do you disguise that? The following morning, when we *were* awake, we saw this solitary tank coming down the road. Now, what actually happened, which I found out of course years later: there was a column of German tanks in *[F_____] (23:07) that our artillery had knocked out I think the lead and last tank. There was a column of smoke on the horizon. There was the remnants of a German battalion of infantry, according to our I & R officer, Intelligence and Reconnaissance regimental officer, a guy I became friendly with, John Connelly. There were at least three hundred German infantry behind this column of German tanks that moved within, I don't know, five or six hundred yards of that baby carriage factory. The German tank that we went to get, unfortunately we did not knock out, because somebody else got there before we did. But we went right up to the tank. And in fact – and this is the only psychological problem I have, explaining to psychiatrists – I have some friends who are psychiatrists who insist that I'm in denial because I said I really never felt any post-traumatic stress at all. A German came out of that tank. He was wearing a black uniform. And we were trained to believe that only the SS wore black uniforms. And without any thought, absolutely intuitively, I picked up my rifle and I shot him. He ducked behind the tank. The lieutenant who had hit the tank with the bazooka – who annoyed me because lieutenants are not supposed to use bazookas, *bazookamen* – if he had come to me and asked for my bazooka, I don't think I woulda given it to him. Which is a lie, of course, I have no idea what I would have done. He said, "What are you shooting at, soldier?" I said, "There was a German, came out of that tank." He obviously didn't believe me. About two or three minutes later, the guy came back!

And I went to the lieutenant: "See?" I said. He said, "Oh, finish him off!"

1:16:40

And I fired at him at maybe fifty yards – and I'm a very good shot. Was, I don't think I could hit the side of a barn... I fired seven rounds, the rest of the clip, and never hit him once. I was standing on a board and I heard a strange noise – *ba-dabadabada* – and it was my legs, shaking the board. I didn't think I felt anything, I didn't consciously feel anything, but I was obviously so upset subconsciously, I couldn't hit this guy at forty yards, and my leg was shaking – I was shaking to the point where you could hear the board rattling. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the other people stood up when they heard my shooting and they riddled this poor guy – not that he was a poor – I never felt bad about that; I thought I had done the right thing and felt silly about not having hit him again, until I found out that all German tankers wear black uniforms and he may not have been SS. But most German tankers were SS

by then, the non- , the Wehrmacht Panzer outfits were few and far – they were all in Russia. So he probably was – I keep saying, he probably was SS. And the only thing I'm sorry is I embarrassed myself by not hitting him again.

SCH: Then of course you have the famous question, "How many people did you hit?" And the answer is, the only one I'm sure of is this guy. I actually fired four times at clear targets. And every time you fire, of course they go down, but that doesn't prove anything. If somebody shot at us, from whatever, we'd both go under the table, whether they were shooting at you or me. So I tell everybody, "Oh, I shot at least four," which is probably not true.

MEY [Looking back, do you have any words of wisdom, do you have anything...]

SCH: Yes, stay the hell out of the Infantry. Don't be an enlisted man if you have to be in combat, be in charge of *something*. I think one of the reasons I was successful is that I was in charge of a three-man bazooka team, I was in charge of something! And these other two guys were raw recruits: if I would stand up, they would stand up; if I would sit down, they would sit down. And they were good guys. They went wherever I went, but we would stumble over each other.

MEY: [Do you have any friend, or anyone you want to remember?]

SCH: Well, I was close to a fella named Bill Cooper (pg 26) who was in the regimental scouts from my company, also ASTP. He was in fact my best man when we got married. He's dead now. He became a doctor. But he was with the scouts. And my overcoat story: I mentioned the fact that when I came back from the hospital with this magnificent overcoat, he wanted me to stay with him in a basement that was too filthy for even me, and with this marvelous overcoat, so I went – I said no, I couldn't stay, I had to get back to my outfit. And he took this to mean that I couldn't wait to get back into combat, which was not my point at all. I just didn't want to get my brand new overcoat dirty.

MEY: [Will you tell your overcoat story one more time, from the start?]

SCH: When I went to the hospital, bandaged hands and all, I had to keep my rifle because one of the three people who went in the ambulance was a German soldier. As I said, we took prisoners on the 3rd of December. On the 4th of December was when I had this incident with the tank. An American tank destroyer, after this German tank was knocked out, pulled up right in front of the baby carriage factory where I was hoping to get the tank, sitting around doing nothing. Here comes the American tank destroyer, and it hits a mine. Everybody that talked about it later insisted that they were hit by artillery, they were hit by a mine. And the sad thing about the story is that when we crossed the river to get to the bridge, we walked through a minefield.

It was rigged for tanks – you could step on a mine and it would not go. And I have no doubt that my comrades stepped on a dozen mines, but they didn't go off because they were all rigged for tanks. Now, surely somebody knew that this field that we went through was mined, because when they asked the

tank destroyer to come up, nobody told him that he was going through a minefield. Now, when the tank destroyer hit a mine a few feet in front of the baby carriage factory and started to burn, one of the squad leaders who was in the baby carriage * _____ is standing there when this tank destroyer hits the mine. The crewmen run out of the tank destroyer into the baby carriage factory, keep going to the rear, to the bridge.

SCH: They were running, because they figured the tank destroyer was gonna blow up. And Jack Lacrosse*, a squad leader who eventually got a battlefield commission, decided, he announced that he was gonna go out to the tank destroyer before it blew up and take off the 10-in-1 rations. 10-in-1 rations were one step above C-rations. The lowest is K-rations, C-rations is somewhat better, 10-in-1 rations are fancy C-rations. C-rations with some things added. And all these guys with tanks and tank destroyers would put 10-in-1 rations on their tank because they came in wooden boxes, and they could strap them onto the...

MEY: [Sure.]

