

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
EUGENE J. SCHOLLER,  
U. S. Navy, World War II

2003

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**Scholler, Eugene J.**, Oral History Interview, 2003

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

Master copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca 70 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

### **ABSTRACT**

The Milwaukee, Wis. native discusses his World War II service aboard LSM 318 in the Pacific Ocean. He talks about joining the Naval ROTC program at Marquette University (Milwaukee, Wis.), changes in college courses with the outbreak of World War II, joining his ship, and spending time at Pearl Harbor prior to going overseas. Scholler mentions practicing in New Guinea for the invasion of the Philippines, celebrating Christmas aboard ship, and the landing at Luzon. Also touched upon is landing at Okinawa, seeing Japanese planes drop bombs, shore leave, difficulty navigating in mine filled waters, and mood on the ship when sailors learned the war was over. Scholler comments on finishing school with the GI Bill, joining the American Legion, and his reflections on military service.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Scholler joined the Naval Reserve Officer's Training Corps while in College and then served in the Pacific theater of World War II aboard an LSM. After the war he returned to Wisconsin and eventually settled in Brookfield, Wis.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2003.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2003.

Transcript edited by Abigail Miller, 2003.

## **Interview Transcript**

John: This is John Driscoll, and I am a volunteer with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, in Madison. This is an oral history interview with Gene Scholler, who is a World War II U. S. Navy veteran, from Milwaukee. We are doing the interview at the Chula Vista Resort, in Wisconsin Dells, and today, if I didn't mention it, is June 3, 2003. Gene, thanks a lot for agreeing to the interview. We've just overcome some technical problems here that were all my fault. Would you tell me, again, about the organization here, as you did earlier?

Scholler: Yes. Our organization is an off-shoot of the national LSM/LSMR Association. LSM meaning Landing Ship Medium, LSMR meaning Landing Ship Medium Rocket. Those types of ships were used in amphibious landings in the Pacific in WW II. And this meeting here, yesterday and today, is a regional meeting of the national association. The region being Wisconsin and the surrounding states, and then we have this annually, now, that is the last three years. And we meet annually, as a regional group. And then we meet annually as a national group.

John: Your next national is in Norfolk?

Scholler: It is in Norfolk the first week of September, and it will include the highlights for most of us, here, will be the visit to Little Creek, Virginia, which is the amphibious training base that most amphibious officers and sailors trained at, preliminary to their efforts in World War II. A suburb of Norfolk. And then, also, the USS Wisconsin, the mighty battleship. It is tied up there as a tourist attraction.

John: That is great. I served at Little Creek, and last summer I got to tour the Wisconsin, which is just awesome. Can we go back to the start and, again, I apologize for asking you to repeat, but where and when were you born, and some of your early life?

Scholler: Certainly. I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and that is where my folks, we were of the Catholic faith and I went to eight grades at St. Sebastian Grade School. Superior teachers, superior teaching order of nuns. From there to Marquette High, University High School. Superior teaching Jesuit priests. And from there to Marquette University, so this was St. Sebastian, graduate in 1937, 1941 out of Marquette High, and fall of '41 to start at Marquette University. Which I did do on schedule. I worked in the summer of '41 to get a few dollars together towards my tuition at the university, and my dad covered the rest. And we came to the day to register at the university, which I did, and my father had told me a few days before, "Now, apply for the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Marquette University." And I registered properly and thoroughly, and came home that evening, and he said, "Did you apply for

NROTC?" I said, "No, dad, I didn't. I didn't meet the weight requirement, I didn't meet the height requirement. So, I figured, no-go." Well, he said, "I want to help you with the tuition but," he says, "a requirement of helping you with the tuition is that you, at least, apply and let the authorities there say no, not you." Next day, I went back, I applied, and the school semester started. Couple weeks later, on the board was the notice of acceptance into the NROTC program. So, here I was in the Reserve Officer Training Corps, in September, October, November, December, about four months prior to Pearl Harbor. So, I was destined Navy from then on.

John: Pearl Harbor, do you remember your Pearl Harbor Day?

