

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
DONALD SCHNEIDER
Ranger, U.S. Army, Korean War
2015

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1965

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1965

Schneider, Donald., (b.1930). Oral History Interview, 2015.

Approximate length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

Donald Schneider discusses his family life, being drafted and deploying to Korea with the 25th Division 27th Regiment Headquarters Company in 1951, as well as returning home. Schneider recalls his childhood growing up during the Great Depression and World War II. He outlines being drafted in 1951 and training to be a Ranger at Fort Indian Down Gap (Pennsylvania). He describes his deployment to Japan and then Korea, including a brief training at radio school in Etajima. Schneider details living in foxholes, communication, and the loss of many comrades. He mentions his involvement in several battles: Heartbreak Ridge, White Horse Mountain, and Pork Chop. Schneider discusses how he was received upon returning to the United States and the trouble he had being discharged. He recounts some of the nightmares he has had because of his combat in Korea and talks about how the service has affected his life.

Biographical Sketch:

Donald Schneider (b.1930) was drafted into the Army in 1951 and served with the 25th Division 27th Regiment Headquarters Company during the Korean War. Schneider participated in battles such as Heartbreak Ridge, White Horse, and Pork Chop before returning home in 1953.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2015.

Transcribed by Ilene Roizman, Audio Transcription Center, 2015.

Reviewed by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Abstract written by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Interview Transcript:

[Tape 1]

Brooks: Today is Wednesday, March 11, 2015. This is an interview with Donald Schneider. Do you want me to call you Don?

Schneider: Don, yeah. I never went with Donald until I got retired, and all of a sudden I had to start writing Donald, and it wasn't me.

Brooks: It's very formal. So we'll go with Don.

Schneider: Okay, yeah.

Brooks: And Don served with the Army in the 25th Division, 27th Regiment, Headquarters Company, during the Korean War, 1951 to 1953. The interview is being conducted in the home of his friend Joanne Mortimer in Chilton, Wisconsin. The interviewer is Ellen Brooks, and the interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program. So, if we'll just start at the beginning, you can tell me when and where you were born.

Schneider: I was born in Rockville, that's east of Kiel. That was back in 1930. August 26, 1930, I was born.

Brooks: Can you tell me a little bit about growing up in Rockwell [sic]?

Schneider: I didn't grow up there. My dad lost the farm in the Depression, and they moved us over—my grandma raised me, and she was a real Indian, so I learned to live off the land. So I can still live off the land where I live now, out in the boondocks. I live east of Kiel, and that's all God's country out there. I don't know what else I can say about that, except that I learned to live off the land.

Brooks: What did your parents do while you were growing up?

Schneider: My dad-- never saw him. He used to work at a gravel pit and he stayed there with the people. He got 50 cents a day for shoveling gravel all day, because nobody had any money. So I rarely saw him, when I got to see him. My grandma ruled the roost out there. She was, I don't know, she was different. She laid the law down. Everybody was scared of her. But she could climb up the silo or climb up a tree. I'd go in the house when she climbed up the silo and called us home from the field. My mother worked on a farm just like an ordinary farmer, so she could milk cows. There was no electricity on the farm till I was a junior in high school, and

that's when the electric light first went through there. That was back in '46, 1947, when we first got electricity. And that was really different then. Other than that, I just grew up like any other kid. We walked to school; it was three and seven-tenths miles.

Brooks: Did you have any siblings?

Schneider: Sure. My sister was older, and I've got two brothers left who are 20 years younger than I am, so I never grew up with them. And I was in service when they were born. My sister's older; she's a year older than I am. She's an old lady by now.

Brooks: Can you tell me what you remember about World War II?

Schneider: Sure. Everything was rationed, you know. My dad couldn't have a car—well, he had a car, but we didn't have any gas that he could drive anywheres, because you couldn't get gasoline except for unless you worked in—well, unless you worked in Manitowoc shipyard, then you could get gasoline and you had to carpool to drive over there. He—I remember he had an old '28 Chevy, and they took that away during the Depression when he lost the farm. They took everything out of there except the kitchen table. I had to have an operation, and they put me on the kitchen table, and that's one thing they didn't take out of the house, otherwise they took everything that was worth something. I don't know where they ever went with it, but I remember Crystal's truck that came and picked up everything that was in the house that was worth something, and they left a couple of beds. I remember sleeping on the floor. But other than that—I was used to that. See, I was in the Rangers in the service, and I was used to living rough and tough. So it didn't bother me any. I didn't like it, but I made it.

Brooks: And you grew up not speaking English?

Schneider: No, when I went to school I didn't—I never even heard English. My dad and my uncle Fritz always went to mass at Sundays in St. [inaudible], and that was Latin, and the mass was all in Latin. I never heard English being spoken until I got to school, and I didn't know what the nun said. So she knocked my front tooth out. When I took a drink out of the bubbler and I didn't know what she said, so she hit me over the head and knocked my front tooth out when it broke when I hit the bubbler. I learned in a hurry.

Brooks: And what did you speak at home?

Schneider: German. I never heard English being spoken until I went to school. I learned the hard way, so that's how I—.

Brooks: Was that difficult at all, coming from a German background during World War II? Was there any negative feeling towards you and your family?

Schneider: Oh yeah. We had to watch out what you said. And this guy that lived next to us, they picked him up because he was a ham radio operator, and they picked him up and I never saw him again. The FBI come and got him, or I guess the United States Government, and he just disappeared, I don't know. I don't know if they shot him or they just locked him up, but I never saw him back again.

Brooks: And he was German as well?

Schneider: Yeah. He had a ham radio operator. I have pictures at home—my cousins in Germany sent me pictures that they painted stuff, and my mother always used to write back and forth. My mother could read German and speak German, so she was in good shape with the people over across pond. Just different.

Brooks: Do you remember what your reaction was when you found out that the war was over, World War II?

Schneider: It was just another day. I mean, we didn't celebrate. We didn't have a radio and stuff like that. We had the Sheboygan Press, was the newspaper that we got, and my grandma paid for that, and that was the only thing that I—I don't know, I don't remember the war being over, really. But anyway, it was just another day. Just like birthdays. We didn't celebrate birthdays until I came out here, over here, and that's seven, eight years ago. Seven years ago. See, my kids and her kids used to exchange places because I worked with her husband before he died, what was that, 17, 18 years ago, something like that.

Mortimer: Forty-five.

Schneider: Forty-five years ago? Not since Tom is gone, though.

Mortimer: No, but when our kids went back and forth.

Schneider: Oh yeah, yeah.

Brooks: And so did you make it all the way through high school?

Schneider: Yes, yes, I did.

Brooks: And what did you do after high school?

Schneider: I went and—I worked at Hart Carter. We made the Sport King outboard

motor, and I was only there a little while, and Uncle Sam drafted me. So I went in the service. My dad had kicked me out of the house because he—I switched—see, there was—it wasn't anything written, but if your dad worked at the production factor in Kiel, you went down there the day after high school and you had a job, so you didn't have to put out an application, you just went there and told them who you were and that your dad worked there, and they put you to work. And so I quit there and I went to New Holstein, and my dad was so irate about me quitting there that he showed me the door. I lived in my car for two years, then I went in the service. I never went—well, I went home once in a while, take my clothes home and get washed. But the City Hall was never locked in Kiel, and we could take a shower, and slept in the jail where the bums slept, and stuff like that. So we lived and so, and I used to—I'd eat once a day then, too, which I still do, so I'm never hungry.