SCH: And there was a box of 10-in-1 rations on this tank destroyer. Jack went out to get it, when he noticed there was a tanker, a crew member, laying there outside the tank destroyer with his leg blown off. So he ran back and said, "I didn't get the rations because I saw there was this poor guy with his leg blown off and a bunch of guys volunteered and went out, dragged this guy back. And he, this guy with his leg blown off went back in the ambulance with me. When the tank destroyer blew up, we were maybe a mile from the company – I should say battalion headquarters, aid station, they were all one, next to each other – and where they kept the prisoners. You know, all American soldiers have very high IQs. So when the tank destroyer blew up, the guys who were guarding the prisoners left to see what was going on [laughter]. And this poor schnook, who was one of the prisoners, decided that he could go home – it turned out that he lived in the neighborhood! Which was his motive – well, nobody's bothering him, he's not bothering us... he starts out, he gets about fifty feet and some other G.I. from my outfit sees him, shoots him in the face. The bullet passed laterally, this way, through his cheek, stopped at his teeth... it looked awful; he looked like he was dead. But actually it wasn't even life-threatening. Of course, it must have been terribly painful. So of course he was recaptured, bandaged, et cetera, et cetera. And he went back in the ambulance with me. The sergeant who obviously was in charge of prisoners took this as a personal affront: this kid had the nerve to try to escape – I'm only guessing this – and decided that he was gonna come to the aid station and, I don't know what he was gonna do. Kill him, shoot him, punch him. Punching him was absurd. The chaplain is there, Chaplain Farmer, one of the regimental chaplains. And he figured out what was going on, that this guy was not going to the aid station to get a band-aid, and he decided that he was gonna save this kid's life. So he's talking to the kid in German, getting him to explain why he tried to – well, he lived in the next town, or some such, he had only been in the army... whatever, and now he's turning to us – I'm in the aid station with bandages up the kazoo, and I'm interpreting too because I had a little German, not much. And the kid kept saying "Alle soldaten Kamaraden" – we shouldn't shoot him, "All soldiers are comrades." Which was standard among prisoners; whenever you took a prisoner, "Alle soldaten Kamara – don't shoot me." So the chaplain is trying to make him sympathetic, and he asks the kid, "How old are you?" The kid says he's nineteen. I remember the chaplain turning to me and saying, "He's only nineteen!"

SCH: And I said, "How old do you think I am?" The chaplain ignored me, of course. And here's the sergeant coming, and they finally kick him out of the aid station, but he's shaking his fist at this kid.

The first sergeant of my company comes over to me and he says, "Can you fire your weapon?" Well, they had bandaged my hand. He turns to the medic: "Re-bandage his hand so he can use his trigger finger. Take your rifle with you, and if this kid moves, shoot the bastard." I had no intention of shooting the bastard, and this kid wasn't going anywhere anyhow. So the three of us are in the ambulance. The ambulance driver announces that I had to get rid of my rifle, you're not allowed to bring a rifle into an ambulance. I said, "They told me to bring my rifle, what do you want from me?" So he goes to whomever, who said, "No, he's gonna – if that kid, the prisoner moves, he's to shoot him." So I arrive at the hospital with a rifle, and a prisoner, and a poor guy who had his leg blown off. So they take me and treat me specially; I have to go someplace to get rid of my rifle and my cartridge belt, which of course had ammunition. And I think that's how I got a complete wardrobe – I'm not sure, maybe they do that with everybody. But they took everything. The only thing I wouldn't give up were my combat boots. We had just got combat boots after the Metz campaign; we didn't have combat boots before the Metz campaign. We had leggings, which are a pain in the ass. In any event, I kept my boots but everything else I had to give up. When it's time to go, they send me back to this special supply sergeant, that's how I got the special overcoat, and he said, "You're a bazookaman, you shouldn't have a rifle. You should have a carbine." So he gave me one of the **new fancy carbines**, the carbines that we trained in were not nearly as good as these. The carbines that we had had a flip sight, you flipped it – it was L-shaped, you flipped it this way to shoot to close, you flipped it the other way to shoot it a long distance, and the joke was, "You flip it this way it's too near, you flip it that way it's too far, you can't hit anything anyhow." And of course there was a great deal of contempt directed at the carbine and the theory that if you shoot somebody you'll only give him a headache, which was not true. It was quite –

MEY: [It was good.]

SCH: It was good, but it was not as powerful as an M-1. You could shoot an enemy soldier with a carbine and he may not go down, but he might ache a little. He would ache a lot. But it's not as lethal as getting hit with the big .30 caliber bullets we used. So there was a certain contempt for the carbines.

MEY: [How many caliber were the carbines?]

SCH: They were .30 caliber, but it was a much smaller bullet. The definition of a carbine is a rifle with a small bullet. Or a small rifle, that is, short rifle. That's what a carbine is. They were developed for the cavalry. You know the famous story about the Civil War, the guy in charge of ordnance for the North refused to allow Union cavalry to have repeating rifles, breech-loaders. They had to use muzzleloaders. He decided that if we used breech-loaders, which of course were a hundred times better than muzzleloaders – they had magazines before the war was over; you could get a carbine that had seven rounds, and all you had to do was cock the trigger to shoot it seven times.

SCH: But he decided that if we had breech-loaders that in order to train soldiers they'd have to fire fifty rounds, whereas if they used muzzleloaders they'd only have to use five rounds. And besides, muzzleloaders were much cheaper to make. So he banned breech-loaders until Abe Lincoln was asked by an Illinois cavalry commander if he could pay for his own breech-loaders.

SCH: And then Lincoln wrote a polite letter to the guy saying, "I think we should have breech-loaders." This was like 1864 before they did it. So of course one of the reasons that the Confederate cavalry was considerably better than Northern cavalry is that these guys were much better with muzzleloaders than our guys. But when they switched to breech-loaders, they were quite impressive. And I think either Sherman or Sheridan's cavalry had breech-loaders, I'm not positive. But coming back to my war... where were we? Oh yes, this poor kid – oh, I'm going home now to get me a carbine; my first sergeant took one look at it and said, "No, you can't have a carbine." And I said, "Gee whiz! I'm a bazookaman –" "Then I'll have to give it to all the bazookamen!" And he insisted that I take an M-1.