Scholler: Yes. Vividly. My father and I were listening to the radio, no TV or thought of TV in those days. We were listening to the radio, the Packers-Bears game. And my father was a very hard worker, six days a week. He was stretched out on the sofa. And I was sitting in a lounge chair, in the living room. And the interruption came telling us that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. And that was a jaw-dropping event for both of us. And, I just still remember to this day, he was looking over at me. He didn't say anything, but he had that look of, like, aren't you glad you are settled now, to where your war efforts will be? And I was settled in the Navy from there on.

John: That day, I was only six or seven years old. Even I remember. What was your, well, maybe you've answered, but so many guys were not, didn't even think military. You pretty much had your course laid out for yourself.

Scholler: Yes.

John: Okay. Then, go ahead, after that, you stayed in school?

Scholler: Yes. So Pearl Harbor, December, '41. And that was nearing the completion of the first semester, or the first year, and went on into the second semester, in '42. Things were very, very dark for the U. S. then. Everything was going, I'm speaking now of the Pacific, because that is where did our war effort. But everything was going the Japs way, they were moving swiftly and decisively from--right down to New Guinea. Next stop, New Guinea, if we hadn't stopped them, would have been Australia. So, the Navy program, then, said, all right, continue on these two semesters of your sophomore year. Continue the NROTC and the naval science, and we did what was accepted at that time, once a week, we did drilling. Drilling, real bore. We had a couple of time per week when we went to the gym and had some pretty strenuous work-outs, but it was still kind of make-believe. But then, as 1942 wore on, and our production began to be, our military production, began to show, the Navy said, "All right, you guys can continue," and

this was the same with all the Naval Reserve Officers Training programs at the colleges throughout the country. “You guys can continue on into your junior year. But, we are going to put you on three semesters a year program.” Well, okay, that speeded things up. But I must say that most of us were pretty restless. We could read now about the major battles, and so on, that were taking place and we felt that we should be part of it. One day, finally, January or February of 1944, came the word. “Okay, you guys, you are all going, you are all going probably to amphibious. Two weeks, get your uniforms, have them made up. Tell everybody that you are departing.” And, simultaneous with the end of a semester, we were all given our commissions. We went across the stage, got the acknowledgement of how far we had gone. By this time we had completed six semesters.

John: You hadn’t graduated? Okay, but you hadn’t graduated.

Scholler: No. Six semesters of the eight, and including the three semesters a year program. Trimester. And got our commission, walked off the stage and, you might say, within a few days walked out of Milwaukee to Little Creek. Fascinating experience. I had traveled extensively prior to that: I got to Chicago one time, prior to this. Cudahy, a couple times. And so on. But, any rate, all of a sudden, going on a train, seemingly endless. What was the big bay there?

John: Chesapeake?

Scholler: Chesapeake Bay. And the tracks stopped, and they moved all our cars onto a big ferry. They didn’t even have the train go around the Chesapeake at that time. So we got to Little Creek, and it was just a mass of Quonset huts. And we were given our assignments to a Quonset hut. And what to do per day. And we did train there for two months. As I remember, seven days a week. Maybe we had a day off every other week, so something like that. But it was intensive and speedy, and what was necessary.

John: Training on what? Doing what?

Scholler: Well, in my case, I was going to be the fourth officer on this landing ship medium. So that included gunnery, communication which was radio, radar, signals, searchlights, mess officer, supplies. Made sure supplies were on there, made sure the ammo was on there. And finally, service officer, morale officer. Whatever that meant. And that kind of finalized it. But this was a newly commissioned ship, and we just, nobody knew how to perform. It was just off, just newly built, off the ways, and had to prove itself. So, we completed that intensive training. We were formed into a ship’s compliment. As you left Little Creek, and we were assigned to pick up a ship at Pullman Standard Ship Yard, which is actually, which is at Gary, Indiana, and which is actually the steel works there, and all. And they had

converted that and were building LSM's there, and about four other locations in the U. S. And we got back there, picked up our ship, outfitted it, that is, all the supplies, all the equipment, all tools, everything. And then we sailed through the Chicago River, down the Mississippi, down the Illinois and in the Mississippi, down the Mississippi and when we got to New Orleans, they put us in the ship yard for two weeks to convert our officer quarters to handle another half dozen officers. We being early in LSM completion, we were assigned a captain and his flotilla staff to report on the performance on this type of ship. So we suddenly were a very special ship, because of the flotilla.

John: The officers on the ship, were any of them naval officers? With sea time?