Brooks: And how did you feel about being drafted?

Schneider: It didn't bother me. I mean, I had three meals a day, I had a place to sleep at night, didn't have to sleep in my car. So it was all right. And then I—another guy by the name of Stahlers [sp?], he was from West [inaudible] Virginia, and we were just a bunch of rabble-rousers in the service. So they put us in the Rangers.

Brooks: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about—well, you weren't recruited, because you were drafted, but kind of what was the first thing that happened in your induction and that type of stuff?

Schneider: Well, they put us on a bus and we went to Manitowoc, and they took us on a bus down to Milwaukee, from Milwaukee put us on another bus and took us to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. And then we got our clothes and our rifle and ammunition, sent us to Indian Down Gap, and I took Ranger training out there.

Brooks: So is Ranger training, is that different than basic training, or did they roll it all together?

Schneider: It was kind of together like, you know. But one part of the group went to Germany and the other part went to Korea. And nobody ever heard of Korea. Nobody knew where that was. So we didn't know where we were going. Except we trained in the mountains there, and it was training just like Korea, in the hills.

Brooks: So during training, you didn't know where you would be sent or what your—

Schneider: I knew I was going to Korea, but that's all we knew. And nobody knew

where Korea was, because you couldn't find it on the map years ago. So it was different. Because a couple of years ago in the geography books, French Indochina was Vietnam, and Indochina, I think it was something like—it was something to do with China. But we didn't know where Korea was.

Brooks: So when did you go for training? Do you remember what month?

Schneider: Sure. August.

Brooks: August of '51?

Schneider: August '51, yeah.

Brooks: So the war had already started over there, so you had—.

Schneider: Oh yeah. It started in '50.

Brooks: But you weren't sure about what was going on there, what your job was going to be.

Schneider: No, we didn't know. Except we were training for infantry, that's all. I was ready to shoot, and put my bayonet on my rifle and go. And they needed us real bad, so they flew us over in an airplane. So we landed at Hawaii to refuel, and we landed at Wake Island to refuel, and it took us 36 hours of flying time, sat on a bench. We were young—we were rough and tough.

Brooks: And you said that you had a friend there who was also getting into trouble with you often?

Schneider: Yeah, right.

Brooks: What was that like?

Schneider: Well, in case they say to the drill sergeant—we go 17 miles over the mountains, and the drill sergeant would say, "I'll race you guys—whoever wants to run back, I'll race you guys back." So we always beat him. So we could run 5, 10 miles and that never bothered me. And this other guy, he was just as wild as I was. So we get back and turned out he'd—when he finally got back with the rest of the outfit, we asked him if he took a break or something, because we were always waiting for him when we got back to headquarters. So they put us in the Rangers then, because we were tougher than most of the guys.

Brooks: Can you explain a little bit how the Rangers are different? What does that mean?

Schneider: Well, the training is a little different. You go over ladder ropes, climbing and stuff. We didn't have helicopters then yet, so just jump out of an airplane. Well, they start you out slow, and you jump two feet first, and it's just like a baby training, you know. And you've got to learn to roll when you jump. Then the next week they put you up to three feet, to four feet, and then afterwards you can jump off of twelve feet, that's about—you're coming down at that time, you come down at twenty-two miles an hour, that's for your parachute. So that's equivalent to jumping off someplace at twelve feet up. And you could do that real easy. I don't think I could do it now anymore, but I could try it yet.

Brooks: So it sounds like you were pretty physically fit when you were drafted.

Schneider: Oh yeah.

Brooks: Was there anything else about training that was hard for you? Anything about the military life?

Schneider: Nothing was hard for me in basic, no.

Brooks: Nothing difficult to adjust to or anything?

Schneider: No. I was always on top. It was different, so I was—I could run seventeen miles, it wouldn't even bother me. I could run with seventy pounds on my back. See, we'd put stones in our backpack, because that's what you carry when you jumped out of an airplane.

Brooks: How long was training? How long did that last?

Schneider: I didn't finish my training, because they sent us over—I was flying over around Christmastime in '51.

Brooks: And what was that flight like over to Hawaii and then Wake Island? What was—

Schneider: Well, you got kind of sore because you were sitting there all the while. What are we going to do, from here to the window, other guys are sitting on the other side of the plane, and we were all ready to go. We had our ammunition and rifle and helmet, and we were ready to go. When I got to Japan and they sent me—my orders were changed and they sent me to radio school. So I learned—I didn't finish that either, because they needed us over in Korea, and we went over there.

Brooks: So you did radio school in Japan?

Schneider: Yeah, right, I was in Japan for, let's see, two months, something like that. Supposed to be a four-month course and I never finished because they needed us over in Korea.

Brooks: Do you know why they assigned you to radio school?

Schneider: No, no. I just—just three or four guys that went to radio school. Some went to lineman school, you know, stringing wires. So our whole planeload got split up. One night they said, "Okay, you're going to Korea in the morning," so we got drunk that night and we loaded up the next morning, with a headache and all, and loaded up our landing craft, and they took us over to Korea.

Brooks: What did you think of Japan?

Schneider: Stunk.

Brooks: Yeah?

Schneider: Yeah. Stinks. Fertilize everything with human waste, just like Korea. It was—it's a smell that gets in your clothes, and everybody gets used to it. In those days I could smell yet, now I can't smell. It was different. And the water was cold when you got off the landing craft. You know, when the gangplank goes down, when you hit a sandbar or whatever, and the guys pile out and [inaudible], and the water was kind of deep there, and it was cold water.

Brooks: Where did you stay in Japan?

Schneider: Where did I stay? It was called Etajima, it was a radio where Hirohito and his white horse were there, and it was an island off of Hiroshima. It was a Japanese naval academy is where it was, and that's where officers in the Japanese Navy trained, and they had guns and everything there, and we trained right there. Well, we always had calisthenics and stuff like that to keep us in shape. I could do whatever they wanted me to do. And we'd sneak out once in a while, took oranges and stuff off the trees, go up the mountains and stuff on the weekends, because there was nothing to do on the weekends. And we knew we were going to Korea, so nobody'd give a shit about nothing, you know. Didn't pay to have anything, because you couldn't take it along anyway. Had a pair of field glasses that I didn't bring them along home, but other than that I didn't bring nothing home except two guns that I smuggled home, and they're Russian make. The one gun I think is here yet. I can get it out afterwards so I can show you.

Brooks: Sure.

Schneider: She always hides it, because that way I won't shoot myself. Yeah, well, that's one of those things that you don't know what's going to happen.

Brooks: What did you think about radio school?

Schneider: I didn't like it. I couldn't keep my mind on it, no. See, I was going to get married, and my folks and Priscilla's folks wouldn't sign for us, and I was too young to do my thing, and so was she, so I had her on my mind instead of concentrating on radio school. And there we learned the dit-dot, you know.

Brooks: The Morse code?

Schneider: Morse code, yeah. When I got to Korea, they didn't have any radios like that. So we had one radio and a three-quarter [inaudible] but we didn't use it that much because you couldn't send out, because it didn't carry over the mountains. Them hills are so damn steep over there. But anyway.

