

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**FRED V. HOCHSCHILD**  
Clerk, Army Signal Corps, World War II.

1995

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**Hochschild, Fred V.** (1920-2000). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 25 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 25 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Fred V. Hochschild, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin native of German heritage, discusses his World War II service as a Signal Corps NCO clerk in the European theater. He speaks of his prewar life, induction in 1942, military training at Fort Warren (Wyoming) and Camp Crowder (Missouri), and assignment to Camp Clark (Missouri), an Italian prisoner of war camp. He volunteered for the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) and studies German heritage, language, and geography for nine months at the University of Chicago. Hochschild tells briefly of life on campus, its relaxed atmosphere, and his leisure activities in Chicago. He touches upon going overseas to England and spending time in various replacement camps before finally reaching the 3259<sup>th</sup> Signal Service Company, a radio intercept unit that decoded German messages. He relates stories of experiences in these replacement camps, his duties and life in the 3259<sup>th</sup>, weekend passes, and some contact with the local population. He tells of an experience with German soldiers dressed as civilians trying to get home and about an incident with a civilian and confiscating his liquor. Near Munich, at V-E Day, Hochschild says they build a bonfire and got a barrel of beer from a little brewery and celebrated. In preparation for going to Japan, Hochschild says he attended the American University in Paris for three months studying business and insurance before his discharge and return to the States on New Year's Day, 1946. He reports returning to his job at Wisconsin Electric in Milwaukee, using the GI Bill for a home loan after his marriage, and that his old clothes were outdated when he came home. He joined the American Legion, Ninth Division Electric Post No. 228 in 1950 so that he could bowl with world renowned bowler, Hank Marino.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995.

Transcribed by W. Belle Peyton, WDVA Staff, 1998.

Transcription edited by Mike W. Aird, 2008.

**Transcribed Interview:**

- Mark: Today's date is the 25th of April 1995. This is Mark Van Ellis, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, doing an oral interview this morning with Mr. Fred V. Hochschild of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a veteran of World War II.
- Mark: Good morning Mr. Hochschild how are you doing?
- Mr. H.: I am doing fine. Thank you.
- Mark: I suppose we should start out by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born, where you were raised and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.
- Mr. H.: Okay. I was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Born here, raised here and in 1941 I was working for Wisconsin Electric at the time of Pearl Harbor.
- Mark: Now what part of town were you born in?
- Mr. H.: The northwest side.
- Mark: Is that the Germany section of town?
- Mr. H.: Seventy-five years ago that was in the Germany's section of town. That was called the northwest side. But now you are talking about sixteenth, twentieth, twenty-first and twenty-fifth street, but now that is not the northwest side anymore.
- Mark: Yeah. It has changed a lot since those days. Now a name like Hochschild-- that is not Irish. In World War II we were fighting the Germans. Did you grow up in an ethnically-aware community? Did you have ancestors from Germany?
- Mr. H.: I really don't know because I was gone most of the time. I mean the war started in 1941 and I was drafted in 1942. So, I really don't know, there was Pearl Harbor and we got involved with Germany. But I wasn't around here enough to know if there were any Germany repercussion or if the people was against Germany. I have no idea.
- Mark: As someone of Germany extraction, what did you think of as Hitler started marching across Europe and that sought of thing?
- Mr. H.: My mother and father was born here also. So the fact that we had German extraction meant nothing. My grandfather was born in Paris, France.