Scholler: Ah, no. Yes, our captain had a little time on the mine sweepers off the east coast. And maybe there was mostly some training, or something, because the mines weren't a problem off the coast. But that was his experience. Other than that.

John: Green as grass, huh?

Scholler: Yea. And the ship, when we arrived at Little Creek, there wasn't an LSM available yet. We were all talking hypotheses. Finally, one day, near the end of our three months training, the first couple of LSM's arrived. To serve as training ships.

John: When you got the new ship, and you took it down the lakes and the rivers, and that, how did it shake down? Did you have problems with it?

Scholler: No. The, we were, when we went down the Mississippi, and that year there had been exceptionally heavy snows. So the Mississippi was in flood stage all the way down. And we had a four foot, two inches draft, because we were to pull up on the beaches and unload. So there was no keel. And hence, we had no keep for steerage. And we went down that Mississippi with just the Mississippi telling us where we were going to go. And it wasn't as developed as the Mississippi is now, so we bounced off of shore, which is somewhat flat, and so on. Wherever that mighty river wanted us to go, we skidded along.

John: It must have been an adventure.

Scholler: It was. It was. And then, we were trying to learn the ship. Gee, is it going to do this in the ocean, too? You know, you were full of questions and didn't have any answers.

John: How big a crew?

Scholler: The crew was originally, and remember, this was the beginning of LSM's. We had four officers and fifty enlisted men. And then, ultimately, the ship was assigned a fifth officer, because the officers would stand a deck watch, four on and eight off. Four on, eight off. Well, that eight off, you tried to get four or five hours sleep there, and then that other eight off, you had so many duties to perform, so the Bureau of Personnel realized that they needed a fifth officer. By the time we got to Pearl Harbor, they had sent out a fifth officer. So we went around New Orleans and did the re-fitting of the ward room for the additional officer. And through the Canal, back up to San Diego, and there we practiced landings, again. Just going to the beach, timing the opening of the doors, lowering the ramp. The major was dropping that stern anchor at the right time, and so on.

John: So you could pull yourself back off the beach?

Scholler: Yes. That had more to do with retracting from the beach than even your powerful diesel engines. And we practiced there, and practiced, and suddenly, "Okay, you guys, on to Pearl." And when we got to Pearl, we had to transfer two men because they could not take the pounding that was inherent in this ship. And though we didn't run into heavy weather from Diego to Pearl, there is the prevailing westerly wind and smack, smack, smack, you were bumping. And this was really a young man's ship. And we had to transfer two. One of them was coughing blood by the time we got to Pearl. But they were transferred then to the navy hospital there and replaced.

John: Who did your navigating, if you didn't have an experienced crew? How did you find Pearl?

Scholler: Well, for the most part, you relied on an enlisted man known as the quartermaster. Now, we had a fellow by the name of Garvin, and he was old by the standards of the navy enlisted, but he was an excellent navigator.

John: Okay.

Scholler: We had no concern with him. But as far as the officers, I wasn't expected to have much knowledge. The executive officer was expected to have knowledge of navigating, and it was the celestial deal. Sextant, celestial, and hope we don't have too many days of continuous cloudy weather.

John: That is great. Okay, so you got to Pearl?

Scholler: Yes.

John: This was about when?

Scholler: We were at Pearl, probably, in '44, it would be about September, of '44 when we went in there. And the battleship Arizona was still in its sad condition before it was made into the beautiful memorial it is today. The Utah was still over on its side as it still is today. There is a lesser memorial there. A lot of people don't know that. But then we met, somehow or other, this is hard to believe but I had very close friend from St. Sebastian, Marquette High and all, that was in the Navy on a destroyer escort. And we had a little time in Pearl, four or five days or so. His ship was in there also, newly commissioned, on the way out. And we were able to make contact. And, by gosh, I got off a half a day from the ship, and he was able to get off. He was the quartermaster on this destroyer escort, and we found a friend, we knew of a friend who was on one of the bases on one of the islands, and he got a Jeep and took us on that road around Oahu, that famous drive around Oahu. So we had a little break from the deal. Then when we were to form in convoy, I think it was around thirty of us, and we would be the lead ship in the convoy now because we had the four-striper and his staff aboard. And we went, we were going out of the main channel at Pearl, and there was a destroyer escort coming along out of the series of channels that lead to the main channel, he falls in behind us, this destroyer escort. And it is this friend of mine from grade school. And he is up there as quartermaster. He gets on the flashing light and he says, "Good luck and God speed." What a coincidence.