Brooks: So tell me more about Priscilla. When did you meet her?

Schneider: I met her when I worked at Hart Carter. She used to come out to the office, and Hart Carter, the foundry was on the other side of the building and there was a street across there. She'd come walking through the building, and I had—see, I was a bad—well, I wasn't really bad, but I had a—she'd come walking down the aisle with a bunch of papers that she had to take to the foundry, and once in a while she'd come walking through, and I had a string on a ball, it was a rubber ball, it wouldn't hurt her anyway, and she'd come walking down past my machine and I'd whip that ball out there. It wouldn't have hit her anyway, because it had a string tied on it. And she'd drop her papers and she'd jump and—I'd have to pick up her papers, and I asked her for a date, and she was going out with, I don't know, a bunch of other guys. She said, "Pick me up after the Red Owl on Friday night." She worked at the Red Owl on weekends, and the Red Owl was just about half a block from where she lived. So I got to—I only took her out for six, seven months, when I leave for service. But I couldn't get married because I wasn't old enough. She made wedding arrangements before I got home. I was supposed to be a civilian in March of '53, and in June of '53 I still fired my rifle yet. So I got home just in time to get married. I didn't know if my suit would fit or what. I could've gotten married in my Army uniform.

Brooks: Were you able to keep in touch while you were in training and then when you got over to Japan and Korea?

Schneider: Well, yeah, but it would take two and a half weeks for a letter to get back. Send a letter home and you couldn't really say where you were, because

most of the time we didn't know where we were anyway. But she wrote me every day, and some of my letters, what I wrote back, are all in here, plus the envelopes. I'd send them home and she --what I wrote home--my mother saved them, except in, I think from January '53 till I got home, never found the letters, I don't know whatever happened to them. It was all bullshit anyway, because what were you going to write? You couldn't write, Okay, last night I went on patrol and there was only three of us or four of us came back. You couldn't write stuff like that home, because then they'd worry at home too. I remember one time I got fifty-two letters at one time because the mail didn't catch up to you all the time, when I went from Japan to Korea. They put us in different places, we waited for the mail, and it didn't always come through. And the mail guys, a lot of them got killed when they were bringing the mail up to the foxholes. See, there's no tents over a foxhole, you just live outside. So we ate outside, we did everything outside.

Brooks: What did people from back home write to you?

Schneider: Oh, their problems.

Brooks: Yeah?

Schneider: Yeah. Sure. This one died, or that one died, or we went to a funeral. My dad didn't care, so he never was too much interested, as far as I know. So I stopped home before I left and told him I was going in the Army, so that was it. My mother used to write. My girl, my Priscilla wrote every day. She wrote me a letter every day.

Brooks: What did she usually say in her letters?

Schneider: Well, just one sheet of paper, and there was lipstick on it and it smelled good, and that was it. She was talking about making wedding plans and stuff, said I don't know if I'll be home in time for my wedding, but I made it, I just made it.

Brooks: So when did you get sent over to Korea?

Schneider: Over in—I left Indian Down_Gap, I think November. November of '51. From then I went over there.

Brooks: And who did you end up getting shipped over there with? Were you with a company or just a couple of guys?

Schneider: Well, it was three or four guys that I knew from Kiel, from the outfit there, but we got separated. My buddy Mel Wester, he was from Belgium, Wisconsin. I don't know if you know where that is. He's got a marker on

the cemetery too, his body—he got a direct hit from artillery round. They never found anything from him either. [inaudible] went over there, Bill Paulus from Manitowoc, he was over there with me. He went to clerk typing school, and I never saw him again after his school, after that either. And [inaudible], he was in 35th, which was attached to the 5th Division. Yeah, Bill Paulus, that was the only guy I knew over there. And the guy that I was, ended up in MASH hospital once when I first got over there, and they picked up the stretchers, and he was a stretcher bearer and helped me into the MASH hospital, was from Kiel. He's still living yet, but he says he doesn't remember me being over there. So that's—you know, and he picked up guys all the time there, it was like an 80 field of stretchers were laying all over. It isn't like you see on "M*A*S*H" on the TV. I mean, sure, the doctors joke around. I asked him what he was doing there, he said he was patching us up and sending us back up front. They couldn't take me back in the ambulance, because the Chinese blew up the ambulance. The Chinese didn't have any regard for Red Cross or anything.

Brooks: So when you left Japan, this was in the spring, maybe, of '52, about then, did you go over there with—over to Korea with a company, or just by yourself?

Schneider: Just ordinary guys and we just got orders, guys from all over, so I didn't know anybody that was on the landing barge.

Brooks: So you're just replacing folks?

Schneider: Yeah, guys that got killed or whatever, that was our main objective—to get off the landing craft.

Brooks: Do you remember the first places you landed when you were in Korea?

Schneider: Sure. I landed at Pusan that was the southernmost port. We were on a landing craft, and when the gangplank went down we went ashore, and then we got on a train, and the guerrillas down there, they shot out the windows on the train and stuff, and we got our first taste of combat right then and there. And then we moved up front, up north, always north, north, north. We just ended up and got in the—before I got to my outfit, I got my leg banged up and ended up in MASH hospital, and it was about a week later I first ended up at 27th Regiment, because I had to heal up a little bit first.

Brooks: What happened to your leg?

Schneider: A mortar round came in, blew out the truck ahead of us, and all those guys that went to radio school, some of them guys were in the truck, they all got killed. You got numb after a while, because guys that you knew got killed.

Just one of those things. There was only two of us came home that were in my outfit that I went home with, and he was a survivor just like me. I went out to see him about 10 years ago. He lived out in Wichita, Kansas, and I went out to see him, and he had gotten a stroke and all he could remember from the Korean War was the land mines, you know, you walk on mines and stuff and they blow up. It was rough going. He was the only guy in my squad that came home; the rest of them all got killed. There were some good buddies, but—one of my buddies' markers I found out in Ogden, Utah. Went out to see him, to see his gravesite, just like Melvin Westers in Belgium. There's no body there either, it's just one of those things. He was taking—he always took out the mines for us when we found one, and this one was a double tank mine; he was taking the mine off, and he lifted up the first one and the second one blew up too, and that was it. Double tank mine. And a tank mine blew up a lot of stuff. There was nothing left of him.

Brooks: How did he take out the mines?

Schneider: Dug 'em out. He had a way of disconnecting them. So it was a double tank mine, and he had the first one—he had the first, he lifted out the first one, when he lifted out the second one, he didn't know it was underneath there and it just blew him apart. The tank mine blew would blow this building—like a building like this, would blow it apart. The tank mine has pretty powerful stuff. And we'd walked over that maybe one hundred times already and it never went off, because you needed so much weight to set off a tank mine. So it just blew him apart. Then the government said that he stepped on a mine. That's not what I heard, and I was there. But that's the word that—see, they send a casket home, but there was no body in it, and his folks weren't allowed to open it, so they buried a casket in Ogden, Utah, and I went to see the gravesite. What else can you do? Then them other guys put them in a body bag and don't have time to—you know, you get numb after a while. You just go along with the current.

Brooks: Besides kind of being numb, did you have any other kind of coping mechanisms or anything that kind of kept you going during the difficult times?