MEY: [So you gave up your new carbine.]

SCH: I had to give up – it was a gorgeous carbine.

MEY: [Now, do you have your overcoat by now?]

SCH: Oh yeah, I got the overcoat at the hospital.

MEY: [And when they gave it to you, was it a beautiful overcoat?]

SCH: Yeah! You could see that this was not an ordinary overcoat.

MEY: [What color?]

SCH: It was this olive drab, the same color.

MEY: [But –]

SCH: The only difference was the buttons. The buttons were camouflage buttons. All of the overcoats that we had prior to that were brass buttons, and I made the joke that they gave us those brass buttons so snipers would have a better target. And the idea of painting the buttons grey or brown never occurred to anybody until, I guess, December 1944. Well, you know, the Army... it's amazing how much stupidity exists, you know – friendly fire, for example, is usually a result of stupidity. Occasionally of course when an artillery piece fires a round it might be defective, they call them short rounds. But for the most part, they're aiming at you; somebody forgot to tell you that there are Americans there. That was pretty common. I understand that C Company suffered a rocket attack by American P-47s towards the end of the war because there was a symbol that you had to – they were signal panels, they were orange, and on Monday you would put them in the form of a T, on Tuesday you put them in the form of an L.

SCH: And they forgot to change them, C Company, and these P-47s said, "Ha, these must be Germans."

They fired rockets, and I think they caused eighteen casualties. I don't remember how many of them were killed, but I remember the number eighteen. Pure stupidity, they just didn't know enough to change the shape of the panels.

MEY: [So now you're back with your carbine and he makes you give up your carbine...]

SCH: Yes. I became a bazookaman again, and I stayed a bazookaman until about February or March, and then I got dumped in a rifle platoon and became eventually a squad leader. But first I was just a rifleman, then I was a scout, then I was an assistant squad leader, then I was – you get promoted to squad leader just by survival, not because you have more talent than the next guy, it's like, "Who's left?"

MEY: [Do you remember – some people talked about liberating a displaced person...]*

SCH: Yes. Yes. We did. We also liberated a concentration camp.

MEY: [You did?]

SCH: Yes. It was full of Czechs – soldiers, it was not civilians. A very few civilians. There were mostly Czech officers, Russians, Poles... that's all I remember. And these were military men. And I remember the largest group were Czech officers. And there was an enormous hill just outside the main fence, which they insisted was where they buried umpteen-thousand of these guys. They were made to work. Germans put everybody to work, including American prisoners.

MEY: [Being Jewish... one of my interviews, a man who's died now, Joe Nordoff Switkes, had such rancor toward the Germans, by the time – he said everybody knew, he said he ran across some people he talked Yiddish with, and he said, he said, "Whenever I saw a German and I could kill him, I felt good...."]

MEY: Did you have any anger .. any particular anger toward the Germans?

SCH: Ahh... not for being Jewish... The only thing I decided was that I'd never be taken prisoner. But I felt as an American I had the right to kill these guys.

And... one very mean thing our idiots did..when we were in Germany and we were moving from one town to another...

Somebody developed the incredible habit of taking a hand grenade and putting it in a "C" ration can. And before they put it in the "C" ration can they would take the cotter (?) pin out. Then they would put the hand grenade down and put the "C" ration can upside down with the hand grenade inside so when you picked up the can the hand grenade would go off.

The likelihood of German soldiers coming back and taking this town was remote – possible but not likely. The likelihood of German civilians doing it was very great.

SCH: It was also possible that another G.I. would come along and say, "Oh, look 'C' ration." And so they would develop some sort of system where they thought Americans would know better. I really don't remember what they did or if they did. But I know on at least 3 or 4 occasions were would leave a German tan... a German town, excuse me... with at least one "C" ration can covering a hand grenade with the pin out.

MEY: That's interesting.

I'm sure you've already done this but I went to hear Ken Burns talk about a year ago. And I talked to his producer Lynn Novick and I asked her... they were taking questions at the end... and I asked her "What's your favorite question" and she said "My favorite question is, 'Tell me a story you've never told anyone before?' And I said, "That's a pretty nervy question.' And she said, "Well you know on Television people come to us.." But since then I've been asking that question and I say to people, "Whatever comes to mind." One person talked about seeing lightning hit the Pacific and he remembered that. And how it just came across the Pacific and scaring him. Another person talked about something he tasted or a cake... so I'll just ask you the question and if anything comes to mind... any image comes to mind... just...

SCH: I have a great story for you. It's December 4th. We have awakened. We have seen the solitary tank.

To be more precise, when we came down to the street, we saw for the first time the knocked-out German tank from the night before. In front of the German tank, closer to the bridge was what was left of a German non-com.

According to the best information I could gather, there was a 57 millimeter anti-tank gun directly in front of this tank that had opened fire about the same time as the tank destroyer that knocked out this tank.

Each of them claims they knocked out the tank. The likelihood of the 57 millimeter anti-tank gun knocking out the tank is nil because he fired head on at the tank.

If he hit the tank which he probably did, he would not have knocked it out. The likelihood that the tank destroyer knocked it out is probably true because Paul was there and he saw what happened. The tank destroyer opened fire at point blank range. 20 yards. And literally picked the German tank up and put it on the sidewalk. It burst into flames.

We came down the morning.. We saw the German tank 400 yards in front of us and behind us was this knocked out German tank from the night before. What was left of this non-com. I believe that the 57 millimeter anti-tank gun opened fire and hit this civili... this non-com excuse me.

According to Pat Thorton who is very reliable. This guy was carrying a candle. Then the non-com was leading the tank with a candle. I believe it.

SCH: I have no idea what he had in mind but it's probably true. I can't imagine Pat making that up.

And when the anti-tank gun opened fire they probably hit him and blew him to smithereens there was nothing left of him... including the candle.