John: That is tremendous.

Scholler: To have that occur. And we both went out from there. And our group, then, went all the way down. We went to the Russell Islands, just past Guadalcanal, and stopped at the Russell Islands overnight, two nights. And a few of the islands in that Solomon group. The war was over there. For some reason, we had done that. And then we went across and they said, "Okay, you guys, you got a little time now before we do the staging, meaning the provisioning and the munitions and the tanks and ammo and everything for the next big invasion, which is the Phillipines. So go over to Lae, New Guinea, and practice more landings." Just think of the oil. That our own ship was using. If the Japs had that, they would have been so happy. But, at any rate, we practiced some landings at New Guinea. So that is how far this little two hundred foot ship sailed up to this time. Then we staged and one memorable event, we were departing December 27 for what then would be the largest landing in the Philippines, at Lingayen Gulf, on Luzon. The initial landing in the Philippines was at Leyte, but we weren't quite ready for that. So we were fully provisioned and fully staged to go on this first invasion. A little apprehension. We didn't know what it was all about. What is coming, and so on. So, December 27, early in the morning we were to depart, probably at first light, and about maybe the 24th or 25th, the 25th, I noticed that fellows were standing around. They were pretty sad, the enlisted crew, standing on the tank deck in

between the tanks, sort of raised there and chained down and so on, and I thought, “What is going on here?” And I thought a little bit more about it. And I went down in the officers ward room, then upstairs, and I looked again, and there was a couple of fellows. And I said, “Hey, what’s up?” Well, I didn’t realize until they told me, this was Christmas. And there was a melancholy, a natural melancholy, and I looked, and I thought, and I said, “What can I do?” And then I thought before I got an answer, I also had one star off. You don’t even think of those minor ones on the line, so I had a little prayer book. I was Catholic, and I had a little prayer book given to me by the service, a service man’s prayer book. And special prayers, prayers of the Mass and etc., etc. And I said, “If I hold a service, non-denominational type of service, in here in between the tanks, you fellows interested?” “Yes!” “And I said, okay, only pass the word. Pass the word.” Well, we had out of our fifty enlisted compliment, I think we had twenty, twenty-two, twenty-four, twenty-five there. And I just paged through the book, and a little prayer, and another little prayer. Said a decade of the Rosary. Whatever. And then I said, “Okay, now, it’s your turn. Any of you who have something to say, something to pray, a favorite prayer, whatever.” And by gosh, we finished in about a half hour, and a pick up.

John: That is great.

Scholler: And this was the pick up, right here. I am pointing at myself.

John: Yea, I can imagine.

Scholler: So we shoved off and we had a rather uneventful, long trip from way down in the Admiralties just a short distance north of New Guinea to go all the way north of the equator to the Philippines. But just a submarine scare or two and we did have a plane attack us, a couple Japs as we were going up Luzon came from the ocean, where the sun was setting, came out of the sun, as they call it. And roared in on our convoy. But we were pretty alert and the outer column saw them coming, shot one down and the other guy veered off and departed fast. And it was kind of silly for them. Don’t waste your planes on little amphibious ships. Go and get the big guys. But these guys weren’t that smart. So we made the January 9, 1945 landing at Lingayen Gulf. A very successful landing and sand beaches. Just typical landing area for the way this ship was built. And there were some mortar fire, mortar shells sent out from the beach. It wasn’t a heavy opposition. But a classmate of mine out of NROTC, Bob Blands, was on an LSM just down a few ships, and he was killed. Yea. They have a nice memorial down at NROTC at Marquette University.

John: Gene, let me turn this over.

**[End of Side A of Tape 1.]**

John: So, you made the landing?

Scholler: Yea. And this was a very successful landing, and the uniqueness was that we landed there, as I mentioned, January 9, 1945, and this was three years to the month after the Japanese had landed, and taken that away from us. They landed there in January of '42. So it would be after Pearl Harbor and the smashing of our air base, and so on, in the Philippines. And they went in there and three years to the month later, we landed on those beaches. And the tanks that we carried went all the way down from Lingayen to Manila. And fought in the bitter battles there in Manila to dislodge the Japanese.

