

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
STERLING W. SCHALLERT
LST Deck Officer, Navy, World War II.

1995

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Schallert, Sterling W., (1919-). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 2 sound cassette (ca. 70 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 70 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Sterling W. Schallert, a Sullivan, Wisconsin native, discusses his Navy service aboard LST 465 in the Southwest Pacific during World War II. Schallert touches on getting a deferment to finish his undergraduate degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and enlisting in the Navy's V7 program in Chicago. He discusses his month of preliminary training at the University of Notre Dame and three months of midshipman training at Abbott Hall (Chicago), and he characterizes his officers and the other ensigns. Sent to the Naval Training Base in San Diego, he speaks of having special training and waiting for the LSTs (Landing Ship, Tanks) at the Kaiser shipyard to be finished. Schallert portrays living in wartime San Diego with his wife, including playing football and finding an apartment. He comments on seeing his LST commissioned, the insufficient number of guns aboard, getting the ship prepared, and sailing to Australia with an understaffed crew. Schallert recalls being escorted by Australian destroyers and seeing his first action when nearby ships were torpedoed. He evaluates the capabilities, durability, and versatility of LSTs. Schallert discusses his duty as stores officer, including being responsible for food and ammunition supplies, and he states the only equipment he had difficulty obtaining were battle talker helmets and a certain auxiliary engine piece. He describes the Australian food supplies they used and the relief of getting American food later in the war. Schallert relates the positive relations between Australian and American troops and between the different American military branches his ship transported. He discusses having mail delays, getting books from the States through a book club, and stashing Coca-Cola aboard that he bought in Australia. Schallert details the operations his ship participated in: dropping the 60th Seabees at Woodlark and Kiriwina (Solomon Islands), transporting dangerous gasoline, having to sit out the Lae landing due to ship damage, bringing 1st Division Marines to Cape Gloucester (New Britain), landing in the Admiralty Islands, and seeing one of his officers shot by a sniper at Hollandia. (New Guinea). Schallert describes the detailed plan books read by the officers and the procedure during a typical landing. After unloading, he talks about searching the beaches for souvenirs and collecting Japanese parachutes and propaganda on Hollandia. He recounts his luck in missing out on the fierce landing at Biak due to more ship mechanical problems and shares his impressions of the growing fierceness of Japanese resistance. Schallert mentions being impressed by 1st Cavalry loading techniques, getting to know officers from the units they transported, and trading Navy canned fruit for Army C-rations. He discusses morale aboard ship, lacking air cover, and witnessing his first kamikaze attack on an Australian cruiser. Schallert comments on having limited recreation opportunities, seeing the Japanese airplanes at the air base on Hollandia, playing basketball on the tank deck against other LST crews, and getting a

beer ration. He states he was tired and lost weight, but his crew did not have problems with psychological breakdowns, tropical diseases, or liquor. He touches on meeting football-player Harry Stella and the South Pacific native who saved his life. Schallert talks about trading clothing for chickens with Filipino natives. He details receiving orders to be rotated back to the States, assignment as a training officer to Morro Bay (California), and promotion to first lieutenant of the base. Schallert recalls the reactions on VJ Day, driving around a tough area of San Francisco with the Shore Patrol, and calling the police to arrest an ex-Navy man. He reflects on the fanaticism and kamikaze tactics of the Japanese and declares that using the atomic bomb saved lives by making an invasion of Japan unnecessary. After his discharge, he discusses returning to law school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Schallert comments on having classes full of returning veterans, the more serious attitudes of veteran students, being treated with more respect by professors, and using the GI Bill and a state program for educational finances. He recalls his easy readjustment after his homecoming and his recent involvement with the LST Association. He highlights the importance of LSTs and amphibious forces to the war effort and wishes to see them get more credit.

Biographical Sketch:

Schallert (b.1919) served in the Navy from 1942 to 1945, and was in the inactive Reserves until 1954. Born in Watertown (Wisconsin) and raised in Sullivan (Wisconsin), he graduated from Fort Atkinson High School and from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School. After the war, he worked for Farmer's Mutual-American Family Insurance and settled in Madison (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995
Transcribed by Joanna D. Glen, WDVA staff, 1998
Reviewed and corrected by Joan Bruggink, 2012
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2012

Transcribed Interview:

Mark: Today's date is September 14th, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Sterling Schallert, originally of Sullivan, Wisconsin, a veteran of the U.S. Navy in World War II. Good morning.

Schallert: Good morning.

Mark: Thanks for coming in.

Schallert: You're very welcome.

Mark: It's such a nice morning out there. I would have been tempted to stay out. I suppose we should start at the top and have you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Schallert: I was born in Watertown, Wisconsin on December 17, 1919. At that time my folks were on a farm about a mile south of Rome, Wisconsin and I went to Fort Atkinson High School, graduated from there in 1937, then went to the University from 1937 to 1941 and my senior year I transferred into the law school to apply law school credits toward my degree. On December 7th about 4:15 in the afternoon I heard the broadcast about Pearl Harbor so I knew that I'd be going into the service, as would many of the students.

Mark: Had the thought occurred to you prior to Pearl Harbor? There were menacing events overseas.

Schallert: Yes. Of course, we all had to register for the draft and I registered for the draft in July of 1941. At that time I was working in Washington D.C. and I was told that I'd be classified 1A so I went home and obtained a deferment to go my last semester to the University to get my degree. Got that deferment at Jefferson, Wisconsin and then that summer I went to Milwaukee to see if I could get in the Navy V7 program which was available but had closed in Milwaukee at that time. So then I went to law school in the fall of 1941 and then over the Christmas holidays I went into Chicago because I understood that the V7 program opened in Chicago. The day after Christmas I went in and took my preliminary physical, then I had to obtain three letters: character, education, and jobs, that sort of thing. Then I went back on the 31st of December with those letters, took the final physical, passed and was sworn into the Navy on December 31, 1941. At that time I was told I'd be called in February so I went home to work in my father's store in Sullivan, Wisconsin at that time.

- Mark: What made the Navy and the V7 program in particular so attractive to you? There were plenty of options if you wanted to serve in the service; why this particular option?
- Schallert: I had always been interested in the Navy and this particular option was a good one because it went one month to preliminary training and then three months as a midshipman and then you graduated as an ensign in the Navy, the so-called four months wonders.
- Mark: So how did everything work out? What was your entry into the military like?
- Schallert: It worked out very well. Actually, the training schools weren't quite ready and couldn't handle the supply so I was not called in February and I'm sure everyone at home thought that I was somehow dodging the draft, but I was called on July 6th of 1942 and reported to the University of Notre Dame for the one month's training.
- Mark: What did this consist of? What sort of training was it?
- Schallert: The training at Notre Dame was intended to weed out anybody that had problems either academically or physically. In the original physical, we had to be between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-seven, unmarried, physically in good shape, so we had already passed that physical. But now down at Notre Dame they exercised us very strenuously for two or three hours a day, we drilled at least twice a day and then we took elementary seamanship and mathematics and that sort of thing and they washed out another hundred down there. That left about six or seven hundred to go to Abbott Hall in Chicago and the other four or five hundred went to Prairie State in New York, which was a battleship, U.S.S. Illinois, which had been converted into a barracks. I'm sure that it was much better to go to Abbott Hall in Chicago, which was on the downtown Northwestern University campus.
- Mark: I'm sure it was. In this secondary training, what was entailed with this?
- Schallert: When I became a midshipman?
- Mark: Uh-huh.
- Schallert: They issued us twenty-one books and we were going to be there three months. Twenty-one books and concentrating on seamanship, ordnance, we took special training in gunnery and that sort of thing, but it was primarily seamanship, navigation and ordnance, which turned out to be very valuable later on.