- Mark: I see. After high school you were working?
- Mr. H.: Right, after high school I went to work for Wisconsin Electric.
- Mark: Now this was during the depression, did you have troubles finding work or any thing?
- Mr. H.: I had no trouble finding work because I had a person at Wisconsin Electric that helped me get the job.
- Mark: I see. So do you recall the actual attack on Pearl Harbor and what you were doing and where you were and all that sought of thing?
- Mr. H.: That was interesting. That was on one of your questionnaires and giving some thought to it. That goes back a long time. All that I can remember is that I was walking down North Avenue, east from 44th Street, and I passed a store that had a radio on and it explained, determined that Pearl Harbor, they had bombed Pearl Harbor and we were going to war. And that is when I first founded out about it. And I was only twenty-one at the time.
- Mark: So, as a young person did you think it might have some ramification for your life, your personal safety I suppose?
- Mr. H.: No. I had a cousin that was slightly older than I was. I thought, hey, he would surely get drafted. But after everybody yet got drafted I would have been very disappointed if I wouldn't have been drafted. I got drafted and I was very glad that I was able to serve.
- Mark: I see. Now, in your work at Wisconsin Electric, did your working conditions change at all with the onset of war? Did things get busier or did things pretty much stay the same?
- Mr. H.: Did it change? Well not really. At the time I was working as a clerk in an office where my boss got drafted, I got drafted and we both were replaced by a girl. Consequently, the only difference was there was more females doing the work of us guys that was being called into service.
- Mark: But there was no increase in work or anything?
- Mr. H.: No, no. Not much at all.
- Mark: So you were finally conscripted in 1942. Describe for me if you would your actual entry into the military. Where did you go for your physical, where did you go for basic training and all that sort of thing.

Mr. H.: Now that goes back a long time for me to remember. Let me see what I can remember. If I remember my draft board was on Elizabeth Avenue and 35th Street and we were called to some place downtown. Now I forget where that was but we had a physical examination and everybody had flat feet but me. I was upset. Then they took us on a ----- after that we went home and then I got my notification and I was a 1-A. Then I got a notification that I had to report some place. I don't remember where, on some morning, went there and we took a bus and we went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

Mark: What happened at Fort Sheridan? Is this where the hair cut happened, got your uniform?

Mr. H.: I got put on KP first day and we peeled too many potatoes, and whatever. But we were only there for a very short period of time, at Fort Sheridan Illinois. And from there I went to Fort Warren in Wyoming where I got my basic training.

Mark: I see. Is this where you had your basic weapon training?

Mr. H.: This is where I had the basic weapon training, where we went through the obstacle course, where we learned to fire rifles, machine guns, pistols and so forth.

Mark: Was discipline -- did you think it was tough?

Mr. H.: Not at all. It was typical army, at the age of twenty-one or twenty-two. I was able to adapt very nicely.

Mark: Did you recall what sort of weapons you used, did you have old Springfields, did you have modern M-1?

Mr. H.: Yeah. We had the 1917 Springfields, that's what we used in Fort Warren for target practice and I don't know what kind of machine gun we had, some kind of machine gun that we used and we also used a 45 pistol that they taught us how to shoot.

Mark: What sort of guys were in your basis training unit? Where there people from all over the country? From the East coast to the South, was there a lot of Wisconsin, Midwesterners?

Mr. H.: Fort Warren, Wyoming was a signal corp outfit and there was a few of us that came from Wisconsin. But most of them came from all over the country. At that time I really didn't make any, I don't recall any close friends, but I am sure I had some that we went together, and so forth. But, I have no recollection any more. I enjoyed Fort Warren, Wyoming it was a very nice

camp. We were there September, October, November. We had a very good Thanksgiving. They had a great Thanksgiving dinner and then got shipped out in December.

Mark: To where?

Mr. H.: From Fort Warren, Wyoming to a little place called Camp Clark in Missouri.

Mark: I have never heard of Camp Clark before.

Mr. H.: Ha, why don't you find out where that is? It was an Italian prison of war camp at that time.

Mark: Well what did you do there was it more training?

Mr. H.: No. I worked in the office which is -- what outfit it was I forget now. It was the Military Escort Guard outfit, is what they called it. I was in the office, I was the company's clerk. I got promoted to corporal by a very nice colonel, an old line colonel. I just worked in the office but then I took some tests and I had the opportunity of either going to OCS or the Army Specialized Training Program. I took the Army Specialized Training Program.

Mark: For what reason?