Schneider: Well, every day was difficult because you never knew if you were going to be alive by the time night came along. I was itching to go home. For fourteen months I wanted to go home. So did everybody else. Nobody wanted to be there.

Brooks: Did you have a sense of why you were there and what you were fighting for?

Schneider: No. We just—we were there, and we didn't know what we were fighting

for, because most of the stuff that we took, that we took away from the Chinese; we had to give it back to them a lot. It was senseless. That's why they named Heartbreak Ridge Heartbreak Ridge, because it took us a month to get it. I remember it was 1,051 guys that got killed taking it. And we had to give it back to the Chinese because it was the high ground, and then Pork Chop Hill and Sandbag Castle, a couple of other hills, part of the hills were across the 38th Parallel, and some big mucker said we were across the 38th, which we were, but we had to give it back. So they called it Heartbreak because all the guys that got killed and over two thousand got wounded just taking the hill. It's one of those things. It was a stupid, stupid war. We weren't out there to win, let's put it that way. We weren't there to win. We were just there.

Brooks: While you're there, you're infantry; you're a rifleman, right?

Schneider: Yeah.

Brooks: And so how did you usually go into combat? Did you usually go with a company, or—

Schneider: Well, we had patrols, You know, like a patrol is maybe 12 people, maybe a squad. We'd go out there and we had Captain Louis Millet, he was good. He got the Medal of Honor. But anyway, we used to follow him, it was the [inaudible] Company in the 25th Regiment. We used to go with him. We used to go out on patrol and stuff, 12 guys or so. Most of the time—a lot of the times they'd have—we'd have to call in for reinforcements or backup, because we were always outnumbered. There wasn't a time that we weren't outnumbered, because there were always five hundred, six hundred Chinese. What are you going to do with twelve guys, you know? Just go along with it, you know, somebody isn't going to come back. So we carried stretchers with us, put them in our ponchos, tied a knot in the corner, to cart our wounded back. It was rough going, because you never knew if it was going to be you or not.

Brooks: And when you weren't on patrols, did you have like a base camp? Or you said something about trenches, right?

Schneider: Well, yeah, we slept wherever we—dig a hole someplace and crawl in, stay there until it was time to go again. And if there was snow outside, then you covered your buddy up, you rolled up in a poncho and covered him up, and two or three hours you had to get up and pull guard duty and stuff. Somebody had to be awake all the time. It was, yeah, it was rough going, but we made it.

Brooks: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I've heard it was cold.

Schneider: Yeah, thirty or forty below, fifty below. I slept outside in fifty below weather, and now I'm always cold. I'm even cold in the house right now. It was cold. It was mighty cold. It was really cold. And you couldn't have any water in your canteen, because it would bust apart. So a lot of times you went pretty dry. We drank—well, in summer we used to drink out of the rice paddies and stuff. We had halazone tablets—everybody carried halazone tablets that you—well, you could urinate, too, in your canteen cup and put it halazone tablets and let it sit for half an hour, then you could drink that. So you survived that way.

Brooks: What about food?

Schneider: Food, we always had C-rations. They were from '46 and '48, and it was old stuff, but it was something to eat, because you get hungry once in a while, you know. And they tried getting us—when we first got there, they tried—we had good cooks, but so many got killed taking these canisters up to the guys on the front that they cut that out, and you just passed out C-rations, so that's what we lived on mostly. And then every, about every three weeks they tried to get us back into what we called a reserve outfit for a rest and shower and stuff. One time we didn't get to a rest area for six months, no, six weeks. Yeah, six weeks it was. And we didn't have a shower for six weeks. If [inaudible] there was no water, you know, you can't, and when it's that cold out, you can't wash your clothes either. Used to wash them in gasoline once in a while. But you had to watch out you didn't smoke a cigar or something out there, you'd blow yourself apart. It was all dangerous stuff, but we made it. I wasn't a hero, I was a survivor. Me and two other guys—one other guy came home with me out of my squad.

Brooks: What do you think made you a survivor?

Schneider: The man upstairs. I did a lot of praying. I still pray for people nowadays yet. But anyway, no, I know it's the man upstairs. He took good care of me. I think of that so often. One guy, he was going home—well, we were all a bunch of kids, you know. The oldest guy in the outfit was the company commander, and he was twenty-six. He headed the whole company. And the rest, we were all just all kids. Yeah, the guy upstairs took good care of me. I never was lost over there. I still can't get over that I never—we'd go out on patrol, I never had to be lead man, because I always got the patrol back all the time, and it was the man upstairs that was looking out for me.

Brooks: What did you do in your, I guess, your free time, your downtime?

Schneider: We didn't have any downtime.

Brooks: No downtime?

Schneider: No.

Brooks: Just either sleeping or patrolling?

Schneider: Yeah.

Brooks: Or eating?

Schneider: Eating, yeah. Or trying to write a letter, you know, when you were in reserve area, and you could catch up on your stuff. That's where my duffel bag was, out in the reserve area, and they'd move that around. But the reserve area was always about a mile in back of artillery, and artillery was about 15 miles in back of the line. When you're sitting in water up to your neck or up to your waist, it's pretty hard to keep the paper dry and write a letter. And the first thing that people would write to you, "Well, why didn't you write?" Well, how are you going to write? Our ballpoints were frozen, and you couldn't write with that, and so you had to use a pencil, and how are you going to write on something when you don't even have a piece of paper that's dry? And it's raining like a bitch. How are you going to—you just couldn't explain that to people. We checked it one time; we got eight inches of rain in one hour once. See, they got the monsoons over there too, and when it rained, it rained. The water was coming down in amounts like you wouldn't believe.

Brooks: Less than ideal sounds like.

Schneider: Yeah, right.

Brooks: To put it one way. So were you—you mentioned a couple of different of the bigger battles, the Heartbreak Ridge and Pork Chop. Were you part of those?

Schneider: Yeah.

Brooks: Can you tell me a little bit more about those experiences?

Schneider: Well, Heartbreak Ridge was a bitch, because it was—this other one attached to it was, what was the name of that? White Horse Mountain was there too, and Pork Chop. You'd go up two feet and you slide back three. Then you'd try it again, and the Chinese were dropping mortars and hand grenades and stuff at you all the time. You look over and your buddy's still shooting at them. You look over again, and there's nobody there. Round came in and just took them out. That's the way it was. Survive, survive, survive, that was the name of the game. Survive.

Brooks: Did you have any close calls?

Schneider: Oh yeah. A lot of them. I had a dent in my helmet. Then it rang for about a week, when you get your bell rung. We couldn't get any beer, but we got three cans one month once. And I went on R-and-R in Japan, and we sat in the bathtub, a wooden bathtub, me and another guy, and we sat across from each other, and this mama-san old lady would come along and pour hot water on this wooden tub, and she dipped some water out again, pour some more. We sat in there for a whole day, just drank beer. Had a case of beer sitting by me, and he had a case of beer sitting by him. The only time we got out was to take a leak. The rest of the time we just sat in the tub. Boy that was something. Sitting in the tub, you don't have a bath for six weeks or, you know, a long time, sit in the tub and just soak, skin almost shriveled up on us. But it was good, you know.

Brooks: How long were you on R-and-R for then?