- Mark: It's mostly classroom training?
- Schallert: Mostly classroom, not as much exercising or drills.
- Mark: I went to basic training as an enlisted person forty years later and I remember the haircut and getting the uniform and the screaming and yelling and that sort of thing. I get the impression your experience was different. What was the discipline like?
- Schallert: Much different. At Notre Dame the gentleman in charge was a Lieutenant Dunlap who had been an ensign on the U.S.S. Arizona and he still had—and he got the Navy Cross and he still had the burns on part of his face and hands, very fine gentleman. There were two companies of us and we had a lieutenant junior grade, a fella by the name of Broulette and a chief by the name of Morris that were in charge and we did not get any hazing, that sort of thing, we did not have anybody shouting at us. Of course, everybody was a college graduate and we were all equal and got along well and had no problems. Nothing like boot camp.
- Mark: You mentioned washouts. Was that a large percentage?
- Schallert: No. They washed out about a hundred people, mostly physical, some because of academics, but mostly physical. A friend of mine from Watertown named Paul Hibbard washed out because they found one of his ears had some problems. But the type of exercising they did, if you had anything, any slight heart problem or ankle or foot or anything, this would bring it out. So about a hundred washed out at Notre Dame.
- Mark: As for the men in this program, could you perhaps characterize them in terms of their background, educational level, economic status, etc.? Where did these guys come from and how did they get into it?
- Schallert: They came from all over the United States and surprisingly enough, there were more older. I saw a statistic once that of that group between twenty-one and twenty-seven, that the average age was closer to twenty-six. You would think it would be twenty-three, but the average age was closer to twenty-six. There were all sorts of people. There were teachers. We had a man named Rengalu [?] who was a math teacher in a college, very, very good. We had—one of my roommates was an accountant named Schwartz and I would say pretty well educated people and as you can see they are all college people.
- Mark: In fact, some seem to have been established in their professions already. They weren't just college kids, they were people who had been working for a while.

- Schallert: Yes. I would say that more were in their professions of some kind or another than college kids; that's why the average age was so high.
- Mark: What motivated these people to join the service? Was it patriotism, or—
- Schallert: Well, I think patriotism, but the other thing that motivated them was it was a chance to get a commission. Some people, see doctors and dentists and that sort of thing, they would get commissions directly and they would get lieutenantcies and captaincies and this sort of thing. But a person like myself that had no Navy training, no military training, no ROTC or anything like that, a chance for a commission is pretty remote. And so I think people thought well, this is a good service and four months and you become an ensign, you know. Sounded very glamorous, too.
- Mark: So you became an ensign?
- Schallert: Yes. I became an ensign on October 30th, 1942.
- Mark: What happened to the young ensign after he finished at Northwestern?
- Schallert: We got our orders about ten days before—in fact, about twenty days before we graduated we got orders. My first order sent me to Norfolk, Virginia, which meant that I would have probably have gone into the Atlantic, might have even been in the landings in Africa. But then ten days before graduation quite a few of us received a change in our orders and were sent to the Commander of Southwest Pacific Amphibious Forces at San Diego. So that's where we went after we left, October 30th, 1942. We got some leave and then we got on the train and went down to San Diego, California.
- Mark: And what happened there?
- Schallert: At San Diego we were assigned to the Naval training base in San Diego with the idea that we would be there, we would learn, we would practice pre-gunnery, get anything caught up, special training, that sort of thing. But a lot of it was gunnery and there wasn't much on amphibious forces because nobody knew too much about it. All they could do with us was take us out in a regular freighter or a personnel carrier and then lower us over the side in a boat and then we'd go and pick up troops and wait to go to the beach. It was very boring, we only did that about twice, and of course, didn't learn much about LSTs [Landing Ship, Tanks] because they weren't ready yet. The LSTs were supposed to have been ready by around the first of January. Well they weren't ready, so they didn't have a lot for us to do. They would have us come in the morning and maybe take a short class of taking apart a .45 or that sort of thing, then they'd let us go.

As I was just newly married and a lot of the others were too, it was a great time and a beautiful place to be.

Mark: I was going to ask, what was wartime San Diego like? You seem to have enjoyed it.

Schallert: Yes, it was very nice. There were barrage balloons around and we had the ships of the fleet; some of the ships of the fleet were in the San Diego harbor. But the biggest thing that I enjoyed was the planes on North Island. One of the things I used to like was when the Corsairs would come in. The Corsairs were those ones with the bent wings, you probably know, and they have a kind of a peculiar wail when they come in. I used to like to watch them come in. It was a great thing. As far as the base was concerned, we all had to pass swimming tests, this sort of thing, and then for athletics we played football. And I used to like football, and on our team we had a fellow named Ringelberg who had been to the University of Michigan, a tremendous blocking back; anybody could have run a hundred yards behind him any time, so we did very well. Nothing to do with the war, but it was a great recreation.

Mark: Now you were married. Did your wife go to San Diego?

Schallert: Yes. She went to San Diego and, of course, it was war time, very hard to find rooms and that sort of thing, but we were lucky. My wife got on a streetcar and was going up 5th Avenue in San Diego and she saw a sign in a window, she got off the streetcar and she went back and we got that little apartment. We got that little apartment within twenty-four hours after we were in San Diego and we kept it all the time we were there. And a lot of the fellows weren't that lucky. They had to stay in the Grant Hotel the entire time.

Mark: So the LSTs finally arrived then in February, I guess?

Schallert: The LSTs were in various places around the country, but our division was going to get LSTs from the Kaiser Shipyard across from Portland at Vancouver, Washington. It's a little confusing because there was another Vancouver on the coast, but this Vancouver is right across the river and up the river from Portland, the Kaiser Shipyards. So that's where they were coming from. LSTs 445 through 475 were built at that Kaiser yard.

Mark: They came down the coast and you saw them for the first time in February?

Schallert: I saw them, yes, that's correct. We saw them for the first time in February when we were sent up there and our ship was commissioned on the 27th of February, 1943 and there were six officers, myself included, at the

commissioning. And after it was commissioned, we swung it around and took it down to Portland into the fuel dock and then to the supply dock and equipment dock and of course, equipment was short so we borrowed from the next guy's bin and that sort of thing. So from Portland then we went down to Astoria, Oregon and then three LSTs went out and down the coast down to San Diego. That was our first trip.

Mark: I was going to ask, what did it take to get these ships combat ready?

Schallert: Well, they came off of the shipyard and at that time we had one 40mm on the bow, one three inch on the stern and six 20mm. Well as it turned out, that wasn't anywhere near enough, but that's all we had. After we went down to San Diego and did various things we had to, we had to be demagnetized and that sort of thing, then we went up to San Francisco and at San Francisco at the Navy Yard they made over a hundred structural changes. An officer had to stay on board, and like the fool, I volunteered. I couldn't get home so I volunteered, but that was not a good decision because as they worked that fiberglass about that thick, and that fiberglass particles got into everything, into the bedding and all over the place and it was really a wreck. For one week they tore the ship upside down and made a lot of alterations. I don't really know what all the alterations were, we didn't have any more guns at that time, but whatever it was they did it, it worked. They were doing something.

Mark: So when did the actual crew get on board? It sounds like it was a bit later than that.

Schallert: When we first got commissioned, about half the officers weren't there and the crew wasn't. The crew was at various places. The crew was like at baker's school, and they were at gunnery school and at communications school and so on. So those people didn't really join the ship. They joined the ship before we sailed, but I don't think everybody was on the ship until after the alterations in San Francisco.

Mark: So from the time you got the ship to the time you got overseas was how long?

Schallert: We left the States April 23rd, 1943. From there we sailed to Samoa, from Samoa we sailed almost straight south down below New Zealand and then back up to New Zealand, then from New Zealand we went to Sydney, Australia and then from Sydney, in that group there were nine LSTs and one Liberty ship, no escort. We finally got escort when we went from New Zealand to Sydney, Australia, we had two big Australian destroyers. I remember their names, I have never forgotten them: the Arunta and the Warramunga. Strange names.

Mark: But easy to remember, I would suspect.

Schallert: Their destroyers were a little larger than our destroyers. They are about halfway between a destroyer and a light cruiser. So we went to Sydney, Australia and then they started sending us north to Brisbane. Three of us went, and that's when we saw our first action. We thought we were pretty safe because we had five small escorts, two in the front, two on each side and one behind. We thought we were pretty safe. First night out there were about nineteen ships and we only were going six knots because some of the Australian ships would only go six knots. First night out they torpedoed the ship just to the left and behind us and the ship behind us. That's when we saw our first action; we decided maybe we weren't as safe as we thought.

Mark: This might be a good time to have you tell me a little bit about the LST itself, what its mission was and what your mission was on this specific ship and your duties on that ship.