Mr. H.: Primarily because of some education and of course the rumor had it that when you graduated from there you would be a major or captain, but that was false, of course. The other reason was I was able to go to the University of Chicago, in Chicago, Illinois and that was very close to home.

Mark: So when you signed up for ASTP, did you know exactly what college you would be going to?

Mr. H.: Yeah. I could have gone to the University of UCLA, and Chicago, and there was a third one. I forget now and I picked Chicago.

Mark: Yeah, close to home. What did you do there?

Mr. H.: There I studied area and languages of Germany. They taught us how to speak German, which I have probably forgotten. It did me some good in Germany. Taught us about the geography of Germany, history of Germany. We had a professor that was formerly from Germany, from World War I, that had his eye shot out, so he had a false eye, a very, very nice, well educated man. We went there for nine months.

Mark: And basically took courses?

- Mr. H.: Yeah. German language, Germany area, and Germany history.
- Mark: Now the other guys in the ASTP, were they different than the people you went to basic training with?
- Mr. H.: These were all highly intelligent people. We had some guys with college degrees that were in this course.
- Mark: Did you get much free time while in Chicago? Did you get to go home?
- Mr. H.: We had weekends off. We stayed at the dormitories, men dormitory, men fraternity house right on the campus of the University of Chicago. On Fridays, at 3 o'clock we were free until Monday at 8 o'clock, something like that. I would take the little electric railway from Chicago to Milwaukee and visit home or stay in Chicago and go to taverns. Stuff like that.
- Mark: Did things seem to change on the home front, as time went on, from your perspective?
- Mr. H.: I didn't notice no difference. Now I am in the army and I am a soldier, and everybody treated me very nice. You go to a tavern. They buy you a drink because you were in the Army. Doing your duty and all kinds a' good stuff. But no, I found no difference.
- Mark: So meat rationing and gas rationing, so that really didn't impact terribly much on the pre-war .
- Mr. H.: That's where I ran into four guys that I stayed with practically during the rest of the war. (names of people)\_\_\_\_\_ .
- Mark: So your ASTP training lasted nine months you say?
- Mr. H.: Army Specialized Training Program lasted nine months, right.
- Mark: So what happen after that?
- Mr. H.: Well after that we had to take our basis training all over again. They didn't make us majors or captains. Then they sent me to Camp Crowder, Missouri. Now that I think you know about. That was a Signal Corp training. I took the basic training over, but I didn't have to go back to school because I had passed the examinations for clerk, or whatever. Then we took basic training over and since I didn't have to go to class, I had a lot of free time. I'd help the instructors, something like that. We were there about there months.

Mark: So then what?

Mr. H.: Then we got shipped overseas. Where did I get, from, shipped overseas? On August 2nd we left for Europe and arrived Europe on the August 15th and we were on the Liberty Ship.

Mark: Did you go over as a unit?

Mr. H.: No. Out of the guys from ASTP and Camp Crowder about seven of us were put together, the three plus me and three other guys, we went as a group. We didn't know this before, but we were all ear marked for special units and they sent us overseas and we went to Northern England. There were seven guys independent of everybody else, that went to ASTP or Camp Crowder Missouri.

Mark: So you got to England in Liverpool, if I recall correctly.

Mr. H.: Yea I think so. A little narrow gage railroad train down into the London area.

Mark: I see.

Mr. H.: Then they shipped four of us overseas, trying to find the outfit we were assigned to. We were in replacement depots all over France and Germany for a period of time. We were fifty miles west of the Battle of the Bulge.

Mark: I see.

Mr. H.: No east of the Battle of Bulge. Then they took the four of us and sent us back to England, 'cause that's where our outfit was. That is where we caught up with the 3259 Signal Service Company which was a Radio Intelligence outfit.

Mark: Right. Describe for me if you would, the duties of the 3259? What was the purpose of the unit, and what did you do as the American forces went across France and Germany? What was your role in all this?