John: Yea, I've seen, and heard, and talked to people who were there. I have a friend whose dad was a missionary and they were interned there.

Scholler: Oh, those Japs. To jump ahead a little bit, we later on were sent into Manila Bay for a reason I hardly recall, and then up the Passay River but while there, I went ashore a couple of times and I saw the devastation in Manila that was unnecessary, but it was the hate of the Japs. And the brutality toward civilians. And that to me was why I believe in the bomb, not only to save the casualties at that time but to return the brutality, you had to see it to believe it. So then, that was a completed mission and they sent us, I think we were sent back to Leyte. And there were quite a few ports now. Leyte was becoming a big supply base. We were sent back there for a few weeks for something they used to call something like R and R, or rest and rehabilitation. What it really meant was resupply for your next venture. Which turned out to be, so we got after about twenty-five or thirty days, perhaps, up at Lingayen Gulf, through most of that January, then we went back to Leyte, February. March we started staging for the next landing, Okinawa. Big one. April 1. Major. And we went on then to Okinawa, probably a week run, at least, from the Philippines there on up to Okinawa, and made the D-day landing, as we did at Lingayen, on April 1, which was Easter Sunday that year. And April Fool's Day. So, a rather successful landing there. There wasn't great opposition to the beachhead landing, but this time the Japs had a new policy, which was wait until the boys get in and we'll be dug in, and we'll shoot them up. And so we were active at Okinawa for about the month of April, which meant after you unloaded your original equipment that you carried from the rear area, then you would go out to the big AKA's [Amphibious Cargo Assault] and you would bring in first the heavy artillery, shells for the artillery duels taking place. And more ammunition, smaller ammunition. And then you would go out and you would start bringing in, you would always bring in medical supplies, of course. But then you would start bringing in foodstuffs and so on. And gasoline for the tanks and for the motor equipment, and on and on. Supplying the boys on the

beach, from the big cargo ships. Very interesting. We had an interesting event there. All the LSM's every morning at first light would start making smoke, all the LSM's and LST's had a big, a huge smoke generator on its stern, and we would build a big cloud of smoke, and it would hang over all these amphibious ships massed right off the beach. And one morning, and this was, it got kind of monotonous. You didn't fire out there, and it would only be a stupid Jap plane that would come in at the amphibious, because the carriers were out a couple miles out, and the cruisers, and the destroyers, and that is what they wanted. One morning our radar, we had our radar, a pretty minimum thing but the radar man is reporting up to the conning tower, and I was always up on the conning tower, as the gunnery officer. And "Bogie approaching. Bogie coming closer." And you know, not going out to the ships out at sea, and pretty soon this bogie coming right down the coast here towards all of us. Well, this guy came over our ship, he nearly took the top, the radar ball off. And we could see the flame out the side of his engine, you know, the piston engines. But we didn't shoot, we weren't to shoot because you could do more damage to your own ships.

John: Yea, if he was low. Sure.

Scholler: And all of a sudden he just dropped a bomb and our gunner's mate, who was up on the bow forty millimeter had shrapnel in his life jacket, which we all wore at general quarters. Well, it turned out, the Jap had dropped that bomb and missed the ship, he was trying to hit the big Red Cross, it was something like USS Comfort, or Hope, hospital ship. And we could never figure out, you know, finally it dawned on us, hey, he was going after that. But he had pretty bad aim. So, that was, and there was a lot of the shrapnel from that bomb that he dropped, that hit neither ship, but some of us did get shrapnel throughout our ship. Fortunately, it didn't hit, nor did it hit the hospital ship, neither.

John: I spent all of 1958 on a cliff looking down on the invasion beach at Okinawa. I was in the Marine Corps and we had division schools was up there, little town called Naha. No, not Naha, Koza. There was the cliff and then was the invasion beach. Of course, this was thirteen years after you were there.