Schallert: LST means Landing Ship Tanks. The ships were about three hundred and twenty-seven feet long, fifty feet wide, had wide bow doors and the idea was that they'd carry not only tanks, but trucks and a mission to do anything. A real workhorse, and it turned out that they could do a lot more than anyone had ever thought. No one really planned on LSTs carrying a lot of personnel, but it turned out that on the landings we carried the personnel and the trucks and the tanks and that sort of thing. We didn't use many tanks in the southwest Pacific but we did have occasion to carry them. The early LSTs like 465 had an elevator about one-third of the way from the bow and the tank deck below was about two hundred feet long and about forty feet wide and could hold a tremendous amount of equipment. Vehicles were backed in, then when we landed on the beach the bow doors opened and the ramp came down, and then these vehicles could just proceed right out. Usually the last thing in was a bulldozer in the front because sometimes the jungle or coral or whatever had to be pushed out of the way and sometimes the bulldozers had to push sand and gravel up to the ramp to allow the other vehicles to get out. Then after those vehicles went out, then the vehicles and whatever was on the top deck was lowered down through the elevator. Later on they decided that was too slow and they built a kind of a ramp with a heavy weight on so that it would stay up and then would drop down, that ramp would drop down and those vehicles could drive off. So those newer LSTs would unload faster than we could.

Mark: So this ship has a crew of how many?

Schallert: We're supposed to have a hundred and seven men and eleven officers, supposed to. But when we first went over we had seven officers and about

seventy men. We wondered if they were trying to tell us something. I don't think that anyone thought that the LSTs were going to be as tough as they were or as versatile as they were. LSTs were made into hospital ships, they were made into repair ships, various sorts of things, and turned out to be very good. And in the whole war, only forty LSTs were lost and five of those were lost in one explosion and some were lost by grounding, so less than thirty LSTs were actually lost, although they were shelled and bombed and torpedoed. For example, on the way up from Sydney to Brisbane, that LST that was hit in the stern was put back in service. In fact, LST Flotilla Seven, our LST flotilla with thirty-six LSTs, never lost a single LST although we were in seventeen different campaigns and then more after that after I left.

Mark: That is quite remarkable; it sounds like a very durable ship.

Schallert: Yes. When you consider that the side of an LST was probably about a half inch, maybe less than that, and all welded together and they didn't break up even in typhoons, so really quite a remarkable ship, and my hat is off to the people that did them because when I used to see the bow bending like this and this ripple coming down, I often thought "I hope it doesn't break a weld," but it never did.

Mark: As a deck officer, what were your duties in combat and just generally?

Schallert: I was the stores officer on the ship so I was responsible for the food, for the menus, for obtaining the materials and that sort of thing, and if we needed any other thing, ammunition or that sort of thing, checking with the gunnery officer but all went through Stores. And then as far as the duties in running the ship, we served four hours on and eight hours off so we would have a watch, for example, from noon to 4:00 p.m. and then from twelve midnight until 4:00 a.m. Those were the regular hours for each officer except the engineering officer who was considered to be on call at all times and the engineering officer did not stand watches. And the captain and the executive didn't stand watches either, but all the other officers stood watches.

Mark: As far as stores and those sorts of things are concerned, how was the Navy supply system? Did you have trouble getting materials, did you get the wrong materials, or did everything work fairly well?

Schallert: The materials, first of all, as far as the actual materials for war are concerned, very good, and of course we worked very closely with the Army and the Marines and that sort of thing. So they were really responsible for their own equipment so we didn't have to worry about that. The only thing we had trouble getting was battle talker helmets. They are a large helmet that will fit over the earphones. We didn't get those so we

ordered them. Well, we didn't get 'em so we ordered 'em again. Then when we still didn't get 'em, we ordered 'em again. After a while we got all of them, so then we just passed them on to other ships. So we got all three orders finally. That was about the only thing that we didn't get.

We had trouble in the LSTs with what's known as an auxiliary engine. The main engines worked great. They were Electro-Motive diesels made down in LaGrange for a big 750 horse power and some of 'em were even bigger, the same ones used on locomotives. But the auxiliary engines we had problems with them; they kept breaking down and we could not get a certain piece. There's a piece to an auxiliary engine, and I'm not an engineer, but it was like a round disk and about $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick and they were made out of brass; we absolutely couldn't get those at all. So we had a machinist on our ship who took Micarta like you have for your counter and he got some thick Micarta and he made twenty of those. They wouldn't last as long, but they did work until we finally did get some more of the other part. But that was the only thing as far as the ship itself was concerned that we had trouble getting.

As far as food, we didn't have any trouble getting food, but at first the only food we could get was from Australia and Australian food is quite different. For example, we had to take, in the meat line, we had to take fifty percent mutton and fifty percent beef. We didn't care for the mutton, but our chef took it and he steamed it and steamed it until it had no taste at all and then we served it with mint jelly and we managed to get it down. We couldn't get American food until about 1944.

Mark: Those don't sound like major problems, so my next question might not be too applicable, but I'll ask it anyway. Did these problems change as time went on? Did they get better as the American presence in the Pacific picked up and as the supply lines started to work or could you not tell?

Schallert: Yes, they got better, and it wasn't too long in '44 before we started to get supplies from America, American food. One of the reasons that the Australians had problems with Americans was the fact that they were short of food too. When we went into restaurants down there we could only eat four shillings worth and then we'd have to move and they shared what they had and were as cooperative as they could be and we liked to work with the Australian divisions, the 7th and 9th Divisions. Very fine people. We really didn't have it too tough as far as food was concerned. We had the food.

Mark: What about mail and those kinds of things?

Schallert: Mail comes slow. Because LSTs were always moving up, we would be away from the mail source. For example, when MacArthur's headquarters

was at Brisbane, well the LST's headquarters was at Milne Bay up in New Guinea, quite a distance away. So mail tended to come to Brisbane and then be forwarded. So it would be thirty to sixty days before you'd get mail and then as we started jumping bigger, sometimes the mail got left behind. In late '44, I had to go down to Milne Bay to get some supplies and to bring them back. I came back in an LCT, which is a hundred-foot landing craft, and on the way we stopped and picked up some sixty, seventy bags of mail that had been left behind and they were in a kind of a long, rectangular building which had been, I suppose, a post office and here these bags were sitting in the jungle. They're regular mail bags and some of them got mold on them and that sort of thing, and we threw 'em in the LCT and then brought 'em up and when we got up to where the LSTs were up in Hollandia and opened those up, I had some sixty letters from my wife. So we just put 'em aside and one of the banes of existence in those days was fruitcake. People would send fruitcake and they wouldn't wrap it properly and it would break so your mail would be very fragrant from laying in the jungle with the mold and all that sort of thing, but we liked the mail anyway.

Mark: [laughs] As you know, I interviewed your friend Dale Bender. One of the things I remember from his interview, one of the things that sticks in my head, who knows why, but he said that you could always tell when an island was liberated when they put the first Coke machine on. I'm wondering, did you get many amenities from the States, like did you get Coke or magazines, newspapers and that sort of thing?

Schallert: I organized a—some members of the crew and some of the officers got books through book clubs. We subscribed to four book clubs in the United States and all during the war those people sent those books to us and we had one package come damaged and I wrote to them and they sent us a brand new set. Those book clubs sent them all during the war. The services had little books that they put out, but we were ahead of that so we never got those until late '44 we finally started to get those, so up until that time the only books we got were those books that came from the book club. But they were nice. We passed 'em around and I really appreciated those book clubs. I wrote to them and I really thanked them for that help. We didn't get things like Coke. Beer and cigarettes. Services were issued beer and cigarettes but they were not issued soft drinks of any kind. When I was in Australia, I bought some Coca-Cola and under my bunk I had drawers, and I took one of those drawers and put about ten bottles of Coke in there and I saved that so when I ran into people, Marines or Seabees or anyone from my home area, I'd give them a cold Coca-Cola; it would be the first one they'd probably had for a year. So that's what I did with that. And I ran into some of them several times and some of them I've seen since the war.