And it probably went on to hit the tank and they probably saw it hit the tank and they never saw the civilian—I keep saying civilian... soldier.

In any event... there's this German tank... sideways

To us facing off to our right and here's the crew of the tank destroyer which is hiding in an alley.

If he moved this tank destroyer, the Lieutenant in charge of it, 20 feet-30 feet he would have a clear shot at the tank. And I being a big-mouthed jerk said, "Lieutenant, why don't you move your tank destroyer?" and he told me where I could go.

Of course, the point, in retrospect, was that tank destroyers were worse than Shermans. They didn't even have a turret and if the German tank sneezed at him he would be dead. Which in retrospect was the correct position to take. So he said, "If you're so anxious to get this tank, go up to the baby carriage factory and get it." "Yeah, good idea." So I lead my two raw recruits up to the baby carriage factory.

Now we're all the way up to the baby carriage factory – there are holes in the wall facing the enemy. From shells.

There's the baby carriage factory. I had a great shot. "Hand me the rocket."

I left the rockets back where we were sleeping.

I don't tell this story... too often.

In fact.. I kept writing to Junior McVeigh because I never knew which of them forgot the rocket – it was he.

SCH: I just found out at the last reunion.

In any event, I said "you dumb blankety-blank, I'm going to go back and get the rockets." And I'm running back without the bazooka and who comes running down from the roof of the command post – John Connelly who became my friend – he was the intelligence and reconnaissance platoon leader; Captain Barsh who was the regimental dentist. And Barsh stops me – I'm going the wrong way – "Where you going soldier?"

And I said "Well I'm the bazooka team" there are actually four bazooka teams – from A company, sir. And I'm going back to get more rockets.

SCH: So he says – “Oh A company, you’re the guys that knocked out the tank (Pat Thorton had hit the tank but he hadn’t knocked it out. Rumor.) “Yeah yeah, that’s me.”

I went back got the.. uh rockets that I came for. “Go get’m soldier” – that’s exactly what John Connelly said to me.

And years later here when I told him what actually happened – he said, “Aaaahh – you’re lying.”

He says, “I remember it was a glorious moment. You saved the day. Did you know there were 300 and some odd German Soldiers over there. (We saw one tank.)

Did you know that there was a column of German tanks back in Fraulautern waiting to take off?

We saw a column of smoke. I saw one tank and the guy never fired his cannon, he fired his machine gun.

And I couldn’t understand why he was firing that way, I didn’t know the there were troops from the third battalion that had landed that had crossed the bridge.

I thought “What the hell is this guy shooting at.” (laugh)

And so by the time we got our rockets into the bazooka, somebody else had did what we did, This Lieutenant from L company had borrowed a bazooka. Which is unthinkable to me.... And had knocked the tread off.

So I had my one moment of glory and it slipped away.

MEY: Slipped away.

SCH: But I did have the satisfaction of shooting the guy that came out of the thing. Not too well. I had to empty a whole clip and I only hit him once.

MEY: Is there anything else...

SCH: Oh, don’t get me going, I’m a great storyteller.

MEY: You are...

SCH: Well I taught for 36 years. I taught a very dull topic.

MEY: So you had to spice it up.

SCH: Sure.

MEY: Sure.

SCH: Oh... I’ve got lots of stories. But the best is... we forgot the rockets.

MEY: Great story.

SCH: And I want you to know that for years afterwards when I was friendly with Connelly and Bosch.. they ... they thought I was kidding when I said

We never hit that tank. When the tank came I was back walking for... "Come onnn..." Everybody knew that "A" Company... when I was wounded and went to the aid station.

libeThey treated me.. "Oh! This is the bazooka team from 'A' Company."
They were formers of the (unintelligible)... for me.
Now I'm the guy.

MEY: Well... they...uh... It's it's a talent to know when to take the compliment and when..

SCH: John Connelly who was an intelligent guy, who was a lawyer... which is how we became friendly...actually never believed that I did not knock out that tank. He said he made a memo at the time that this soldier from "A" company had turned the tide... that there was a moral problem because Germans were attacking tanks and infantry. And here comes this guy. No one ordered him to do this he was going up to get a ... another tank.

MEY: Do you have any grandchildren.

SCH: Yes I have.. two grandchildren.

MEY: Two grandchildren... Is there any other story you'd like to tell them in your own voice.

SCH: Not tonight. I think I'm running out of gas.

MEY: You've been talking a long time. And if you feel like it, I'm around for... if something else comes to mind... just tap me on the shoulder.. I'll turn on something.
Let me close right now.
It is now... 10:15 (PM)

SCH:... Holy mackerel...

MEY: ... Holy mackerel's right... 10:15 PM on August 1st, 2008. This is David Meyer, son of Earl D Meyer, Co. H, (379th regiment, 95th Infantry)in the Holiday Inn French Quarter, Toledo, Ohio. I've had the great privilege of talking to...

SCH: Jerome M. Schwartz... you keep forgetting my name I don't like you any more.

MEY: Sorry. What company?

SCH: "A" company, 379th

MEY: What was your final rank, sir?

SCH: In the infantry?

MEY: Yes.

SCH: Staff Sergeant.

MEY: And when you were finally discharged.

SCH: Staff Sergeant. But I joined the Air Force reserve later.

MEY: And what were you there?

SCH: 1st Lieutenant. Although the St. Louis office doesn't believe it.

MEY: And that's a fitting end. Thank you very much.

SCH: Take care.

END OF "SchwartzJeromeFile1Aug12008.mp3" (Jerome M Schwartz - first day - August 1, 2008)

1:47:04

Then on August 2nd, 2008, continues. Again there is a break between two sections that are spliced to gether. Mr. Schwartz sits down to relate a story about his old foxhole buddy, Charlie Sussman

SCH: I have a more humorous set of stories about a fellow I shared a foxhole with but it's insulting to him.

His name is Charlie Sussman..