Scholler: Yea. But, when we were taking some of the supplies in, after unloading our initial armored equipment, we, all the landing beaches were surrounded by coral reefs. And we were going in, very slowly and cautious. We made a lot of landings, but somehow there was a little knob there, and it tore open our bottom, and let salt water into one of the oil storage areas. And so the amphibious commander for the area says, "Hey, you just stay where you are. Matter of fact, pull yourself up a little further on the beach if you can. And we'll sent you extra signalmen, and fellows who handle the flashing light, and you can direct all the other ships in so they don't shoot at them." Makes good sense. So, in that time, I took, I talked to

the skipper and asked if I could go ashore for a while. The very captain of the Army group that we dropped off came back to the ship to find out if we could let him have some of the waist-length Navy jackets, alpaca lined at that time with an alpaca collar. Which, April, it was an unseasonably cold April, so we gave in and broke out the whole bunch. And he says, "You want to look around?" "Yea." So, real, real bravado. Went along, he had the Jeep, and we went north, the Marines went north. Oh, and that was like Holy Hill area. And we are driving along, he's driving, a person sitting alongside him, two of us in the back. And we see this Marine sniper. And I figure, oh, man, what are we doing here? But I didn't say anything. And all of a sudden, bwing! There was a sniper sitting up there probably in a tree. The Marines were waiting. Marines were way ahead of him, you know. They move fast and always left something behind. Oh, we went up that road, there was no place to turn around. No intersections. We just backed, backed, backed and had to go back the same way. As fast as that Jeep would go, it seemed it wouldn't go any faster than five miles an hour. But we didn't hear from him again. And we realized, hey, guys, stay on the ship where you know what the hell you are doing.

John: I guess so.

Scholler: We left Okinawa, were ordered back, I think it was to Saipan. And standby there for a while. By this time, there was a big hospital area, bug supply base, and so on. And we anchored off shore, and it was a nice peaceful time, and we could send the crew ashore with 3.2 beer, always warm. But at least, go for your recreation, and so on.

John: They'd give us two beers and a baloney sandwich, and say "Go ashore and have a good time."

Scholler: Yea. But, at least, you were doing all you could. What I do remember, though, this is backtracking, when the major supplies were taken to the beach by LSM's and LST's, then we got the order from the amphibious commander, go to Kerama Retto, there is a dry dock there, and have that bottom, that whole in the bottom patched. Which we did. And that was when I saw the greatest fireworks that even beats our current major fireworks. The Japs would like to fly in there at night. Now, we were in the dry dock then, and so we were not to fire out of the dry dock. So we could just sit there. You had a view and nothing you could do to stop anything that was going to happen. Just sit there and watch, and there were a lot of ships in there for repair, of course, from the kamikazes. But, we just saw the fireworks and the anti-aircraft going up, up, up. And it was interesting. It was a show, because we could not be part of it, firing out of a landing ship dock. So, then we went back to Saipan and we sat there. And we went, as I mentioned, we went ashore as much and we sent the gang, the crew ashore, as much as we were

permitted. And so on. And then there started to be these rumors. By this time now, we had Okinawa. May, June, and one day preliminary operation orders came on board. And I think, by this time, I was probably executive officer. So, I read it. And it was our group of ships, our flotilla that had worked together all the time, landing in Tokyo Bay. I read that, and I think I went to the bathroom. Oh, my heavens! Preliminary, though, very preliminary. But then I started thinking, oh, my, what is next? And, fortunately, that never had to be. Truman commiserated and thought and discussed and so on and decided we have the bomb, let's use it in August. So, here we are sitting and getting preliminary op orders, and then the bomb goes off, and happy days. Then number two goes off.

John: You would have been the very front edge of the invasion.

Scholler: Oh, yea. Now, when we took our first occupation, by this time we had taken trucks, huge generators, multi-wheeled trucks could drive right off, and these huge generators, stuff like that because there wasn't much going that hadn't been taken care of by the B-29's, but we just, while we were going in to take this load in, we made two trips in to Tokyo Bay, and then I had to turn the ship over to a Jap pilot to avoid mine fields, and etc., etc. And so I took the glasses, binoculars, very good binoculars for that time, and I studied these Kettle Moraine-like hills, like our Holy Hill, as I said before. And I saw the stuff in there that was waiting for us. Because there was no big mystery where you are going to land because these Japanese islands just jutted out like mountain tops.

John: There are only so many places you can land.