- Mark: It's amazing to talk to people how small of a world it really is.
- Schallert: But no, I don't remember a soft drink ever issued in the service. Beer and cigarettes.
- Mark: I'll come back to some of those sorts of things. I think we should move on to some of the combat operations. Now your particular ship, you mentioned seventeen different landings all through the Pacific. Which was your first landing and how did things change over time?
- Schallert: The first operation we had was to land on islands between the Solomons and New Guinea. At that time we had Guadalcanal and then we had Milne Bay, New Guinea and Port Moresby, New Guinea, that's all we had. So before they could mount any further operation, they wanted to build some airfields on little islands called Woodlark and Kiriwina so we had some way to keep the Japanese from bringing their giant air fleet down on us. Those were the first landings made in July of 1943. At the same time the Solomons group which is called the South Pacific, they were starting to go up the Solomons chain and take the next one up. Fortunately, the Japanese paid more attention to the Solomons landings than they did with Woodlark and Kiriwina, so we were able to go to Woodlark and Kiriwina and land the 60th Seabees and have them build an airstrip there, which incidentally, they broke a record; they built an airstrip in thirteen and a half days on Woodlark and it was a real mess when we put 'em ashore. I really felt sorry for them because it was all mud and jungle and that bulldozer went and pushed this thing apart so those trucks and stuff could get off. I really felt sorry for them.
- Mark: Were there Japanese there?
- Schallert: No Japanese. Neither Kiriwina nor Woodlark had any Japanese so it was not opposed in that way.
- Mark: But they had their own problems, as you have indicated already?
- Schallert: We had our problems too, because when we went back for a subsequent landing in August we were loaded with one hundred octane gasoline for the airstrip and we were bombed that night by three planes and they straddled us with fifteen bombs and we were just lucky because if any one of those bombs had hit—there were two LSTs—if any one of 'em had hit any of us, the other one would have gone and we'd have all been killed because that gasoline would have exploded. It damaged our shaft.
- Then the next amphibious landing that was planned was at a place called Lae. That was the first landing where there were to be Japanese and where they expected to have trouble. Well, because of the bombing our

shaft was bent, so we did not go on the Lae landing. We went to Australia to the dry dock and the ship that took our place, LST-471, was hit with an aerial torpedo and the officer that had my position was killed. So it was a most fortunate thing that we were in the other area. They did have opposition at Lae, and we were not on that landing.

Then the next landing of any size that we were on—we were on various landings in between—but the next landing of any size that was important was an island called New Britain, called Cape Gloucester in which the 1st Marine Division was landing. We were on that landing and that was a landing the Japanese opposed. There was supposed to have been something like thirty or forty Japanese fighter planes knocked down and around thirty or forty bombers and we lost a destroyer there, but no LSTs on that landing.

So Gloucester was the next one and then we had another small one called Saidor. Then another important landing was at the Admiralty Islands which is about four or five hundred miles north, and this was one that they went in with a few people and discovered a chance to land so then they sent the LSTs in and we took over the Admiralties.

Then the next landing was a big landing and a surprise landing. MacArthur decided that they should have a tri-pronged landing up at Hollandia, fool the Japanese. There was a big base in between where we were and Hollandia called Wewak and the Japanese were sure we were coming there. So they fortified Wewak and did not fortify Hollandia, so on that landing we must have had two, three hundred ships and they landed three different groups at Hollandia and a place called Aitape and that landing fooled the Japanese completely and was a very, very important landing. Again, we didn't have much trouble. Our officer, George Woodliff, was shot in the arm in the afternoon by a Japanese sniper, and I've often wondered why that Japanese sniper didn't pick off MacArthur because MacArthur came right by our ship about 11 o'clock that morning and that sniper must have seen MacArthur with that hat. You know, he wore that hat with the braid on and he always waded ashore, quite dramatically. But instead he shot poor George in the arm. So that's halfway up the coast of New Guinea.

Mark: So on these landings could you describe the sort of chronology? When did they occur, what are you doing to prepare for them, what's going on as you're going into the beach and letting the materiel off the ship?

Schallert: First of all, a plan book was prepared and I presume by MacArthur's staff. That was given—one plan book was given to every LST captain and then all we officers read it. The most thorough planning you ever saw in your life. It laid it out the times, what everybody did, contingencies, it laid out

which Air Force groups were going to do what, it laid out what Navy ships are going to do the bombardment, it laid out which ships are going in first, which troops, where, exactly where, the whole thing, and were typically about that thick. I, as an organization-type man anyway, I often thought that one of the reasons that the landings went so well is that they were so well laid out. They put timing in; two or three days before the frogmen would go in and check the beaches and they'd have that tide all figured out as to what time to land and so on. All the earlier landings we could not land during the daytime, we had to land early in the morning or in the evening because we didn't have air power. But by the time we got to Hollandia, we had—I think there were something like twelve to fourteen carriers and we actually had little carriers behind the LSTs at Hollandia. We never had that before. We always had Air Force cover, but now we had Navy cover and the big carriers were laying off the beach there, or far out; we never saw them. But they prevented the Japanese fleet from coming close.

So that the typical landing would start out, they would check the beaches, then they would bombard the long-range bombardment, then we had these LCIs that were tailored for rocket ships. The rocket ships later on were quite fancy, but all these were, they just had racks alongside of the ship and the rockets were just stacked in there and they just pressed a button and they went off. Later on the rocket ships had a kind of a revolving tubes that shot out and were really fancy, but by the time they shot off something like seventy or eighty of those rockets they just devastated the beach in addition to the planes coming over and strafing the beach and then the troops would start in with first the small boats, and then landing craft infantry, and then the LSTs would come last. Typically we'd come in, oh, 9:00 or 10:00 in the morning when we had air cover like that.

Mark: Yeah. I was going to ask what these beaches must look like after all that bombardment. When you got there, the troops had already landed and it must be a mess.

Schallert: They were a mess in that the shrubbery and all that was knocked down, but the bulldozers came in early in the game and the bulldozers would push all that aside and the actual beach itself wasn't bad at all. It wasn't full of debris. It was back of the beach where there was any possibility of troops and many of these beaches, like at Hollandia, the actual beach landing was kind of a large island with a kind of a swamp between that and the mainland and there was only a few roads in and so they knocked everything out behind and everything was surely knocked out. At Hollandia, one island there was a little sniper fire and we got permission—we were very tickled—we got permission to use our three inch gun. We fired three rounds into that island and there was no more sniping out of that island. But we got a kick out of it because that was the first time that

we were allowed to use that three inch on a landing. So I'd say that the beaches, generally speaking, were not all torn up. It was back of the beaches. Back of the beaches. Trees were gone and the jungle was gone and the big holes and that sort of thing.

Mark: Did you get back there at all or did you stay on the ship?

Schallert: No, no. We always got off the ship; as soon as the troops moved back in we went in. For instance, at Hollandia and the Admiralties we got a lot of souvenirs and I suppose it's possible that it could have been land mines and that sort of thing too, but by the time all the troops and vehicles and stuff had gone over we felt pretty safe. At Hollandia, for example, we got Japanese parachutes and took those back to the ship and we got Japanese propaganda and Japanese money and even Japanese crockery and the tea was still warm in the pots just like it said in the newspapers. The tea was still warm in the pots because the Japanese had not expected that at all.

Mark: Those kinds of souvenirs keep us in the museum business going, I think. [laughs]

Schallert: I've shown you some of mine. I have twenty-five different kinds of Japanese propaganda and I've told you about Melvin Donkle and I hope that you get to see him and get some of his souvenirs too.

Mark: Well, let's hope so. As time went on, did these landings change at all? For example, did the Japanese resistance taper off or anything? Did the Americans get more effective at it? You've already hinted at some of these things and I'd like to explore this a little further.

Schallert: They were better up through Hollandia. After we got through Hollandia, we landed at a little island called Wakde. The landing that was tough and indicated the new Japanese spirit of resistance was an island called Biak. Fortunately, again, we lucked out on that one; our auxiliary engines broke down so we didn't go. That was a tougher landing and the Japanese resisted very, very, very much on Biak. They were in caves and it was the first instance of where the Japanese stayed in the caves and were determined to fight to the last and not only that, but the Japanese army or the Japanese Togo and company had figured out that maybe this was a place to challenge the American fleet. And they already had their battleships and carriers and they were coming down, they were coming down and they were going to challenge the American fleet off of New Guinea. The only thing that changed it was at the same time in the central Pacific we were starting to work on Saipan and a Japanese plane saw that they were working on that and they changed that order and the battleships and carriers went north so we escaped that, so that could have been a real—the big battle would have been there then instead of Leyte. So I

would say yes, at Biak there was more resistance. Generally speaking, the Japanese decided not to fight on the beaches but to hole up in caves and this sort of thing and build defense systems and Leyte was tough back in, Leyte was tough, and then Okinawa, the Japanese went to northern—not Okinawa, Lingayen, the Japanese went in the northern section and very tough for our troops, and then of course Okinawa and Iwo were extreme examples of how the Japanese were resisting.

Mark: Right. Now you served with the Army, it sounds like.

Schallert: Oh, no.

Mark: But these were Army operations.

Schallert: We worked—well you see, the way that worked is the Army were the ones being transported. MacArthur had a fellow who was an engineer and expert and he and the Navy, this general and the Navy worked together and they worked out a lot of techniques. For example, the 1st Cavalry, before we took the 1st Cavalry on a landing, they went—their officers went on another landing with us to see if they could learn anything further about the loading, and I'm sure that they loaded a little different. We were very impressed with the 1st Cavalry because they loaded so that their vehicles and the way they manhandled all their stuff it went out as fast as anybody we ever had. They really did a tremendous job.