MEY: Yeah.

SCH: and if you ever read anything by Russell Baker.. the guy who was..

MEY: Yeah... Sure...

SCH: He dedicated two books to Charlie Sussman. He called him (sounds like "Old Suss")

And it seems they grew up together in Baltimore.

Charlie was a renaissance man. High school music... (unintelligible)

And Baker was a tough kid.

And Sussman according to Baker, converted him to the good things in life. They both went to John Hopkins together. And as I say, he dedicated 2 books to Charlie Sussman.

Charlie Sussman as Paul (Madden) was on the same day as I was. The three of us were born on June 12, 1925.

We all went to basic training together through the screw-up with the ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program) in the Infantry school.

Sussman and I were in the same platoon probably the same squad because we were arranged alphabetically.

He was the world's worst soldier. He had no business being in the Army. He never fired his weapon.

He ended up being in charge of the switchboard in Company A in fact was discharged as the communications soldier

I will only give you one quick incident which I've got a million of them. Breaks everybody up because some of them are really funny.

But we were cornered in a mortar (intelligible). Actually one man was killed and we have ... Charlie and I were actually laying in a ditch with water and we didn't dare put our heads up and Charlie crawls over to me in the middle of "Boom..boom..boom..boom."

"What do you think of Henry James?"

Now you can't make that up.

And you want to know what my reply was?

MEY: What?

SCH: "Charlie get the fuck away from me I'll kill you."

Now everybody loved Charlie. You ask Paul when...the first sergeant got a battlefield commission, used to come to the reunion -"Charlie Sussman was the world's best soldier. Whatever you told him to do he would do." He did what I did, he was a runner.

He wasn't a bazooka man. He was taken...he was confiscated by the communications sergeant and put in charge of the switchboard etcetera, etcetera. So he never got to a rifle platoon but he got to Co. "A" headquarters.

And..uh...I hated him because inevitably we were put together.I don't think we were put together because we were both Jewish. I think we were put together because we both claimed to speak French.

We were the company translators. I had three years of French in high school. He had two. My French was better than his but not by a helluva lot more.

However, whenever they needed a translator they would send for either me or Charlie Sussman. 15:06 In fact a coupla times they put me in a jeep we had to go some place and I would go along as the interpreter – 3 years of high school French.

But uh there were at least a half a dozen situations where he almost got me killed. Not intentionally.

MEY: No.

SCH: For example, my famous incident where I got my undeserved, unawarded purple heart when I finally dove into the fox hole. Now I was 10 yards away. I was actually airing out my blanket. And he had to see me he had to know I was 10 yards away.

And I dove into the foxhole and the shelling and just stopped.

“Schwartz, were have you been.”

“Where the fuck do you think I have been, I was over there trying to .”

I got better ones.. but I'll save them for another... he was hilarious...unless your life depended on it, as I say everybody loved him He really was a first class guy. but – he really was no soldier.

Just one quick one again. In basic training we had to learn how to dig a foxhole lying down. The lieutenant would take a stick and if you got up too high – you had a little shovel and you'd pass around a little pick - and in order to use it -get leverage - you would kinda rear up. He (the Lieut.) would smack you with a stick. So you had to learn to dig a foxhole lying down.

We would pass around a little pick. And when Charlie got the pick he hit himself in the head with the pick and knocked himself out.

That was Charlie Sussman.

He would put his pack on upside down. And as he walked, things would... he would leave a trail... of things falling out of his pack.

He put his boots on the wrong feet.

But the best story and I'll save that one ...

This is one worth your while... was his ... radio.. what do you call it... when you got a long antenna.

MEY: Yeah.

SCH: There's a name for it, I can't think of the name.

Well I'm not exactly 26 anymore.

Uhhh.. And his aunt had sent him one of these radios. When I have more time, I'll tell you the story of Charlie and his...

MEY: ...I'll remind you...

SCH: ...radio. What the hell is the name of it. We actually got the British and German stations on his radio.

MEY: Like a crystal set?

SCH: Yes, that's what it was. But you needed a long antenna. We had... we were ... runners so we had wire to repair the telephone.

The best method of communication that we had was the... the telephone, field telephone because walkie-talkies were Junk. . And the big radios that we had that you would put on your back used vacuum tubes so they were that big and they easily broke.

But if I don't tell you . . . crystal radio. That's what it was. That's a hilarious story and absolutely true. And I'll tell you that the next time.

SCH: But just to finish up, I hated him because he almost got me killed.

It is not immodest for me to say that I was a soldier.

Because I was.

And I ... again... it was not immodest for me to say that I was a good soldier.

Uh... Charlie on the other hand was no Soldier.

Not that he ran away. But.. he wouldn't shoot at anybody.

And happily his responsibility was with the switchboard most of the time. But on occasion he really endangered my life.

MEY: So.. so.. when you were assigned a foxhole... a foxhole buddy you stuck with him?

SCH: No, no, it wasn't my choice.

MEY: I mean but..

SCH: ...we were put together presumably because we both spoke French. We were the interpreters.

MEY: Okay.

SCH: But the punchline -- on this note I'll leave, is when I first met him at the reunions...

now, we were in basic training together... in the same platoon... And when basic training ended they kept a dozen of us or so to give demonstrations to the next group.

So we fired mortars together, we fired 57 millimeter anti-tank guns together. We then ended up in Company A together, we shared a fox hole.

Frequently I wound up working his radio...because we were part of Company Headquarters for a time.

When I first met him at the first reunion, it must have been ten years or more ... It must have been in the -- 70's..

He didn't remember me.

SCH: And I said, "Charlie, you remember me. We shared a foxhole."

(Charlie says) "To tell you the truth, I don't."

True story. Though later on he remembered me.

Well Mr. Schwartz.. a great pleasure.

SCH: I think it is.

(laugh)

MR.MEYER: You make it clear if you are a soldier and your life depends on even if they are well meaning, it doesn't matter if they run. If they are well meaning on not, if they are a fuckup they're still a fuck up.