Scholler: Yea. You know. And I saw stuff like Bake Bombs, just a little slide and all it had to do was go up and come down in the Bay. I saw way back in what looked like suicide planes. Well, they were a wreck, but all they had to do was get off with a bomb and drop. On and on. Cannon, it looked like some of those cannons were in a condition that if they fired them they would blow up in their faces, but they would get off a couple rounds. So, that was our experience. In going up to Japan, the events, we had always a gnawing fear as we were going up to Japan both times, and did see the mines that our submarines planted, and our B-29's planted, to hinder, sink Japanese shipping, and they did a great job. No only did submarines mine the waterways, but, of course, they patrolled the waterways, took care with their torpedoes. Japan was a very, was almost without resources when the war ended. But we had to go through those floating mines.

John: Yea. And a mine doesn't know a Jap from an American bottom.

Scholler: No. And then, on the way back, each time on our return, probably September, September was the signing of the peace on the Missouri, and we were up there

about that time, and we went back. And then another tour up. And so we were returning in October, probably returning in September and returning another one, late October, each time we ran into an unannounced typhoon. We didn't have very good meteorology in those days. And I tell you, out of all the events that I have experienced out there, the most awesome was looking up at those waves. It wasn't just a nice clean wave, it was just a huge upward surge of water and the feeling that what can we do about it, except don't meet it head on, just approach them at a little angle. The wind shifts a little bit, adjust, and keep a speed that is sensible to riding up so you don't go shooting out over the top of the crest and plunk down the other side. We got it worked out well, but, oh, and a storm doesn't last, it lasts for three, four, five days. But we made it.

John: I was in a bad one. It wasn't a typhoon, it was in the North Atlantic, on an LST, and, oh, my God. And, like an LSM, you are sitting on top of the water. I know.

Scholler: And you look aft at the ships in column, and all of a sudden, where did they go? And maybe way over, another column over, ooops, there is just a little radar sticking up. But we did not lose any LSM's to those typhoons, but it was a memory. So, came the word that the war was over.

John: What was the word on your ship when you heard that?

Scholler: Well, it was an elation, but it was a subdued elation. I think I was a little surprised, myself, same way, "Great, it is over." And, you know, it was almost like a feeling that it was overdue and it was hard to comprehend that all this turmoil, all this uncertainty, was over. But it was. The Japs acquiesced. MacArthur did a masterful job. He did not throw out the emperor. A masterful job. It was over. So, after a while, we got a few more assignments to do this, carry that. Move this from here to Guam. We got to Guam. We got our orders, "Go home." That was the jubilation. "Go home!"

John: That's right. When the war was over, you were still busy.

Scholler: Busy, and much to do. Yea. Duties were still there, twenty-four seven, what they say today. But, yes, "Let's go home." Oh, boy. That was it.

John: Well, where and when did you get back?

Scholler: We reached, we arrived in Diego, San Diego, between Christmas and New Years of '46. The war ended, yea, the signing was in September of '45. We stayed out there for a little while, different things to do, and then got back in probably January 2 or 3. And, after that, well, hallelujah!

- John: When you got back, did you leave the ship? What did you do with the ship?
- Scholler: No, even though, for some reason, in the decision, there was a point system that you had to reach a certain number of points. For some reason, the points that were required of a Navy officer, lower rank, was pretty high. So, all that sea time, all that time in service and all that sea time, all that overseas time didn't have, as it did for enlisted or for senior officers, but so be it. We went into Diego, as I mentioned there, probably the first week of January and the after a few weeks, our ship was sent up to Frisco, Oakland, where it ultimately was to be decommissioned. And I stayed on there for a while, for the decommissioning, and I finally had enough points to go home.
- John: When did you get home?
- Scholler: I got home about the first week of June, of '46. Yea, I did get a leave, though, a well-earned thirty days in March of that year. So, I left the ship in March but I had been on that ship from June, of '44, to June, of '46, when I actually left the ship.
- John: Two solid years.
- Scholler: Yea. Living on two hundred and three foot long hunk of metal, thirty-four feet wide. You know, you are young, you can do that.
- John: What did you do when you got home? What did you do after the service?
- Scholler: Well, when I got home, I told my dad, the same smart gentleman, that said NROTC, I said, "Boy, I got to go to work. I want to get some money. I want to get some money to buy a used car." And etc., etc. And he says, "Well, you have two semesters to finish to get your degree. Do you think you want to do that?" And I said, "No, I want to go to work." And he said, "I think you want to get your degree." And, again, I listened, and he was one hundred percent right. Listen to your dad. And I did. That summer I worked, and in September, I started at MU to finish my two semesters, which I did.
- John: Now, you had the GI Bill. Did you use that?
- Scholler: Yea. Oh, yea.
- John: How about afterwards. Vets organizations, the VFW, the Legion. You are in this one.
- Scholler: Oh, I joined the American Legion quickly, and enjoyed that affiliation. A member of the Cudworth Post which had this beautiful building overlooking Lake

Michigan. And, yes, I joined the American Legion. Now, as of the end of the war, and returning, and your being released, a Navy officer was just released from active duty. And I began to receive, and they had us doing these worksheets every quarterly, schedules, you know, and so on. I didn't stay on the active Navy Reserve.