Schneider: Three days. Then we had to get back again. What we did, we could buy booze, a bottle of booze from the Canadian PX over there, and it was Canadian Club, it tasted like rotgut, you know, but oh, man, guys would get sick on it. I had a guy that—my tunnel rat, he'd go into tunnels and stuff, he got killed too. But anyway, he was over there and I said "how am I going to get the bottles of booze over to Korea from Japan?" He says, "Give me a week, I'll let you know." About a week later he come around there and he said, he showed me how to put like slings in—we had these big parkas, you know, and he showed me how to sew shoelaces inside the parka, and I had ten bottles of booze in my parka and [inaudible] everybody that was there, and we could sell it for \$100 a bottle over in Korea. So anyway, I think I had ten bottles sewn in my parka, and the plane, when we got on the plane afterwards to take off, the plane wouldn't take off. We knew that already, because everybody was so loaded down with booze and stuff. We had our rifles and full field pack, and four times he tried it, and the last time he made it, and I thought them engines were gonna come out of that plane. We had a two-engine job, and boy oh boy, he fired them up like you wouldn't believe. That plane just shuddered when he—he held the brakes as long as he could, then he let go, and boy, that thing shot and he hit the barricades yet on the end of the runway. So we were in the air. I didn't think we were going to make it off the field.

Brooks: So did you sell most of those, then, when you got over there?

Schneider: Sure, yeah. Well, some we drank, too. Because we couldn't get any booze or any—you'd be surprised, you only need a shot or two when you don't have anything for six months or whatever, then you get this powerful stuff and you're drunk right away. It was all right.

Brooks: Did you ever—while you were over there, did you interact with any Korean people, any civilians?

Schneider: No, we saw very few civilians, except on the road once in a while. The Chinese would be showing them their own people on the roads, and the only refugees we saw were the people going south, they were carrying whatever they could carry. I felt sorry for them kids; they were walking barefoot, and maybe carrying their little brother or little sister or whatever. And you could only give them so much, you know. And their feet were frozen, and people they just, I don't know how they even survived. I felt sorry for them, but you couldn't do nothing for them, because there was—it was helpless, helpless, hopeless, boy, I'll tell you.

Brooks: And what did you think about Korea in general? You said it smelled like Japan, did you say?

Schneider: It really stunk. They fertilize everything with human waste. You had people that carried the waste out all day long that was their job. They had what we called [inaudible] buckets, and they'd carry them, they had one on each end, they had a long stick, and they'd balance them and take them up to the top of the mountains or hills and pour it off and come back and get another load. Part of their living, that's all they did.

Brooks: Any other impressions of the country?

Schneider: It was all hills and rocks and rice paddies. One rice paddy was up on top of the other one, and as the water—as it rained, the water would run over one and down into the other one and down, until it got down to the bottom. There was—most of the trails up the rice paddies were mined and stuff. Took many a drink out of the rice paddy. You got to get down in there too.

Brooks: So when did you, if ever, did you get the impression that the war was kind of winding down?

Schneider: Well, we were figuring that every day, because of the truce talks, but you couldn't communicate with them buggers. So every day we'd see them guys would get up to Panmunjom once in a while, and it was just a hopeless case, because you knew, okay, some of them guys, the officers, were going there, five minutes later they come back out and drive back again. I don't know where they went to.

Brooks: So you knew they were talking, but you didn't know—.

Schneider: We didn't know what they were talking about. It was just two years of my

life just—well, it wasn't just wasted, but felt sorry for the people, the civilians over there, and what were you gonna do?

Brooks: So when did you get the word that you were going to get sent home?

Schneider: Two days before I left.

Brooks: And what point was the war in at that point?

Schneider: It was still going on yet, yeah. I was still fighting till the day I got married, or the day after, I don't know which. But it was the 27th of August, I think. No, July. I got home just in time to get married. Me and this one survivor, there were only two of us left in our squad, but anyway, the original squad, but anyhow, we sat in a cave and played checkers for two days, and we were in reserve area, and we just got out of the punchbowl, and it was west someplace. We sat in there for two days, and one of the guys brought us chow and stuff. Only time we got out was to take a leak. Other than that, we just sat there.

Brooks: And that was after you found out you were being sent back?

Schneider: Yeah.

Brooks: And how did you find out? How did you get that message?

Schneider: We had a different company commander, and he said we were way overdue, we were three months overdue already, we should have been civilians already, and we were still over there. There was another thing; I first got my discharge—hey, Joanne? When did I get my discharge? Was it last year or two years ago?

Mortimer: I think it was 3 years ago.

Schneider: Three years ago? Oh, 2011, yeah, finally got discharged.

Brooks: Officially?

Schneider: Officially, yeah. Because they didn't—this company commander sent us home with a piece of paper, and we got to Camp Carson, Colorado, and they wouldn't send us home, they wouldn't give us anything. So we just kept bugging them, and they finally sent us, they give me \$100 and a train ticket to Chicago, and that's how I got home. I checked everything, I didn't have this DD-214 form, I didn't have that. And then I finally got one, and that one was, well, it had my signature on it but it wasn't true either. Then he said I should go out to St. Louis and go out there because the records are out there. So I drove out to St. Louis, and what was that,

Joanne? They didn't have any records either, right?

Brooks: The fire.

Schneider: Yeah, and then they blamed something on the fire, and then they said they've got the paperwork up on the fifth floor, wasn't it? Fifth floor, yeah, something like that. Anyway, I said, "Okay, I'll go up to the fifth floor and see if I can get some paperwork." And she said, and the guy says, "Well, yeah, but you can't go in there because civilians aren't allowed up there." So I come back from St. Louis and we didn't have nothing, right? It was all right. Then finally a lady from Chilton sent a letter to the president of the United States, a registered letter, and I finally got discharged. It was about three years ago, 2011, something like that.

Brooks: So, when you were drafted, were you drafted for a certain amount of time then? Was it a certain number of months?

Schneider: No, no, I was just drafted for the duration, it said. And it was from my neighbors and friends, and I had a lot of friends then, you know.

Brooks: But the company commander said your time was up. It had been too long, even.

Schneider: Yeah, right. We were supposed to be civilians already, and so was this other guy, and he didn't have any paperwork either. The people at Camp Carson, Colorado, where we ended up, they wouldn't process us because we didn't have any paperwork, so they just gave me \$100 and sent me home.

Brooks: What was your reaction when they told you you were leaving in two days?

Schneider: Well, I threw my helmet up in the air and said the hell with it, they ain't gonna get me out on patrol anymore. So I didn't. Me and this other guy, we sat in a cave for two days, played checkers. Wasn't a good checkerboard, it was a piece of cardboard and it was about as big as that. So it was something. We weren't going to go out there anymore.

Brooks: And how did you get home?

Schneider: On a boat, Marine Lynx. They took us on a truck to Inchon, and from there we went on the landing craft, climbed up the ropes, and went on the Marine Lynx, took us two and a half weeks to get home, to Seattle. We were two days out of Seattle and we hit a typhoon, and what we called [inaudible], I mean, the water was so rough that ship went underneath the waves, come up again, the front end would come up and the back end would be open, and then the ship would just shudder, because the screws

were all in the air, because the sea was so rough. And from Seattle, we landed at Seattle in the harbor, and we went on a troop train for a week, yeah, it was a week on the troop train from Seattle to Camp Carson, Colorado, on a train. And those days they had passenger trains going, and every time we got to a town or someplace, they put us on a side track, and it took us a week to get there from Seattle to Camp Carson. And I was itching to—I was going to grab a plane or something, I wanted to get home, because I was going to get married, see. So I made it just in time. It was one of those things.