MR SCHWARTZ: Yeah you got it. And as I say... what amazed me was coming to the reunions not only that he didn't remember me, but everybody thought he was wonderful. I remember talking to this Max Steinbeck -- who was the 1st Sarge -- got a battlefield commission -- and dealt with all of us.. me him.

He was in a sense when he was our first sergeant he was our immediate superior when we went out in the platoon... and he said "Now there's Charlie Sussman... now there was a soldier.

I said, "What'd you talking about."

(He) says, "Now it you asked Charlie if there was a hole in the wall, a break in the wire between us and that platoon -- no matter how many enemy soldiers were around -- snipers, artillery -- he went, he really did.

And I wouldn't go. If I ... I conceded the same factors. If there were artillery coming in I'd wait for the artillery to stop.

(People walk by stop.. over-talking)

Stupid I wasn't. I wasn't there to commit suicide.

But Charlie would go, sometimes I had to drag him back. Where you going, schmuck, you're going to get killed.

He didn't know.. he paid no attention.

“So Charlie.. there’s.. there’s a sniper up there and he just shot Sam and Let’s wait until dark. Or something...” or “we’ll ask for some artillery and shoot at him – or *you could say you think there’s a sniper there... something there*”)

and they’d send ...something..
and then you could go report

(unintelligible) Of course when Charlie was there... if they sent Charlie some where you would have to go with him.

It was accurate to say he was fearless.
He would go places that I wouldn’t
But just so that you get the picture clear. When he ... he wouldn’t take a bunch of wire, I would take like 50 feet of wire, 20 feet of wire.. you only needed a little bit – and a tool so you could take the wire and cut the wire.. he wouldn’t take the tool.

He would Forget.

But he would take a spool.. the big spool of wire that you see.. and

And as he would walk.. and I’m not making this up..

he would run the spool of wire out and the spool would swing out... swing back... and knock him off his feet.

He’d get up.. walk two or three steps.. fall down.

Get up, fall.

“What are you doing taking the spool. What do you need a whole spool for?

When the wire broke how far apart could the two pieces be? ... “

You never know.

Sometimes he would say, “Well.. rather than repair the wire, I’ll run a new wire.”

So he’d go all the way to the platoon which would triple the danger... because you might only have to go half-way.

And I frequently would have to go with him because he wouldn’t know how to do a splice.

MEY: So he is constantly putting you in jeopardy...

SCH: Yeah... and you couldn’t explain to anybody.

MEY: No.

SCH: And of course when he would go and I wouldn't then ... you're... you're the villain.

MEY: You're no longer the smart guy saying I can do it.. now you're the guy who holds back.

SCH: ...and if you.. When they'd say "Go, we need the..." "

Well can we get in touch the artillery and have them fire a few rounds over there where we

"Oh.. yeah... we could do that.. Duhhhhhh."

MEY: (laugh)... So you were constantly running interference, saving his life.

SCH: Oh.. I don't know... that' not...

MEY: Or protecting him from...

SCH: Yes. Well everybody did. Everybody loved Charlie.

One of the reasons everybody loved Charlies is because Charlie got packages from home. That's another reason I was very popular. One of my aunts is known . was known as until she died as "our rich aunt."

I had an aunt who was a rich aunt.

And when she sent me a package it was wrapped professionally.

And when she sent me candy it was... the fanciest candy from the... gourmet shops. When my mother would send me cookies, she sent me.. oreo cookies in a box and by the time they got to me it was powder.

When my aunt would send me ... of course she wouldn't send me Oreo cookies she would send me whatever cookies – and they would be in a wooden box, wrapped by a professional.

And of course it was the whole "Aunt Sylvia's ... Schwartz got a box from Aunt Sylvia." And of course you had to dole it out.

SCH: I would ask my father to send me sardines. They were easy to wrap. I hated sardines, I wouldn't eat sardines, but I did it for my buddies.

But when the package would come, "You take the sardines and I'll take the chocolates."

MEY: What did .. what was the last time you saw Mr. Sussman?

SCH: He's been ill. He hasn't been to a reunion for I would say 5 years.

Shoulder replacement. Hip replacement. He's had a lot of bad luck. Physically.

So he hasn't been to a reunion in quite a while.

MEY: Do you still keep in touch?

SCH: Christmas cards. That's all. We have nothing in common.

Paul (Madden) and I had a great deal in common and remember, all three of us were born on the same day. Because, Paul was a soldier.

MEY: Yeah.

SCH: And I say, with all due modesty, so was I.

MEY: Yes.

SCH: But Charlie was not a soldier and was more interested in Henry James than he was in George Patton. Which is not a bad idea. ... But you could write a book and sell a book about Charlie. The only thing is it's insulting. And I have no reason to insult the guy, he was funny.

MEY: Yes.

SCH: To see a guy.

We're in basic training, we're in the middle of no place, and we're sleeping in pup tents and it's raining and at three o'clock in the morning when you are finally asleep after doing all sorts of terrible things some idiot blows a whistle "Get up, we're marching another twenty miles." And Charlie gets up and puts the boots on the wrong feet he's marching around groaning.

"What's the matter, Charlie?"

"My feet are killing me."

And you know you stop once an hour for ten minutes,

"Charlie your boots are on the wrong feet."

"Oh, my God, no wonder my feet hurt."

And then of course there's a guy in basic training named Schulty whom I also hated. This guy was an evangelist.. who believed that God would take care of him. So if you got your socks wet and you didn't have another pair he would give you his last pair of socks. He was a genuine giver. And I hated him because I would never give up my last pair of socks. And he would.

SCH: And I kept thinking "This guys a better man than I'll ever me."

And I really didn't like him.

I was a better shot than he was, stronger than he was, more masculine than he was, but he was a better man than I'll ever be. And that bothered me (faint). He got very sick and he didn't finish basic training. I don't know what happened to him.