**[End of Side B of Tape 1.]**

John: Okay, we are past the leader. Ah, so we just talked about vets organizations. Any, I don't want to say hangover, but any effects, any medical problems after that?

Scholler: No. No medical problems. I tell my grandchildren, the war for me was a very positive thing. We helped defeat a hated enemy. If it weren't for the war, I kid them, I say, I might have been a wimp. But there is one situation that I failed to mention in the war. At Lingayen Gulf, a couple Jap planes came over. Not a serious menace. They were kind of up there and circling around. Not knowing any better, we fired up at them and some of our twenty millimeter shells came down. What goes up will come down. One hit in our tank deck. Here's where I want to give credit, though. Sixteen of the Army personnel, the tankers, got that fine shrapnel in their legs and groin. And not a one of them did not go along. Now, we as a flagship, had one doctor aboard for thirty LSM's, and he told several of them, "Stay on here." Not one tanker did not go with his tank.

John: That is tremendous.

Scholler: Then, somehow or other, some of that shrapnel came up to the conning tower and, I think we were going in to the landing, and the skipper said, "Mr. Scholler, your arm is bloody." And I looked, and I felt, and there was no pain. And the fellow standing next to me was the signalman, Kelly, from New York City. And it was his blood, actually, that was running down my arm. Now it wasn't serious, it didn't, well, it just drew blood. So, another one of our crewmen on the deck at that time, O'Leary, caught quite a bit of shrapnel, but nothing, blood-letting type but not tearing the muscle or the tendon. So, I'm okay. We make the landing and we go back out and anchor. And he says, "Okay, go down and see the doctor." Kelly and I, and O'Leary is in there. Tankers are on the beach. And I just, "Go ahead, Kelly. Go ahead, O'Leary." And he comes to me and, by this time I had found a tissue or something. Nothing here. He looked, and he said, "No, there isn't." But he had my name, and Kelly's. About six months later, I get the Purple Heart in the mail. Being a great guy, honest, not knowing what a fouled up mess government was to become over the years, I sent it back. I didn't want something that I hadn't earned, you know. Kelly had earned it. O'Leary had earned it. And I sent mine back. There were times when I saw the fallacy of the government and the waste, you know how it is. And the spending of the government, and our pork,

and so on, and I wished that I could have used that.

John: To kind of wrap this, looking back, this made a big hole in your life. Sixteen million other guys, too. What is your thoughts about having served, having been part of it?

Scholler: Well, a very simple answer there. Our nation was attacked. And it was a surprise attack, which wasn't very common in history up to that time. And it was deadly. And it left a lot of service people dead. Due, of course, to our own incompetence of reading the international situation. But I was glad. I wanted to go. To get back, to try to equal the score with those people. We called them slant-eyed little bastards. So, it was something, it got very restless with those semesters at Marquette and starting to read in late '43 some of the momentous battles starting to, our strength of Marine Corps and our strength of Navy vessels, and Army groups, and so on. They started getting pretty aggressive. But I just wanted to go. That was all. Gotta get at those little guys, and coming back, it was just very simply, we pulled into Diego and they sent us up to go into Frisco Bay, and this whole thing. And huge signs, probably like on the side of this whole commercial building, "Welcome home. Well done." And it was such a greeting to come home, you just felt good. And you know, you didn't look for anything. You just wanted to get on with your life. The fellows that came back and the girl friends that had waited, joined their wedding parties. It was just a time of get home and get on with my life. Nobody owes me anything. We were attacked, we did what we were supposed to do, and here we are now. So, it was pretty simple.

John: This is a tremendous story. It is a tremendous story.

Scholler: So, thank you.

**[End of Interview.]**