Brooks: What was your homecoming like?

Schneider: So I got home, and my old man says, “Well, okay, you’re home, when is your job starting?” I said, “I don’t know.” I got home on a Saturday or something—no, on a Monday. I think I got home on a Monday. It was the day before I got married. I got married on a Tuesday, yeah. Yeah, the priest would—at New Holstein, the priest wouldn’t have any marriages on Saturday because he said that people wouldn’t go to church on Sunday. So I first got married on a Tuesday. But anyway, I got home the day before I got married, so I just made it. I didn’t know if I was going to wear my uniform or what, and put my old suit on in the morning, it fit yet, so I got married.

Brooks: And then did you start working right away afterwards?

Schneider: Yup.

Brooks: Did you go back to your old job?

Schneider: Yup. When the lady was really unhappy, because she had a big farm and she said, “Wish you wouldn’t have come back.” She always told me. I got to hear that so often from people, wish you wouldn’t have come back, because you’re taking the food out of my kid’s mouth. Made me feel like a fool, you know, like we were the bad guys anyway, because people would throw stones at us and stuff. It wasn’t a welcome like they have nowadays for guys coming home. We didn’t get welcome home at all.

Brooks: Who threw stones?

Schneider: Kids, people. They’d spit on you and everything else, and they’d call you names. We were the bad guys, just like the guys coming from Nam. I mean, there was no welcome.

Brooks: Do you know why? Did people say why?

Schneider: Well, people didn’t want that war. See, they were used to the Second

World War, and that was over with, and people—it wasn't a war anyway, it was just a police action. So I was. So we did what we were supposed to do, but we were the bad guys then because we shot all kinds of women and children over there, which we never did, but we were accused of doing that.

Brooks: And how did you feel about that?

Schneider: Well, what could you do? Couldn't do nothing about it because we were outnumbered anyway, and we were used to being outnumbered from across the pond. So you just live with it. Yeah, we still don't have a real welcome yet. Except when I went to Washington, DC, that was pretty good. I went to the Screaming Eagles 101st Airborne tour at Fort Bragg, and they treated me good there. That's all on that tape, too.

Brooks: The documentary? The high school kids? Did you—have you done an honor flight?

Schneider: Yes, I was on there too. Oh, that was great. Oh, they treated us like kings over there. Oh man. And there were 3,500 people when we got back to Appleton, and they were all waiting for us. And when we walked through the airport, boy, I'll tell you, I had tears in my eyes. That was something. It was the biggest welcome that we had ever, had ever had, you know. It was something else, boy oh boy. It was really great. They even gave us a shirt, and it was really something. And there were people there from all over, people from Appleton and Oshkosh and Sheboygan and all over they came, welcomed us back. It was really something, boy. Even had a band playing for us. We never had something like that before, and it was really good.

Brooks: And so while you were in Washington, I assume you stopped at all the memorials and things?

Schneider: They really treated us good there. When we got off the bus, and on the bus and off the bus, they had sixty-nine wheelchairs on that bus, for people that needed wheelchairs. And at that time I had my knee operated on and I wasn't real good at walking, so I took a wheelchair, and there was a lady from Wrightstone [??] or someplace up there, she had to go to school for this—she was like a guardian, you call it, and I never met her until up at Appleton that morning, and she was looking for me, and she found me, and I got on a wheelchair and she took care of me all day. Boy that was great. I never got to see her since, but I got her name and address. Can't even think of what her name is now. She had a couple of little kids there that night when we got back. That was really great, boy. It was something else.

Brooks: So because you didn't have your discharge papers, did you have trouble taking advantage of any benefits?

Schneider: No, I didn't really, because I had cancer, see, in '98, and this doctor lined me up with a couple of doctors in Sheboygan, and I didn't have any problems as far as—he had me going to schools and stuff, too, so I always had this doctor in my background, Dr. Lukash, and no matter where I went, all I had to do was tell them who I was from and stuff, and they'd call up and he'd always okayed everything. So I always had pretty good going when I go to Cleveland, the VA in Cleveland, Wisconsin, there, and three or four times I had to go to Milwaukee already to the veterans out there down [inaudible]. So it was all right. But I don't have a—I take that DD-214 along, but then I was telling people that it's not worth anything anyway, because it doesn't—it isn't true.

Brooks: So there was an inaccurate DD-214 for you?

Schneider: Right, yes. It's got my signature on it, though, but it's Donald F., and I never did sign Donald. And it's got Donald F. on there.

Brooks: So you didn't sign that? Somebody else did?

Schneider: Something like that. So anyway. But it's got my signature on it--because I was signing my name Don Schneider. So that's all right.

Brooks: Did you go back to school at all, or did you just keep working?

Schneider: I just kept on working. Well, I went to school at Chicago Institute of Technology, and I took it for a while, and then I couldn't afford it anymore, so then I gave that up too. But I took it, a home course, the different—it was mostly mechanics, machinery and stuff.

Brooks: Do you and Priscilla have any children?

Schneider: Yeah. We have five. Priscilla died, she was in intensive care in St. Luke's, I still owe them \$3,800, but anyway, she was on there two and a half months in intensive care, and my daughter died, my oldest daughter died down in the parking lot, down at St. Luke's, only months apart. She walked out of the building and she said, "Hey Mom, I'll see you," she came down with her husband, she said, "I'll see you on Thursday," and Thursday was her funeral.

Brooks: Sorry.

Schneider: So anyway, it was one of those things. But she was diabetic since she was a kid.

Brooks: So you've stayed in Kiel or close to Kiel for your whole life?

Schneider: No, I lived in New Holstein for 30 years, and I hated every day of it. I just didn't like that town, no. When I go there, still go to New Holstein off and on, in fact I took Joanne out there last night and we ate at El Toro. That's a good place to eat.

Brooks: I have a couple of questions, they're kind of general wrap-up questions, but if they bring anything else to mind, we can talk about that. So what would you tell someone who doesn't know anything about war or who doesn't know anything about combat, what would you tell them to kind of describe the experience?

Schneider: Just keep your head down and your mouth open. I don't know. I don't know what I'd say. Keep a sharp bayonet. Right, Joanne?

Mortimer: I didn't hear the question.

Schneider: Okay, okay.

Brooks: Sharp bayonet?

Schneider: Yeah, well, sure.

Brooks: Was there anything that kind of surprised you or that you didn't expect when you went into the military?

Schneider: No, I knew about what was going on, because I had uncles and people that clued me in from World War II. And Freddie Klezer's [??] brother—Freddie was a schoolteacher here in Chilton, and his uncle was shot down in Germany, and he was in a B-25, and he wrote a letter, he had a whole book that he wrote, he kept a diary of when he was shot down over there. So I learned a lot from him. He used to come up to our house anyway, but anyway, so—I knew just about what was going on. Whatever I did over there was nothing new to me except I liked that stovepipe, that bazooka, I liked that for firing. But see, they had Russian tanks over there, and the shells would bounce off them tanks, wouldn't even penetrate through. The Russians had some good equipment.