Mark: I was going to ask about interservice rivalry or cooperation whichever—well, I was going to ask which you thought was more—which was the better term to use.

Schallert: I think that possibly because we carried the troops and we carried the officers and the officers slept in our rooms, each LST had room for about twenty to twenty-five officers. I had a room that had four bunks, so I'd always have three officers in the same room when we had these landings, so we got to know these officers well and in the Southwest Pacific we only had about four units. We only had the use of the 32nd Division, the 24th Division, the 41st Division, the 1st Cavalry and sometimes the 1st Marines. That's all there was. There wasn't any more. So we carried the same troops over and over again. We carried the 32nd Division for example, three times. We carried the 24th twice and the Marines we carried. So that we knew them. **[End of Tape 1, Side 1]** I would say there was absolutely no rivalry. In fact, I used to trade some of our Navy supplies, as far as food is concerned, with the Army. Our sailors, for some reason, liked those little cans of C-rations. Why they liked them I don't know, but they wanted them. So I had an excess of prune plums in cans so I traded with the Army and they gave us the C-rations willingly and we gave them some cases of that. We had very good cooperation and the same with the

Australians, the 7th and 9th. They're just tremendous people and we didn't have friction one with them. Really, really great.

Mark: That was my next question actually, was allies. There's a saying in military history that there's one thing worse than having an enemy and that's having allies. It wasn't a problem for you either, apparently.

Schallert: It was not a problem. We heard down in Australia that there was animosity between the Australians and the 1st Marine Division and the Australians and the Parachute Division. We even heard that they would not let 'em go on liberty at the same time because they always got to fighting, but that was in Australia. We didn't have problem one of interservice rivalry. As we moved up, we were so close that we just didn't have that.

Mark: In terms of morale, how was morale in the South Pacific? Did that change over time? What made these guys go out and fight? Did you notice any sort of battle weariness or anything like that?

Schallert: I think we all got tired, but I think the biggest thing was that we knew and everybody knew that the Southwest Pacific was not going to get priority. It was decided that they were going to go after Europe first, probably a good decision. The Navy pretty much ran the Solomons and MacArthur pretty much ran New Guinea and did not get a lot of equipment and a lot of people.

Mark: Did that affect people's thinking in the South Pacific at the time? Were you aware of this and did you think about this much?

Schallert: I think the biggest thing that we on the LSTs thought about was the fact that we didn't have—at first we didn't have very good air cover, I would say for the first six months, and we didn't have proper guns. We didn't have enough, as you can tell, because later on we built up to twenty guns. I heard that one LST in the Central Pacific had thirty-eight. We added guns from anywhere we could get them and when we had twenty guns, and then you get two, three LSTs together, you can put up a lot of lead against aircraft. We used to say the destroyers came close to us for protection. On the Biak beach there was a story I heard where there were four LSTs on the beach and four Japanese planes strafed and the LSTs shot all four of them down. Got all four of them. So you can see that the LSTs were able to put up a lot of shell with all those guns. When we got Navy cover, we had Navy cover both at Hollandia and we had Navy cover in the Philippines for the first four or five days, then the Army had to take over and cover so that—there was a little more problem in the Philippines with the Japanese aircraft and of course, the suicide planes started in the Philippines.

Mark: Right. In the Leyte campaign.

Schallert: Yes. I think we saw the first deliberate act the day after the landing when a twin engine bomber dived into the bridge of the cruiser Australia less than a mile from us, and that twin engine bomber went right square into the bridge and killed about fifteen people, including the captain of the ship and knocked that funnel off. They repaired that and later on, later on in the campaign for Lingayen that same cruiser went past us as we were going north they were going south and their funnel was gone again. The sister ship, the Shropshire, bore a charmed life, just didn't seem to get hit. But we saw that and that was very clear.

Mark: These are some very isolated areas. If you're in Europe, you're in the heart of western civilization. You're out in the boondocks; did that effect morale at all? There's not too many opportunities for recreation.

Schallert: No there isn't. There is no recreation. Recreation was taking some food and some beer and goin' over to an island and drinking the beer and visiting and that sort of thing and maybe a ball game if they had any flat space. That was about it. There wasn't anything much to do. We did get off. For instance in Hollandia we got off and got on a Jeep and went back to the airfields because there were over three hundred Japanese airplanes that had been bombed and strafed because they had been fooled into thinking that our planes couldn't reach 'em. The planes used to stop and then they'd put on long-range tanks and went in and then the Navy came down with the big carriers and there were planes laying all over. I cut some pieces out of some of those planes and brought the metal back to show what the sides of the planes were like.

Mark: There's a term that some veterans from the South Pacific use and it's called "rock happy." Have you ever heard this term before? You're stuck on an isolated island and it sometimes had psychological effects, shall we say?

Schallert: That could be. I never heard the term and we didn't have anybody on our ship that had been on the islands. Our executive officer volunteered to be what's called a beachmaster. A beachmaster is one that controls as the supplies come in, tells where they should go and what can be put where and that sort of thing, and we found that necessary as we went in. And he became a beachmaster, and I think that he gave up a berth on a ship to be on the beach and work on the land. I didn't personally know anybody that was on the islands except I had a man working for me in the insurance company named Carl Amonson who was on the Treasury Islands in the Solomons. That was a small island. I suppose that's right. I'd be very

nervous about being on a small island because at any time, a Japanese submarine I suppose could land and come in with a few Marines and—

Mark: Or just the isolation of being out there without much support. Apparently no one on your ship or to your knowledge went bonkers out there.

Schallert: No.

Mark: No Corporal Klinger-type thing? No one started to scream for their mother or anything like that?

Schallert: No, we didn't have anything like that. I don't recall anyone that really broke down from it. I think we all became quite tired and, for instance, I went down to about—I think I weighed about a hundred and thirty-eight pounds when I got back to the States and I'd been weighing at one fifty-five or one-sixty. But as far as the breakdowns on the ship or that sort of thing, we had one man that didn't take his salt tablets and they had to haul him down and fill him full of salt, but other than that, no, and it really is quite amazing when you think all the stuff the LSTs went through.

Mark: In terms of the crew and the activities of the crew while you're in the Pacific, did you have any sort of organized social activities? We've alluded to some of this already. Volleyball or basketball?

Schallert: Basketball. We found that we painted our tank deck for a basketball court and had baskets that could be let up and down and we had a great rival with another LST called LST-460. The crew used to play the officers, but then we'd put a combined team and we'd play the LST-460 and we played other LSTs too. That was a lot of fun; that gave us some recreation. Then we played softball when we could. But other than that, there really wasn't a lot for recreation.

Mark: We had talked about alcohol before. If I'm not mistaken, officers got an alcohol ration.

Schallert: No, that's not correct. I don't know anything about any alcohol ration whatsoever, and I would know because being a teetotaler, everybody was after me to get my two cans of beer. We had beer. The pharmacist may have had alcohol, but it never was a problem as far as I know. Now in the British Navy they issue a rum ration, but not the American Navy. As far as I know, there was no alcohol issued to any officers and a person could buy it.

Mark: But you had access to some?

Schallert: If you did have access, it would have been you got it from Australia or somewhere. Maybe the Army or somebody ashore had it and maybe the bigger ships had it, but the LSTs didn't have anything like that and I never saw any alcohol of any kind on our ship. If the officers had it I would see it. When we were in Australia, I'm not saying that they didn't drink; they sure did! As bases quieted down, then you'd have ship stores and that sort of thing open. For example, after we got up to the Philippines the last time we went back to Hollandia it was deader than a door nail. But they had all the amenities and there was just tons of equipment that was going to be abandoned and given to the Australians or whoever because we couldn't move it anymore. One of the islands called Morotai we heard that when the war was over they bulldozed the B24 bombers over the side into the ocean. Too expensive to bring them back apparently. No, liquor was never a problem. It was never seen on our ships that I know of.

Mark: Did you have much contact with the natives of the South Pacific islands? I'm thinking of New Guinea.

Schallert: New Guinea? No. We saw some scouts. Particularly I remember specifically a big Army Ranger named [Harry] Stella, and he was so big I just knew that that had to be Stella who was an All-American guard in 1935 and I asked him. He said, "You're a real sports fan." [Mark laughs] But here's this giant of a man and when he came on board when we landed at Gloucester, he came on board with this black native this high and he said, "Take good care of him. He saved my life many times." He went in my room and full equipment and all and he threw himself down on the bunk and was sound asleep, just like that. When we ever had natives on board we quartered them downstairs because they stank so bad. But we saw to it that he was taken good care of. He said, Stella told us that this native could smell the Japanese and many times that he had saved him. So of course we took good care of him. But that's about the only contact.