Mr. H.: My role, was strictly, I worked at the office tower as senior clerk. We had a first sergeant, then me and we had a buck sergeant. And the unit itself was a radio intercept outfit. We had radios that would pick up ground radios from the Germans. We had people who could speak German better than the Germans. We had people that could break their codes and interpret their messages. We would send that to Corp Headquarters everyday and Corp Headquarters would take action from the information we supplied them. It was a radio intelligence outfit.



- Mark: Did you have access to what the Germans was saying? Was this part of your duties?
- Mr. H.: No I did not. We had trailers (truck trailers?) that did the monitoring. They had intelligence trailers where they did the breaking of the codes and messages and the part that I was given was a message in a sealed envelop to take to the Corp Headquarters. So I had no way of knowing.
- Mark: I see. Did you get a sense of how the war was going for the United States, or for the Germans for that matter? From your perspective.
- Mr. H.: No, no. I guess we were kind of on our guard, you could say, for anything that happened. But we really didn't know if we were winning the war or losing the war or what was happening in Japan.
- Mark: Did you get to have much contact with the Europeans in either England or France or Germany?
- Mr. H.: Oh yea, in England we went with the locals quite a bit. We would go to their pubs and have a couple of ales and play darts with them and they were all very nice. Treated us very nice. On occasional we'd get some guys that was pretty rowdy, then that pub would not welcome us. But the little group I was with, had no problem whatsoever with the English people. And in Germany no, we did not fraternize with the Germans.
- Mark: Now you weren't supposed too.
- Mr. H.: I guess not.
- Mark; What about the French?
- Mr. H.: In France, there was a language barrier there. In France, I was in a replacement depot where you were restricted as far as your activities were considered. You slept in pup tent and waited for orders and waited for a meal and stuff like that. Not to serious. Was a living and we had no problem with that.
- Mark: I see. Now did you get much free time when you were in Europe?
- Mr. H.: Oh in England. Now after the Battle of the Bulge they sent us back to England with the 3259 Signal Service Company, then we had free time. We had weekends, we could do things. I went to London once, that's about it. And when we were in the replacement depots, we were at the Birmingham, England and another place. These were replacement depots. And incidentally, one of these places is where infantrymen who were wounded and were

rehabilitated and they would send them back and they were waiting to be shipped back to the war in Germany. These guys were not very happy. But yes, we had free time

Mark: What about when you were in Europe in a combat zone?

Mr. H.: There we had no free time to speak of until the war was over. One time we ran across a German that had a trailer, a cart pulled by a horse with some vodka, not vodka, but albador (?) in it and we confiscated.

Mark: Was there much drinking? Some vets say there was a lot and some don't mention it to much.

Mr. H.: No. I would say not a lot because there wasn't much available, certainly in the combat zone. In England you had the American facilities you could get to but in the combat zone there was nothing there. I can tell you a little story.

Mark: Okay.

Mr. H.: We had a first sergeant with this 3259 Signal Service Company, an old line first sergeant and we shipped out from England to France. The first thing, at Utah Beach I think it was, it was all beat up, this old line first sergeant was able to find a tavern, whatever they call that in France, and was able to get some tricks. He got demoted. Not because of that, he didn't fit in with the intelligence of the people we had in the company. He was made a staff sergeant and sent some place else.

Mark: Did you stay in contact with folks back home, write letters and that sort of thing, was it difficult to stay in contact?

Mr. H.: I am sure you will find this quite normal. You don't write home as often as you should. And the letters that they would write to you would catch up with you eventually. The communication between home and when we were in Europe was bigger for reasons I didn't write very often and their letters didn't catch up with me.

Mark: I see. While you were in camp did you play sports. You made some references on your questionnaire. Did you play ball, that sought of thing?

Mr. H.: At the University of Chicago we had a pretty good baseball team. We had a touch football team, someplace in Europe. No, no at too much. It was mostly in Germany and in the United States that we played sports. At Warren, Wyoming we had a baseball team and stuff like that, but not overseas.