But I still remember that Schulty would give you his last pair of socks.

MEY: It's interesting, you know... You ... you also are very candid about the dark, too. About feelings about people who do...uh...

SCH: Who do what?

MEY: Who uh... Because everyone feels that way about someone who would sacrifice or do something that they wouldn't do and you would feel like.

SCH: Well Charlie would go and repair the wire under fire. He was crazy. That wasn't bravery that was stupidity.

MEY: Yes...

SCH: And I would drag him back frequently, "Wait until they stop shooting."

9:18 And I particularly hated the communications sergeant because I think he took... I'm sure he took advantage of us. For example, he would get nervous so he would double the guard. Now doubling the guard meant that you would be up two hours and down two hours. Two on, two off.

MEY: Oh.. rather than..

SCH: .. Two on, four off. Or six off whatever.

It wasn't that the Captain said "I want a double guard."

He decided. You see that guy could understand.... Actually if he were clever he could get away with it.. but he wasn't very clever.

But the worst thing is... in any other outfit...and when I was a sergeant, if you were doing that you had to take your turn.

MEY: Ah sure.

SCH: But he didn't. He was a sergeant... Sergeant's don't pull guard duty. So I began to hate him too.

MEY: Sure.

SCH: I think that's how you survive.

This is the good guy, this is the bad.

MEY: To be able to identify.

SCH: Yes.

MEY: 10:20 I started this in some ways I'd uh.. uhm.. I'd a friend now past named Fred Rochlin who was a bombardier.

And uh... and very sweet man.. he started writing his memoirs... he was in a workshop with Spalding Gray.. monologues... and he.. Fred had been shot down over Italy and he had been there over six months... with people there hiding (him)... and there was a time when he had to be tested and they brought out a uh German prisoner and made him execute him.

SCH: Really..

MEY: But.. he told a story...earlier on that he said... uh...

He talked about... he was in some place in Italy he was..uhhh... he was there when he had to help someone... give... help a peasant woman give birth. He sees the miracle of birth. He's nineteen. He comes back from that, goes back to whatever base he is.. they send him up on a mission... soon as he gets.. back... he drops.. bombs. It was a place on the French border that had no strategic value at all.. in fact, all the intelligence on it was wrong.. said there were factories there... there were no factories there.. and they said "you have to bomb this place." So they bomb it, kill everyone there, and he comes back and the irony.. he goes back to his Commanding Officer whoever he was and he says, "I just helped someone give birth today... I see birth and then I killed people for no reason." And the guy just said, "Listen.. I'll tell you this once. Shut the fuck up. You don't think about it. I'll tell you what to do. You go get a stiff drink and another drink. And you stop thinking about all the irony or you'll go nuts." He says, "Because this is what war is.. what war is. You have to find some way to... take the immensity of the experience.

SCH: 12:28 You have to develop your own logic.

MEY: Develop your own logic.

SCH: That's my quote... you can quote me.

More interesting. There's something you should work on.. it is publishable ... the attitude toward cowards... there was no real... dislike of cowards..

You'd see a guy go into the room where'd you see.. "Well, at least, ...I'm not going in... he has my sympathy."

12:55 The first group that ran this association. One of the guys who was president was a guy from my Company named Frank Halperin.

Scum of the earth.

One of the things I had to do was guard him because every time we were going up, he would desert.

He.. the captain..our captain.. did not believe in court martial.

He always said he was going to court martial ((unintelligible)... but he never court-martialed as far as I know.

He may have but not .. Halper would desert whenever we were going to the front to the point that they would catch him.. Captain Blein would put him in chains.

I remember the Ruhr Campaign that I was assigned to guard him, while he was in chains.

SCH: And when we would get to the point where it was crazy to leave him in chains... (sounds like "we took the chains off and off he went")

Uh... He was a vice president or whatever of the Association and I come to the first reunion and this guy comes over to me and says, "Are you the guy who..." whatever he had me confused with somebody who did something — I don't even remember what he accused me of.

And I remember telling him where he could go. Like "who the fuck are you to talk to me, remember I was your guard."

Like.. “Who me?”

MEY:....ahhh..

SCH: Completely gone. He submitted, I remember, a letter to the magazine where he described how he had captured a German truck or... and he presented it to the captain.

The Captain would have spit in his face the Captain couldn't stand him.

Because he was.. I know why.. because it was on his record.

The Italian commander complained to Bleiden (*Capt's name*) that he had too many deserters.

And this guy if you looked up desertion in the unabridged dictionary

And when you talked to this guy. “You made Halper..”

The man was a coward... not that he would... he was a coward.. and worse, whenever we needed him he would desert.

I remember – one clear illustration – I was in a rifle squad, I think I was an assistant (*unintelligible*)– I may have been a scout, I'm not sure, I know I wasn't a squad leader.

We were sent on a combat patrol we were looking for them.

We don't get a fight, we cross a little river, we take a house – big house – hold .. there was a platoon. About 30 of us at this point 'cause you always lose a few men for one reason or the other... And we're all kibitzing around, word comes along we're going to stay.

And where we had some guys outposting –

And one of them comes running back, “There's a German coming.”

Actually he said “There's a Kraut coming.”

And interestingly enough. Six or seven of us, go up take positions, outside of the building or at a window and the rest of them run to the basement.

Now what's interesting is – you don't resent that, you don't say, “Gee..these guys are deserting me.”

You say, “I understand why they're running away, they don't know, they haven't been there they don't have combat experience.”

And you get a guy like Halper... you see, him you resent. He's been there.

And he did it all the time, he was never of any good, of any use.

But uh.. there were guys in my squad who had never seen combat before, or had never done anything.

We had a lot of guys transfer in after the Battle of the Bulge. (16:40)

Because we ran out of infantry and these guys weren't infantrymen but they tried, some of them and some of them ran into the basement.

And... you could tease them, you could say –
“one soldier, and you ran”.

I think he was either a postman or a cop, we never figured it out... he had a pointy helmet from the first World War.