Mark: What about the Philippines? Did you get aboard land on the Philippines?

Schallert: In the Philippines they came alongside and they said, "Welcome Americans!" The first place that anybody said "Welcome Americans," and they needed clothing so we traded them undershirts and that sort of thing and shirts to them for chickens. They'd bring a chicken and we'd give them that sort of thing. Yes, we talked to them.

Mark: I'm sure that livened up the fare on the ship a little bit.

Schallert: We usually didn't allow them on board the ship. Of course, LSTs have a big advantage because you go on the beach and you sit on the beach a lot so that we were able to visit back and forth and I have pictures of Filipinos walking away with bundles of clothes on their head. Very fine. We got

into another island over from Leyte and there we saw the people, but the amazing thing is I'm not a tall man and many of their people can walk under your arm. I was surprised at the smallness of the population. For some reason I thought that a Filipino was about like an average American. At least on that island that wasn't so. They were quite small, quite short.

Mark: So you left the South Pacific before the war ended?

Schallert: That's correct. Right around the first of March, 1945.

Mark: Why don't you explain the circumstances as to how you left the combat theater?

Schallert: Circumstances were very easy. My orders were issued, and the ironical thing is they were issued and signed about the middle of February 1945. We took one more trip up to Lingayen from Leyte and at that time the ship right next to us was torpedoed again so I often thought, "How ironic if I'd have been torpedoed about the 17th of February and my orders were dated February 12th." But anyway, we got back and I got these orders and the orders just told me to report to the United States and then get future orders there.

Mark: Now was this typical for someone like you who had been there since '43, early '43? Were they starting to rotate officers out?

Schallert: Yes, that's correct. They were rotating officers. In fact, just before the Gloucester landing in the end of 1943 three officers joined the ship and we were all excited because we figured that was our relief. Well, that wasn't our relief. [laughs] That was in '43. It wasn't our relief. They gradually added more and more officers until finally there was enough officers. My relief was a man named Miller and he'd been on board some time by the time I got those orders. So that's right; what was happening was new ones were coming out and we were being rotated back.

Mark: And you went to Morro Bay, California, right?

Schallert: Yes. I was assigned to Morro Bay at California, Advanced Amphibious Training Base. I was the only LST officer ever assigned to that base. Of all the LST people that I knew I was the only one. I was lucky; I was assigned to that training base. Their mission was to train troops from the Timberwolf Division over at San Luis Obispo and boat crews. Boat crews would be staying with us and the troops would come in for training and then they would be launched. We had mock sides of ships they could climb down, the troops could climb down the boats and they'd go out of the Morro Bay, kind of a harbor area, and then go out in the ocean and then they'd come in on the beaches.

- Mark: What were your duties?
- Schallert: I was in training, a training officer. I would lecture to the boat crews and we didn't have any troops at the time. **[blank tape]** Yeah, we're talking about the amphibious training at Morrow Bay, California. We would show them films and we had a special building that had antiaircraft training with films of Japanese planes and then you'd fire guns that fired light and we had specialists in that and they were very good. We would take them through a gas chamber to show them—walk through with a mask on and then pull the mask off just so you can feel that tear gas and all and we'd show them something about explosives. We had nine magazines on the base. Generally that kind of training is what was given at amphibious training.
- Mark: Now by this time you were kind of an old salt, I guess you'd say. I'm interested in your impressions of these people going into the Navy at the time. Were they generally younger? Did you think they were as qualified as those who went in early?
- Schallert: Well, of course, those of us who went in like myself originally with four months training, but by now we were qualified and certified under orders that we were qualified to be an executive officer or to command so we knew that we would go back out again as either commanders or executive officers. At the base where I was there was nothing to do with LSTs or LCIs, it was just small craft landing. So as far as my actual training and background, I could tell them about landings and I could tell them about gunnery and ordnance and that sort of thing, but I really couldn't show them how to run a ship or anything like that.
- Mark: Now were these young officers or young enlisted men?
- Schallert: No, no. At Morro Bay it was mostly all enlisted men. The boat groups had two or three officers that were in charge of the group of about forty or fifty men and the men were to learn how to run the landing craft and to learn how to go in on a landing and that sort of thing. So those officers would sit in and if they had anything to say then we'd let them say it, but they did not have overseas training. As a matter of fact, after the war those people were shipped out. They went out to relieve somebody else. So on the base itself there were only three of us that had ever been anywhere else and we were distinguished because we wore the old khaki work uniform and everybody else wore gray. But it was very good duty. I enjoyed it very much and we were very fortunate to get sent to Morro Bay.
- Mark: I'm not exactly sure where Morro Bay is.

- Schallert: Morro Bay is halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Morro Bay was logistically reported to the 12th Naval District at San Francisco, but for training purposes we also reported to the 11th Naval District for the amphibious training. So we could get orders from either district.
- Mark: Did you get to have your wife come back?
- Schallert: Yes. My wife was at Morro Bay and we were fortunate; we obtained a small house there and I hadn't been there very long before I was made first lieutenant of the base. A first lieutenant is like a superintendent of all the equipment and all of the services on the base. Third high after the captain and the executive officer, and then the first lieutenant, so I had very good duty and very good people. My chiefs knew what they were doing. They knew a lot more about plumbing and electric and all that than I did and very good.
- Mark: At the ripe old age of about twenty-four by this time?
- Schallert: That's right.
- Mark: [laughs] So when VE Day happened, and then VJ Day, I'm interested in your recollections of the events and what you thought about them. Do you recall when the Germans surrendered?
- Schallert: Yes. VE Day didn't make much impression on the base. That is, we were happy that the Germans were beaten because we who had been in the Pacific knew now we'd get all the equipment we needed and it would be coming out. But as far as the—there was no change in scheduling. There was no change in personnel, anything like that. We were getting ready to train a new unit of the Timberlake Division. I got there just after they had been training a division, and from what I was told by the people on the base when they did training, they worked hard, day and night. So people got very tired. But when I got there they had just finished training a division and so there wasn't any division training and they were all set to schedule another division and about that time VJ Day came along so that we never did have this real hard training.
- Mark: I suspect that there was a different reaction to VJ Day than there was to VE Day.
- Schallert: Yes. VJ Day we of course were very pleased. We knew there would be no more training at that time. We did an inventory of the magazines. I cleaned out the magazines and sent them with trucks with my chief gunnery guy and sent them all to San Francisco, got that out of there, did the inventory so that I was ready to handle the inventory because I then got orders to report to the Shore Patrol in San Francisco. The reason I was

told is that after VE Day you had these pictures in the paper, you know, of kissing the nurse and all that sort of thing. Well apparently the Navy felt they were embarrassed by that and they wanted to have better control and they wanted officers with their ribbons and that sort of thing, and all of a sudden all I knew I was given orders to report to San Francisco. So about early in September or late in September I guess, I was sent to San Francisco to the Shore Patrol and I found out that I was going to be one of three Shore Patrol officers in charge of San Francisco at night. We each had a territory. I had an ex-policeman for my driver and my car and a big guard about 6'3" about two hundred-twenty pounds riding with us in case, and then San Francisco was split up. It's kind of like a peninsula. The toughest areas are downtown, so I had one-half of downtown where all the Crips and all of the bars and everything were and another officer had the other half of that peninsula and then the third officer had back of that, a bigger area than us. We worked from about 6:30 at night until 2:30 in the morning.

Mark: Doing what?

Schallert: Patrolling. There were two walking Navy Shore Patrol besides whatever the Army had or Navy so we were only responsible for Navy, but two walking shore patrol for every block. We cruised around and we handled hot spots.

Mark: Were there many?

Schallert: Oh, yes. Not many, not many, but we hauled—I didn't, but in fact the driver and the guard said, "Don't get out of the car; you'll get knifed too. You've got gold braid on." So they went in and hauled a guy that had been knifed out of one of these places, got him out on the sidewalk and got him hauled away somewhere. So I saw that. One night a civilian broke into a bakery shop and hit an little woman and we got a call on the squawk box and went right down there and this guy was about 6'3", a big, husky guy, was trying to get back in that bakery to hit that woman again. He's a civilian. He's an ex-Navy man. Well, I got six Shore Patrol and I said, "Just keep him out." They'd throw him away and I called the cops right away because we had no authority over him. It was a very strenuous situation because he would just plunge into them and it was just like a fullback hitting smaller guys really. And they would throw him back and sometimes he'd go down and hit his head and it scared me. And some woman came up to me and lectured me that they were beating up on this man. I pointed out, I said, "You see that little lady in there? What he's trying to do, he's trying to get in and hit her again." She had a black eye and a window broken. Well finally the cops came and I pointed to him and we took off. That's all the difficulty that we had.