Mark: I suppose you were kinda busy with the Germans.

Mr. H.: You know I worked in the office and I carried a gun and we had to shoot one guy once. Also we had a bunch of Germans come through our camp one night when we were all asleep and we didn't know it. But that's about all.

Mark: You had to shoot someone?

Mr. H.: Some of our outside guards picked up two Germans coming through the woods, brought them to the headquarters tent. So, one of the German guys decided to run and one of our guys picked up his carbine and shot him right in the back of the head. That's the only casualty we had. We had nobody get killed in our outfit.

Mark: I get the impression that they just sort of stumbled into you guys or was he looking for you?

Mr. H.: They were probably trying to get home. They were in civilian uniform, in civilian cloths.

Mark: So when the war in Europe ended were you in southern Germany?

Mr. H.: I was near Munich when the war ended.

Mark: Do you recall your reaction?

Mr. H.: We were all very glad. We were able to build a bonfire and there was a town right below us that had a little brewery in it so, we went down there and got a barrel of beer and brought it up to the top of the hill and had sort of a celebration.

Mark: Did you think that you would be going to Japan did the thought cross your mind?

Mr. H.: Well, I'll tell you a little bit about that.

Mark: Okay.

Mr. H.: We were a Signal Service Company and most of our intelligence people were in German, but they wanted to keep our unit together as a basic cadre, such as the captain, and the office, and radio operators to go to Japan. But there was a lull at that time so we were able to go Paris, France. Now, we being, the captain, our first Sergeant, Harry Ware, and myself, Jack O'Connor and Mackeroy. The three of us was sent to Paris, France, the American University of Paris, France where we went to school for three months.

Mark: What did you study there?

Mr. H.: Insurance, business, finance, life insurance, philosophy. And after three months my number came up to be discharged now that the war in Japan was over. The captain came and got me, and I think Macheroy and we went back to our basic unit, near Munich, and was sent home.

Mark: When you went back to the U. S., where did you land originally?

Mr. H.: We landed in New York. We came on a Monticello, an Italian luxury liner, from Marseille, France and we landed in New York on New Year's Day, January 1946.

Mark: Where did you get discharged and all that sought of thing?

Mr. H.: I got discharged from Fort Hamilton, New York, now I really and truly don't remember if I got discharged --, and they gave me a hundred dollars. And I got two hundreds dollars later and a train fare home.

Mark: I see. When did you get to Milwaukee? It couldn't have been too long after that?

Mr. H.: When I got back to Milwaukee, I went back to my mother's house and went back to work several days after that. They were glad to have me. When I left for the military services, my boss got drafted and I got drafted, we both were replaced by a girl and that was very hard to take, one girl replacing two fellows. When I came back one of the girls, had a job lesser than I did, would have been my boss. I applied for a different job at the same company.

Mark: Was that difficult for you to do. Was it difficult for you to get a different job? Go back to the same employer some veterans had troubles?

Mr. H.: I went back to the same employer, the same job I left but then I applied for another job within the same company.

Mark: Did you find the company helpful to you?

Mr. H.: Absolutely. They were great

Mark: The reason I asked, some veterans claimed they couldn't find work or find work they wanted. But that didn't seem to be a problem with you.

Mr. H.: No not at all. Wisconsin Electric was great as far as returning servicemen are concerned.