Brooks: Yeah, you said you brought home, was it a rifle? A Russian rifle?

Schneider: A gun, yeah. A gun.

Brooks: And where did you pick that up?

Schneider: I got it off a Chinese officer. Do you want to get that gun out once? Okay. It was one of those things.

Brooks: And you just snuck it back?

Schneider: Yeah.

Brooks: Did you have to sneak it?

Schneider: Oh yeah, sure. And that rifle, I don't have it here but I got that at home. That I sent home piece by piece with guys that went on R-and-R, I'd send home a little piece here, I took it all apart. I never knew if it got home or not, and then when I got home I put it back together, and then fired it because I got some shells home too.

Brooks: And it worked?

Schneider: Yeah, it worked. See, everything that we captured from the Chinese or took from them was Russian made. The Russians supplied all the Chinese. And we didn't really shoot at any North Koreans, because they had all given up, but they sent the Chinese in there, you know, and all we did was fight the Chinese. And they had millions, I mean, they were so thick, boy, I tell ya. Just moved on, and you had to get out there and get hit by barbed wire and pile them over so the machine guns could keep on firing. That was rough once in a while.

Brooks: Did you bring anything else back?

Schneider: Some chopsticks, pearl handled chopsticks. Those I got at home too. And I got my pictures here that I take to school, if you want to see them.

Brooks: Sure. I'll take a look when we're—turn the recorder off. Where did you get the chopsticks from?

Schneider: Japan.

Brooks: A little souvenir?

Schneider: Yeah. I'm going to give them to one of my granddaughters. I only got 29 grandchildren, and 33 great-grandchildren.

Brooks: Wow.

Schneider: And some more on the way yet.

Brooks: That's quite a lot. And did your—were your brothers involved in Vietnam

at all, or were they too young for that?

Schneider: No, my brother—my wild brother, he was training people for Vietnam.

Brooks: He was training.

Schneider: Yeah, he was. But he was in the Army training people out in Colorado for Vietnam, and he was never over there. He never got out of the States. And my other brother, he was a clerk typist in the Army and he sent—well, clerk typist, he makes out the orders for people to go all over, and he went from Germany to Greece and Turkey and all over. He just traveled the world when he was a clerk typist in the Army.

Brooks: So they were both in, but they didn't see combat?

Schneider: No, no. And my other brother, he was—he refueled planes up in the air, they had a big tanker where it was all filled with gas, or fuel oil for the planes, and that's all he did was refuel. And he was stationed out at Camp Lewis, that's Fort Lewis, that's out at Seattle, and he used to come home once a week—once a month, used to drive home, just drive, yeah, '57 Mercury and he used to drive home.

Brooks: Quite a trip.

Schneider: Yeah. Then he died afterwards. But anyway, this is a .45.

Brooks: That's pretty heavy.

Schneider: Well, it's Russian make, so yeah.

Brooks: I'll probably—I'll take a couple of pictures. I'm assuming this isn't something you're willing to part with, right?

Schneider: No, I'm not going, no.

Brooks: You're probably going to hang on to this.

Schneider: No, somebody offered me \$500 for it, because I got shells for it too, yeah.

Brooks: Yeah, I mean, we were happy to collect things from veterans, but yeah, if you're not looking to donate, that's okay. I appreciate you showing it to me.

Schneider: No, that's why she's got it here. That's why she's got it here. The clip loads on the back end of it, underneath.

Brooks: Yeah. It's empty, that's good. Wow. So—.

Schneider: The Chinese officer had it, that's why its chrome plated.

Brooks: That's great. I'll take a picture of it.

Schneider: Russian markings on it.

Brooks: Is there anything—is there any way that you feel like your life is different because you were in the service? Any way that you feel like it changed you or just your life in general?

Schneider: I don't know. Did I change any?

Mortimer: Well, your nightmares. That was really hard on you.

Schneider: Yeah, I used to get nightmares all the time. I never slept at night. I never slept at all, hardly. I had three jobs when I got home.

Brooks: Oh my goodness.

Schneider: Yeah. But anyway, I slept an hour and half in the morning, I worked third shift at Kohler, slept hour and a half in the morning, and then I'd sleep an hour and a half before I went to work at night. And then I—actually I retired there in '96, and I worked in a machine shop for somebody I knew in Sheboygan. I worked twelve hours a day there. I retired three times from that place.

Brooks: Didn't stick?

Schneider: Well, he always called me back.

Brooks: So did you work so much because you needed to, or because you wanted to?

Schneider: So I wouldn't get—so I wouldn't have to sleep. Because them nightmares, they were real, I mean, like real. You can't shake that.

Mortimer: Did you tell her about the one you put the water?

Schneider: What?

Mortimer: The nightmare about the water?

Schneider: No, I didn't. She can see it on the tape.

Mortimer: I don't know if it's on that one.

Schneider: I don't know, I think it is.

Brooks: Would you mind telling me?

Schneider: Sure. We were—me and another guy, we were pinned down for a whole day and we ran out of water. We're sitting in an old shell hole, and there was no way you could dig down, it was all rocks and stuff. We urinated wherever we could, and we had halazone tablets, but we were just pinned down. Because we knew if we stuck our head up or anything, we'd get shot. We lasted a whole day. And then when I got here, one night I had a nightmare about being so dry, and I drank four glasses of water, because I was dry, and I slept on the couch, and in ten minutes' time I drank another glass and went to lay down, sleep again, and I was still so dry, four glasses of water I got up. She said in twenty minutes' time I drank four glasses of water. That's how real them nightmares are. You can't shake it, because they always keep coming back. I used to get them almost every night, till last year it kind of tapered off, hasn't it?

Mortimer: Did you tell her about Christmas Eve?

Schneider: No. That's not on the tape either.

Mortimer: No, that's not on—Christmas Eve isn't on the tape.

Brooks: Okay.

Schneider: Well, Christmas—I hate Christmas because—well, it started out with my grandma asked me once what I wanted from Santa Claus when I was younger. I said I wanted a pocket watch like my dad has. She said, "What do you want one of them for?" I said, So when Father Frederick talks too long at St. [inaudible], my dad and my uncle used to stand in the back of church and swing their watch, and I said I want one. And so I got a licking from her, and then my old man, and she whaled on my dad, and my dad gave me a licking, and he told my uncle Fritz, and my uncle Fritz, who always used to go with my dad down to St. [inaudible] for mass on Sunday, and so I got a licking from Uncle Fritz too. I didn't sit for almost a week. And then I got over to Korea and them Chinese were—this was Christmas Eve, we were singing Christmas carols. We always had loudspeakers anyway. And the loudspeakers, they were playing music from when it got dark till Christmas carols, from dark till midnight. At midnight they say, Okay, we gave you guys a chance, now we're coming. And they came, and they came, and they came. Them Chinese just kept coming till 7:00 in the morning when it got daylight. No matter how many got gunned down, they just kept coming. And it's Christmas Eve. I don't

like Christmas.

Brooks: So even now, you have trouble with the holiday?

Schneider: Oh yeah. I don't go see—Fourth of July, that was a bad day for me too, because they always have fireworks around here, I can't handle it.