One of the other Shore Patrol officers got slugged by a lieutenant commander who was drunk. Incidentally, they brought the lieutenant commander in and broke him a rank right there and the other officer in the outlying district got involved in a murder. So I was lucky, I only got involved in a couple of incidents. Then the points came up and I had enough points, so November 1 I went down to the Shore Patrol office. Captain Miller processed me in less than an hour, so I was out of the service, paid to go home and left.

Mark: Now were you a Reserve officer? Did you have to do a certain amount of Reserve time or was this free and clear?

Schallert: Yes. As a Reserve officer you had to stay in the Reserves, but you could not—if you could get in a training unit you could get paid, but those positions were yanked up quick, and I really didn't want it at first because I was going back to law school. I had only one year of law school in and I was going back and by that time I had a wife and the second child was born in March of '46, so I had a wife and two kids and law school and after being away for four years, I didn't want any part of more training. But I actually stayed in the Reserves until I was able to get out. I wasn't able to get out until 1954.

Mark: I just want to go back to one more thing and then we'll discuss some of the post-war issues. The bomb. That's been a hot topic of discussion this year.

Schallert: Shut it off for the present.

[Tape recorder back on]

Mark: Okay. Kamikazes and bombs. The subject of the atomic bomb has been a hot one in this fiftieth anniversary year, so I like to ask veterans, especially those of the Pacific theater, their thoughts on the matter.

Schallert: In order to answer that question, we have to talk about the kamikaze tactics of the Japanese in which the Japanese used pilots with little experience but with a plane, usually fitted out with a five hundred pound bomb, and these planes would dive into ships and some have said that our planes could shoot them down and that sort of thing. It's not as easy as that. Seeing them come down is quite terrifying because the ones that I saw got high up and then dove right straight down; right from the beginning you could tell they were not attempting to pull out. They would come right straight down and plunge into the bridge of the ship and the bomb would explode and as I told you about, the crews were [unintelligible]. It kills the officers, it kills the admiral, the head of the ship, blasts the whole ship, and this was particularly true in the three days

before the landing at Lingayen. I wasn't there because this is when the battleships and the cruisers were shelling the beach preparatory to the landing and it received very little publicity, but the ships were just decimated. So bad that it was almost thought necessary to call the landing off. There are very few books about it and I only have one that really tells the true story about the kamikaze.

Mark: Which one is that?

Schallert: It's a book specifically about the kamikazes. I'll have to show you. The other books tell about it a little bit but they don't really tell how serious. The Japanese used a tactic, for example, where they would come out from an island at dusk or at night, low, they'd come out low, and they'd be on the ship before anything could happen. They sunk two LSTs at Mindoro from another flotilla. They sank ships over in the Solomons and at a landing, there would have been hundreds and hundreds of these planes and there would have been no way to stop them. They would have plunged—now they were getting smart. They knew that what to do to plunge into the landing ships and I wouldn't be here if I had been on that Japanese landing. The estimate of us losing a million men isn't at all out of line.

So then turning to the bomb, there were two things involved here. The Japanese Army had such control that even the emperor hesitated to say anything. It was only after the second bomb that the emperor stepped forward and said to surrender. Even then the Japanese warlords did not want to surrender. What they wanted to do and were attempting to kill the ministers and that sort of thing and to continue to put pressure and there was even a die-hard group even after the surrender that wanted to continue to do things and even resist the emperor. Any attempt to capture the Japanese main islands would have been not only a slaughter of Americans and Japanese troops, but it would have been civilians too. I think there would have been just millions slaughtered and where it would have stopped, when the military would have decided that enough is enough is hard to tell. They were so fanatic. I'd have to say that I'm glad the atomic bombs were dropped. I think rather than take lives, I think they saved lives. It was a terrible thing and there is no doubt in my mind that if either Germany or Japan had come up with the bomb, they wouldn't have hesitated one minute to drop it on us.

Mark: Do you recall your thoughts at the time and the reactions of those around you? Was it a joyous type thing?

Schallert: No. We really didn't know what an atomic bomb did. All we knew was that it was a gigantic bomb. For instance, we knew about the fire raid of the B29s in something like March of that year and that killed a lot more and really tore Tokyo down. We knew that in order to get the Japanese

surrender that something would have to be done. The Japanese cities, they would have to be really beaten before there would be any surrender, because of course we'd seen it in the islands where they would have these bonzai charges and this sort of thing. We had seen the fanaticism, so we knew that it would really take something to get the military clique out of power. Just look at Iraq. I don't think for one minute that the Iranians want to fight the United States, but what can they do? They've got a dictator. If you don't fight, we'll shoot you and your wife and your children.

Mark: You were a freshly discharged young officer. Did you go back to Wisconsin? Walk me through the steps.

Schallert: When I came back, my father's store was being sold and so I went to my wife's parents and lived with them until I could go back to law school. So I was with my wife's parents for November and December of 1945 and then in January of 1946, I came up here to Madison to go into law school and was fortunate in that I was able to start in the second semester; I had had the first semester and I was able to start the second semester, so some of those courses were continued, so in a word I stepped in where I left off four years later, back to school. I got a little apartment on the east side and my wife and two children and went back to law school. And the law school was quite different because it was mostly all returning veterans and we were able to go three semesters in a row, so we went three semesters in '46 and two in '47, so I finished in a year and two-thirds instead of waiting for two and a half years. Law school was very different because almost everybody was married like I was, they were having children, and somebody would be out of class this day because their wife was having a baby and that sort of thing. The smokers from all male turned out to be family picnics. It was quite different.

Mark: As a result of the war?

Schallert: As a result of the war. And the people that you were in school with were from—say I was supposed to be a graduate of 1943, so there were people from that class, the '43 class, the '44 class, the '45. We were all mixed up after the war, depending upon when you went in the service and how many points and when you got back. So the people that I finished with in September of 1947, some of them were the guys that I started with in '41 but others were people I didn't know at all before. It was quite interesting.

Mark: In terms of academics, how did the classroom change? As a veteran, were you a different student? How did the professors react to you?

Schallert: Yes. First of all, as far as the students are concerned, we knew we'd lost four years and so nearly all of us had a wife and children so we all studied.

They was no monkey work, there was no playing around, there was no hazing, there was no activity on campus, that sort of thing. We just went to school and worked, went home and took care of the wife and kids. I worked for three months even when I came back because the restaurant where I had worked did not have experienced personnel and they asked if I'd train a crew. So I went back for three months and trained a crew and then I retired from the restaurant business. [laughs]

Mark: As far as the professors are concerned, I suspect before the war they expected a bit of deference and now all of a sudden these returning combat veterans start coming back to class; did that change the relationship between professor and student at all?

Schallert: I think so. Generally speaking, in law school the professors are harder on freshmen than they are on upperclassmen. But I distinctly remember that the professors did treat us better, partly because we were veterans I think, and maybe partly because we were upperclassmen. For one, an old irascible professor named Herbert Paige, when we were in contracts in 1941, was very sarcastic to us. But in the class I took under Herbie Paige in future interests, very congenial and in fact, he even, I asked him to repeat a joke in class that he had told that I remembered and he did with very courtesy about it. I would say that they did treat us better, I think.

Mark: In terms of financing your education, the GI Bill of course is famous. Did you use it?

Schallert: Oh yes. I was entitled to three or four years. We got ninety dollars a month. In addition to that, I went to the state and got a fifteen dollar a month grant from the state. I had to file papers and all that sort of thing and go to the Veterans Affairs and it wasn't easy to get that additional fifteen dollars, but that was a lot. Ridiculous isn't it? I had a hundred-five dollars and then, of course, our tuition and books were paid.

Mark: Through the GI Bill?

Schallert: Through the GI Bill. I always thought that the universities took advantage there. The actual registration fee was something like a hundred-fifteen dollars, we were allowed a hundred-fifty dollars and the University took the hundred-fifty dollars. I always thought there was something funny about that, but—

Mark: Gee, I can't imagine. [both laugh] As for these programs, where did you learn about them?

Schallert: Which programs?