And what’s amazing and this is true, is that about six or seven of us opened fire at this guy, I don’t know..fifty yard, sixty yards.. He went down, he was dead.

And in the morning they went over to loot his body and there wasn’t a mark on him. Nobody hit him. Or least we couldn’t find.. we couldn’t find the bulletholes, let’s put it that way, but he was dead.

And he had an old Mauser bolt-operated rifle that was given to him – (sounds like “Volksturn”)
One guy even if he were a first class combat soldier... you don’t run away in fear.

But it was true, I would say that of the 30 men certainly 20.. went into the basement
And I remember talking to the guys in my squad..there were two Hispanics... and I said, “What are you accomplishing... I mean be logical.. If the enemy is coming what good are you going to do in the basement If they were to come, they’ll throw a hand grenade down and they won’t even have to bother to shoot you. Aren’t you better off up on top?”

And they would say (*unintelligible*)
But you know... natural reaction...

It’s not a natural reaction. Think about it.

Then someone would stop
and someone would continue (*unintelligible*)

But you never resented it.. at least I never ... I don’t think anybody resented it.
I would never say. “You know that (*unintelligible*)was a coward. Never.”
Certainly.

MEY: That’s interesting.

SCH: That is to me a tremendous point that I haven’t seen. I’ve read S.L.A Marshall and he wrote about.. the Korean War. Fascinating. He pointed out that twenty percent of the American infantrymen never fired there weapons. Which is true in my outfit.

I was in combat a month before I fired my weapon.

SCH: And it was difficult to fire. I thought “I don’t shoot at them, they won’t shoot at me.” Then you think, “Well that’s stupid, they’re shooting at you anyway.”

MEY: Do you remember the first time you fired.

SCH: Oh yeah.

MEY: What prompted that.

SCH: Uh... fear. I figured that I'd feel better if I fired my weapon. We had ... Patton had developed "march and fire" Just keep shooting and the enemy will duck so you get... you are better off shooting at nothing than not shooting at all.

And uh.. we did that a lot. Shoot at a building.

The first thing I shot at was a building. I hit it.

MEY: (laugh)

SCH: And you look around, you see Charlie Sussman he's not even .. shouldering his rifle he has no intention of firing. But you don't resent anything. The only guy I resented was Halper. Maybe because I had to guard him.

MEY: But when you guarded him was he repentant?

SCH: Oh, no. He was nasty. He made anti-semitic remarks. I wanted to kill him. I had greater desire to kill him than to kill Germans.

Uh... I felt he was the scum of the earth.

And I once chased him with a bayonet. I tried to kill him, I actually tried to kill him. But he ran away.

MEY: What provoked that?

SCH: He said something. I don't even remember what he said.

MEY: Now was he better after he was Vice President.

SCH: Never... I don't know. He made up stories about how he was friendly with the Captain which was absurd. The captain couldn't stand him.

MEY: That's interesting. It's must be nice to see some person like Paul Madden here, who understands... who's not a ... Because I guess.. when people talk to me, you know, you get a feeling sometimes, there's a ring of truth but it's not for me...to question.

But it's nice when I hear you and Mr. Madden and. You know it's all.. all.. everything's there. Just hear... the details that you know.

Are the details that are... of someone who's there and not someone who wants to be there as some man are throwing up a story.

SCH: Oh, yeah. It's easy. You know. Right after the war, if you had asked me, I would have told you I won the war single-handedly.

MEY: Would you?

SCH: Oh sure.

MEY: How.. how was it coming back for you?

SCH: For me... it was great.

First day I came back, the war in the Pacific was still on, we were given a thirty day pass. I was living with my parents I was nineteen years old.

My father was sick and we lived in an apartment house in Brooklyn. And as I get to the house, my father's doctor is walking out – they used to make house calls – remember when doctors made house calls

MEY: Yes.

SCH: I'm kidding. And he said "You must be so-and-so's son" and I said, "Yes. It's my first day back." And he said, "You know I've had some experience with soldiers just coming back." Apparently guys who had combat fatigue and so on. Somehow he had to deal with it.. (*unintelligible*)

And I talked to him..maybe an hour. And he said something like, "You're the first man I've met who doesn't seem to have been adversely affected by combat."

I said, "There were a lot of us."

And I said, "We weren't all crazy but it will make you crazy."

I said uh.. "You have to develop an attitude and it's easy to develop an attitude, you have to convince yourself that you're something special... even if you don't really believe it you have to say 'I believe I'm something special.'"

And he thought I was the cat's meow and I remember when I went upstairs I said, "Boy, I'm the cat's meow . Ask doctor whatever-his-name-is." He led me to believe that I'm... frankly ... terrific...

I go tell my girlfriend what a great guy I am, the doctor told me."

Goodbye.

MEY: Goodbye... I'll see you..thanks so much

SCH: You really should do something with this Charlie Sussman stuff. Because it is saleable. I have clients... my clients make money.

And some of them.. are my close friends. In Florida. Was a publisher.

He was with Hearst, he was with Cox, he's retired now.

And I have, of course, have bored him with these stories a hundred times and he said, that if uh.. on Sussman alone, you could write a publishable work... whatever.. I have no interest in doing it but I'll be glad to let you do it..

MEY: That's interesting because he is uh.. he has all... he has all the ...

SCH: The only thing is you can't do it now because he's still alive. We'll have to kill him. Let's kill him. He was a son-of-a-bitch anyway.

Goodbye.

MEY: Goodbye, Have a good night, I'll see you tomorrow.

SCH: You bet.

MEY: Thanks, thanks.

This is David Meyer son of Earl D Meyer, Co. H, 379th. My God, I wonder how long I've been talking, but it's over now.

END OF "SchwartzJeromeFile2ug22008.mp3" (Jerome M Schwartz – second night - August 2nd, 2008)

32:42

Total interview length 179:46 = 2 hours 57 minute 46 Approximate 3 hrs