Brooks: What would you want someone who was listening to this interview to learn or to know? What would you—what do you think the big take-away should be for people who listen to this?

Schneider: Do what they want to do. It's a free country, you know. They don't have to listen to me. But if they want to know something, all they have to do is ask, okay?

Mortimer: But what did you learn from all this? What do you always tell me? You learned how to pray.

Schneider: Yeah, well, that's what I told her too.

Mortimer: Oh, did you? Sorry.

Brooks: That's okay.

Schneider: I learned how to pray. Not from just from being home, but over there too, I learned how to pray. See, you talk to God different than what you—you don't say ordinary prayers, you know. You talk to him different.

Brooks: How is it different?

Schneider: Just say it the way it is, you know.

Brooks: When you were over there? A little bit more straightforward?

Schneider: Yeah. You know, he's sitting right next to you. He's aiming a gun for you too.

Brooks: Well, I see Joanne put some of these pictures down for us. So this is you, I'm assuming. I'll take some pictures of the pictures.

Schneider: Okay. That was my graduation picture in '48.

Brooks: So from high school, graduated from high school.

Schneider: Yeah, 1948.

Brook: You look quite dashing.

Schneider: And that's the one I drew from that.

Brooks: Oh, you drew this?

Schneider: Yeah.

Brooks: That's great. Is this a discoloration, or did you do that on purpose?

Schneider: Yeah, it's a discoloration.

Brooks: I wasn't sure if it was supposed to be symbolic of something.

Schneider: No, it was just—.

Brooks: Maybe the ding you got on your helmet or something. No?

Schneider: No, that was before I went in the service.

Brooks: Okay. That's great. Do you do other art? Are you—do you like to draw?

Schneider: Sure.

Brooks: Did you do that at all while you were serving? Did you get to sketch at all?

Schneider: I didn't have time, no. Never had time. I was busy, busy, busy. I was just go, go, go.

Mortimer: When you were shot, from the day you got there--.

Schneider: Well, yeah.

Mortimer: From the day you got there till the day you left.

Schneider: Well, yeah.

Brooks: And what was your reaction when you heard that the war was over, that there would be no more fighting at the time?

Schneider: Well, I was married then, so I was on my honeymoon. But anyway, no, I always—so, okay, we just took it the way it was. So it didn't excite me, just like going in the service. It didn't bother me. It was just one of those things, I was going and I just left.

Brooks: And then you came back.

Schneider: I parked up my car and started up in the morning yet before I left, shoved it against the garage, okay, here it is. Never saw it again.

Brooks: And these are photos of the killing fields?

Schneider: Yeah.

Brooks: Was this stuff that you witnessed yourself?

Schneider: Yeah, those were the pictures I took. Those are bodies.

Brooks: So this—this isn't Cambodia, though, is it?

Schneider: No, that's Korea. That's Korea, yeah.

Brooks: And these are civilians?

Schneider: Yeah, those are—no, those are people that, Chinese that we shot at, or killed.

Brooks: Are these all pictures from the same day?

Schneider: No. They're all different.

Brooks: Okay. I don't want to be too graphic, but for the recording, just to explain, they're photographs of people who have fallen during battle, a lot, a lot of people, kind of all together in these big fields.

Schneider: Sure, that's the killing fields, you know.

Mortimer: The worst part is you had to climb over them.

Schneider: We had to go over them.

Brooks: Yeah, I was going to ask—so they were just here, and then maybe eventually were buried by the other side, or maybe not.

Schneider: Well, no, we took a Cat afterwards and dug a trench and put the bodies in there. And you couldn't move some of them because they were booby-trapped, they had hand grenades underneath with the pins pulled, and a lot of guys, our guys got killed moving them because they said we got to tie a rope on them and pull the bodies off, because otherwise you're going to get blown up too. It was, yeah, it was one of those things. It was part of war too.

Brooks: And this is you in a tree?

Schneider: No, that ain't me. That's one of my wire men trying to pull some wire up a tree. Most of our wires were laid on the ground, and then we had to go out there patrol for—because a tank or something would go through, or they'd get blown up, so we had to string more wires. I mean, there weren't any—hardly—that was the only tree that was around there, most of the trees were shot up.

Brooks: And the wires were for communication?

Schneider: Right, yes.

Mortimer: You can see the mountains in the background that they were climbing all over.

Brooks: Oh wow. And this is you? Are any of these you? I'm just guessing.

Schneider: Yeah.

Brooks: Yeah, '52. March—hey, March 16, it's almost that date now. Wow. It looks beautiful from here, at least. I'm sure it wasn't while you were there.

Schneider: Sure, but okay that was, yeah.

Mortimer: Climb those with seventy pounds on your back.

Brooks: Well, before we kind of wrap up, because it's kind of hard to look at pictures and do the recording, is there anything else that—any other stories you want to share, or any questions?

Schneider: The rest will be on that tape.

Brooks: Okay. Nothing else that you think that I should know, or any questions I should've asked?

Schneider: I don't know. You can ask whatever you want to ask.

Brooks: Yeah, I just usually like to ask people if there's anything I didn't cover. And Joanne's been really helpful filling in some stories for me that people—

Schneider: Yeah, she's got all kinds of stuff—

Brooks: Sometimes people hold out on me, so anything else you think that we should cover?

Mortimer: I don't know if you're interested in his high school days. A lot different than—

Brooks: If they're interesting.

Mortimer: Oh yeah.

Schneider: I used to shoot my .22 in the school.

Brooks: Oh yeah?

Schneider: Sure, I was having my .22 in my locker in school, and nobody said anything because our janitor was a gunsmith. We used to shovel our—me and another guy got a quarter for shoveling the stokers full in the morning of coal, then we'd go down in the coal bin and shoot our .22's, and carry the shells in our pocket, and then Herbie Garleb [sp??] was the guy, he had a cider jug in his locker all the time, we always had cider, hard cider during the day. It was—I enjoyed high school.

Brooks: Sounds like it.

Schneider: Yeah, I enjoyed it.

Brooks: Were you shooting at anything in particular?

Schneider: No, just shooting in the coal bin. Just chopping up coal.

Brooks: So then when you got into the service, did they have to retrain you how to shoot?

Schneider: Well, sure, we had to go in the rifle range and stuff. I got medals there, I got a whole string of them, I got—.

Brooks: Oh, you're attached. Do you want to move?

Schneider: Just bring that string over, the medals.

Mortimer: These?

Schneider: I don't know if that's it, it's on there or not. Yeah, this is what I earned here in—.

Brooks: Okay. So got your dogtag, and then your—.

Schneider: The battles that I did okay there.

Brooks: Oh, and this is the—I heard about this, the electric strawberry.

Schneider: The 25th Division.

Brooks: Yeah, the tropic lightning, right?

Schneider: Yes, tropic lightning, yeah. I got a picture of that.

Brooks: Yeah, I like that little—.

Schneider: Yeah, okay, I got that drawn up real big down on our basement wall.

Brooks: That's great. That's great. Well, if you think we've kind of covered most everything, I can turn the recorder off, and then we can keep talking, we can always turn it back on later if we want to.

Schneider: Sure, that's fine with me.

Brooks: Okay. Well, I'll just say thank you on the record. Thank you.

Schneider: Thank you.

[end of interview]