- Mark: Like GI Bill. How did you find out about that? And then the state programs.
- Schallert: When we were discharged. I think I found about the state program, probably here at law school. Being a bunch of law students, of course, we'd find out. I suppose some law student told me about it and then I went up to the Capitol and filled out the papers and pleaded my case and finally, it took a little bit, it was granted, fifteen dollars a month.
- Mark: Did these benefits cover your expenses? Do you think you would have finished had you not had these options?
- Schallert: It would have been pretty tough. I had saved money during service. I sent almost all of my money home and I had somewhere around four thousand or forty-two hundred dollars in the bank when I got out. Of course I wanted to hold on to as much of that as I could so I could get a house or something when I got through. As a matter of fact, I did use about thirty-five hundred dollars of that. Yes, with a hundred-five dollars I didn't have to dip into savings too bad. It's amazing, but that's true. I even had an old car.
- Mark: Which back then was kind of rare. Cars were hard to get a hold of.
- Schallert: Yes, they were. You were always leery about the tires. But I lived out in Monona, that's all I could find. I found an apartment in Monona, right across from Monona Golf Course. I drove back and forth. I'd go in in the morning and drive back about 10:00 at night because I did my studying there at school.
- Mark: In terms of other benefits, as you moved on from school, the next step is to get a job and to buy a house. Did you have trouble finding employment after the war?
- Schallert: I had no trouble finding employment. I applied to Farmer's Mutual and American Family and I also applied to Hardware[?] Mutual and _____[?] Mutual. An uncle of mine who was instrumental in insurance in Illinois recommended Farmer's Mutual. He knew the founder, Mr. Witler, and he said that he's a smart man and it would be a good company, small but good. So I applied to American Family and I was hired and I took one week vacation when I got through law school and went to work for Farmer's Mutual-American Family September 29, 1947 and my entire working life after that was with American Family.
- Mark: You stuck with that. In terms of finding a house then, did you have trouble finding a place to live? Did you use any sort of veteran benefits to finance that?

Schallert: I don't think there was a veteran's finance program at that time, but I didn't use it. I don't think there was a veteran's finance program as I remember. Anyway, we decided on areas of town we wanted to live and got a real estate guy looking and found a place over on Commonwealth and we were able to put something like twenty-five hundred dollars down and the house cost us twelve thousand five hundred dollars and I was making two hundred twenty-five dollars a month when I started. My law degree was worth twenty-five dollars a month. They hired another guy at the same time. He got two hundred, I got two and a quarter because I had a law degree.

Mark: But there was no housing shortage by this time?

Schallert: I don't think so. I don't recall there was a housing shortage in 1947. I don't recall it. There was an apartment shortage.

Mark: When you were trying to get back to school. But when you got more settled, you didn't have trouble finding a place to live.

Schallert: I didn't have trouble finding a house.

Mark: Now in terms of medical and psychological readjustments—these might not apply to you at all; part of my standard questioning. You didn't suffer any combat wounds. Did you have any sort of disease problems? A lot of the guys in the South Pacific came back with malaria and that sort of thing.

Schallert: No. Probably because we were on a ship. I don't think we had anyone. Of course, we took Atabrine. We took this Atabrine and looked a little yellow maybe, but we took it daily and if you did that and took your salt tablets because you're on a ship and you're off shore and there's a little breeze and I don't think you're exposed to as much. When we first went over we had these nettings and stuff. We used them about once and then we put them away. I don't know what ever happened to them. I don't think anybody on our ship ever had malaria.

Mark: I suppose mosquitoes don't get off shore.

Schallert: They don't get off shore too much, yeah. And when we were on the beach, we were always on the beach away from the trees pretty much so we didn't have it. The other fever that people got was dengue fever and we never got that either. As far as I know, I don't remember seeing anybody on our ship with either one of those. Somebody might have had something but I didn't know about it.

- Mark: In terms of psychological or emotional adjustments, did you have any sort of problems in that regard?
- Schallert: I don't think so. I was happy to get back home. Of course, I had so much leave, I had over two months' leave, so that I still was in effect getting paid in November and December when I was at _____[?] and it was a nice place to be in. I didn't have any particular work I did. I gathered my stuff together and wrote this paper intending to update it and I haven't done it since. I did that and got my books for school and that sort of thing and then we went up to Madison. Just going back to school, it was a place that I'd been and my wife had been to school there too so we knew the area and we lived on a truck farm, really. They had strawberries and all that sort of thing and corn and so on, so it was really a nice place to be. So I guess I'd say no real problems.
- Mark: I've just got one last area and it does involve you in that involves veterans organizations and reunions. I know for a fact that you have been involved in the LST Association. I'll hold on that one for a little bit first. Did you ever join any of the major groups like the Legion or the VFW and if so when and why?
- Schallert: No, I didn't. I might have joined the VFW because Jimmy Van Zant, a congressman from Pennsylvania and later the commander of the national VFW, was on our ship, first as a captain and as a group commander. **[End of Tape 1, Side 2]** A real nice fellow all the way around. Nice man, never threw his weight around or anything. He encouraged us to belong to the VFW and in my hometown of Sullivan the American Legion had a post. I really didn't feel I wanted to belong to either one and never did join either one of those organizations. Then there was another one, AMVETS. I didn't join that either.
- Mark: These were actually on campus. When you were in school, were you aware of them even?
- Schallert: Oh, I might have been aware of them, but you know, too busy going to school. I'm back, wife and two children, I know that I've got to study and law school is hard. Some of the materials, a case will take you an hour to study and brief and you always have at least four courses, sometimes five courses. It's intense study and you haven't got time to belong to anything else. I did belong and revived a speech society called Hesperia. I was one of the ones that revived that, but that was about the only thing, and that met about once a month. Other than that, I stayed away from organizations pretty much and just didn't participate in that sort of thing.
- Mark: Until the LST Association came along.

- Schallert: Yes.
- Mark: Describe how you got involved in that.
- Schallert: I found out about this here in Wisconsin and saw some of the materials they were putting out and the stories and I saw what a fine job they were doing, both the local Wisconsin Association and the national. They've done about the best job of presenting things about the amphibious force that I've ever seen and my hat is off to the editor of that national. The last issue was just tremendous. They get the funny things and they get the tragic things and they tell the story. For example, I saw these LSTs with torpedoes. Well, the stories of those LSTs is in these magazines, so it adds to my knowledge of the theater. That's kind of nostalgia, I guess. Like I belong to Wisconsin Historical Society too. Have for years.
- Mark: When did you start getting involved in these groups?
- Schallert: About five years ago.
- Mark: Quite recently.
- Schallert: Quite recently, yeah. I don't know, either I didn't know about them or else I didn't have any interest because I didn't know what they did. But when I saw the written materials they put out, then I got interested. One of my majors in college was history and I'm very interested in history.
- Mark: How active would you characterize yourself? Do you go to a lot of meetings?
- Schallert: No, no. I'm just a member, probably attend one meeting a year, like they just had the annual Wisconsin meeting. I've never attended the national meeting and may not. If it's held in Chicago sometime I might go. A lot of these meetings they have a lot of recreational things and that isn't really what I'm interested in. I can recreate on my own. [laughs]
- Mark: That's my line of questioning. Is there anything you'd like to add? Anything you think we've glossed over?
- Schallert: I think that the war museums like ours and other museums and books have really not given the amphibious force the credit it deserves. The landings in Europe, the landings that were made over the Pacific could not have been done without LSTs. Without a large ship that was able to carry heavy equipment and put it on a beach fast, there's no way those landings could have been done. The old-fashioned way of taking things with derricks from ships and lowering them into boats and the boats go in is too slow, never could have been done, and the many things that the LSTs were

turned into like hospital ships and repair ships and this sort of thing. Just anything, they could do anything. And it turned out that we carried personnel. We carried ourselves as many as nine hundred troops at one time. No other ship could get up on a beach and land and put that many troops on shore. And those troops were—when they landed, within twenty minutes they were off the ship, and as we got more and more efficient, the bulldozers would pull out like this and those things would just go out of there “rrrrr” and away they’d go. In fact, at Lingayen, the big landing at Lingayen, the vehicles went off and were gone so fast that any pictures we got only showed dust. It would have been impossible to do as many things as were done. They’re not glamorous, they’re not pretty, but even today when there is a landing, like if they’d have had to go into Haiti you know, it would have had to have been by the LSTs, the new big modern ones.

Mark: Well, I hope we created a source material document here that some historian will use some day to give the LSTs their due. Thanks for coming in. I absolutely appreciate it.

Schallert: You’re very welcome.

[End of Interview]