- Mark: I see. So getting back to civilian life what was your priorities? You went back to work did you go back to school at all?
- Mr. H.: Only to night school for a few courses. Some company courses. I didn't get any formal college degree.
- Mark: For these night courses did you use the GI Bill or did you finance it on your own?
- Mr. H.: No. I used the GI Bill only after I got married. We needed a little money to buy a house and we got a second mortgage with the Wisconsin Veterans Service whatever.
- Mark: Oh I see. That was my next question actually that had to do with the housing loan programs.
- Mr. H.: I got married in 1948. I married a girl that worked at the electric company and we lived with her mother for two years. And then we found a house on 27th and Locust and we was able to buy it because we got a \$1500, something like that, second mortgage from the Wisconsin Veterans Administration.
- Mark: I see. In terms of the social adjustments you had to make. Did you have any trouble getting back into civilian life like some of the Vietnam veterans? Did you find that you were accepted back into society?
- Mr. H.: Absolutely. There was no problem as far as my family or my work. My biggest problem was clothing. I was gone for three and a half years and the clothes I had was outdated, old or whatever. I had to buy some new clothes.
- Mark: Was that difficult? Did you have money to do that was?
- Mr. H.: Yea. Remember I got three hundred dollars mustering out pay and I started working very shortly thereafter so I got pay checks. Not much, \$62.50 a month, something like that.
- Mark: I got one last area that I want to cover and that involves some veteran organizations.
- Mr. H.: I belong to the American Legion.
- Mark: Yea. When did you join and for what reason?
- Mr. H.: I joined in about 1950, I joined the Ninth Division Electric Post 228, a post that was sponsor by the electric company back in those days. And we had a

bowler by the name of Hank Marino and one of the guys, Al Newman, was getting a bowling team together to bowl in the State American Legion Tournament and they needed another bowler. So, he called me down to his office and he said if you join the American Legion you can bowl with Hank Marino, so I jump at the chance. So I join the American League so I could bowl with Hank Marino.

Mark: So apparently Hank Marino was a very notable bowler at the time?

Mr. H.: He was a world renowned bowler at the time.

Mark: I see. That was before my time.

Mr. H.: But hey I was very glad to bowl with Hank Marino, join the Electric Post and been a member ever since.

Mark: Was it worth it you think?

Mr. H.: Yea like all veterans organizations they are sorta going down hill.

Mark: And why do you say that?

Mr. H.: We can't maintain members. I made a speech once at Union Cemetery on Memorial Day in which I indicated that I hope I see the American Legion terminated. The reason, if there is no veterans there can't be an American Legion. And that is seemingly what is happening. Now you got the Vietnam, you got the Korea War Veterans, you got a few from the Desert Storm, Grenada, it is hard to get those people to join. So our membership which was up to 400 at one time is down to about sixty. It is difficult to maintain.

Mark: Do you think it is the function of age? Like for example, you didn't join until 1950 a couple of years after the war. Did you find that most World War II Veterans joined during the time you did, or did they join later in life like in the sixties?

Mr. H.: Most joined at the same time I did. The bulk of the membership of the Electrical were older people and as they died off younger people did come. And the Electrical Company did subsidize them.

Mark: Did you join any other organizations, like V.F.W.?

Mr. H.: I joined the V.F.W. for one year but I thought the American League was enough.

Mark: Did you ever attend any reunions of your old unit?

Mr. H.: I got a letter from Jack Oconnor, who incidentally is a movie producer, indicating that he was trying to find everybody that was in our outfit and he found me. They talked in terms of possibly having a reunion but that sort of petered out.

Mark: This happened how long ago? Couple of years ago, five years or ten years?

Mr. H.: This was? This was when? March 17, 1992 when I got some communication from Jack Oconnor about trying to find the guys in our outfit.

Mark: That didn't happen, I take it? That pretty much exhausts all the questions I have. Is there anything you would like to add?

Mr. H.: First Sergeant Harry Ware is now a lawyer in New York. \_\_\_\_\_ a very good friend that I went through the war with is a CPA in Brooklyn, New York. Bernard Lewis, another guy I went through the war with is in Minneapolis some place. I don't know if he is alive yet.

Mark: Do you stay in contact with some of these people. I mean on your own?

Mr. H.: Not really. Bernard Lewis came to visited me once and \_\_\_\_\_ Loman once.

Mark: Well I thank you for taking the time.

Mr. H.: Now you can do me some good can you turn off this tape.

Mark: Yeah

**(End of Interview)**