

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
MILTON SCHULTIES
Engineer, Army, World War II
2005

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Schulties, Milton. (1911-2005). Oral History Interview, 2005.

Approximate length: 1 hour 42 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Milton Schulties discusses his service with the Army in the European Theater during World War II, his duties as staff sergeant in charge of an Engineering unit, and the different structures he built as part of the Engineers. Schulties was working as a carpenter with his uncle when he was drafted in the first peacetime draft in 1941. He briefly discusses his basic training at Fort Livingston (Louisiana), being assigned to the Engineering Unit, Company A, of the 127th Regiment, and how he was allowed to return home because he was twenty-eight years old. Schulties was sent home on inactive service until he was called back after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was promoted to staff sergeant and was part of a newly-formed Engineering unit in the 28th division. Schulties was in charge of training the members of the unit until it was fully formed and they were sent to Fort Dix (New Jersey) for more basic training. He describes getting orders to go overseas on July 2, 1942 and the trip overseas to England. He discusses his unit's duties in England, including building base camps and a command post for the 8th Air Force. He recalls seeing Bob Hope at a USO show. Schulties was commended by his Commanding Officer for the work he was doing and was put in charge of his unit. He describes building a sewage treatment plant in Grove (England), and the fun that he and his unit had there. He discusses being trained in the construction of Bailey Bridges, and how everyone in his unit knew this meant they were preparing for invasion. He describes being injured during this time and being placed on No Duty status until he was healed. Schulties and his unit landed at Utah Beach on D-day plus eight. They moved to a marsh area to rebuild bridges that had been blown. He recalls being under fire from a German gun during this mission, and everyone trying to find the shooter. Schulties discusses moving to Cherbourg and taking charge of the capture of a German soldier who had been in a French barn. He describes repairing bridges across France and Belgium and recalls a time when his unit had narrowly avoided being strafed by German planes. Schulties was on German lines when they received word of German surrender and recalls everyone being quiet when they heard. He was up for a promotion to second lieutenant, but turned it down. Schulties describes his trip home, and his work after the war.

Biographical Sketch:

Schulties (1911-2005) served in the Army from 1941 to 1945. After he was discharged he worked as a carpenter with his uncle before becoming a partner in an antique furniture store in Manitowoc (Wisconsin). In 2005, Schulties' design was picked for the Veterans Memorial in Sturgeon Bay.

Interviewed by Terry MacDonald, 2005.
Transcribed by Telise Johnsen, 2012, Finished by Joshua Goldstein, 2014.
Edited by Jennifer Kick, 2016.
Abstract written by Jennifer Kick, 2016.

Transcribed Interview

MacDonald: —the interview with Milton Schulties, who served with the United States Army during World War II. The interview is being conducted at 9:00 a.m. at the following address of [REDACTED] Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, on the following date of July 13, 2005. And the interviewer is Terry MacDonald. [*Machinery sound in background*]

Milton, can you tell us a little bit about your background, life circumstances, before entering the military?

Schulties: Well, I was born out here, oh, about seven miles out of Sturgeon Bay on a farm out there. And we went to school out there and from there I went to high school.

MacDonald: What year were you born?

Schulties: 1911. It was 1911, yeah.

MacDonald: Okay. And you went to high school in—?

Schulties: Sturgeon Bay. And when I graduated from there I was given a pencil as a gift with the caption, “Make your mark in life.” And I always kept that in mind. At seventeen years old, I started working for my uncle as a carpenter, and also working on the farm—Depression days, before the Depression days. And I was working for him, he was an old time carpenter had a piece of paper, and I was sketching to see how the floor would look. So I said, “Well, I think I’m going to do some research.” And I inquired to the Chicago Tech College home study course. So I applied for it, and I was accepted. And I graduated in Architectural Design and Estimating. And I took all of the plan work for my uncle. I would do plans for houses and everything, and commercial buildings. And when he retired, he said, “The next house is yours.” And I had drawn up the plans for it and everything. And I drew that, and I also associated with the Sturgeon Bay Lumber Company there in Sturgeon Bay. And so they—we worked together and then, when the Sturgeon Bay Lumber Company sold out to Burns Brothers, we bought the lumberyard in Kewaunee. There I drew plans again with the company and didn’t work for them—

MacDonald: Did you move to Kewaunee, then?

Schulties: No, I stayed here, but I drew up the plans and shipped them down there. And then they—I got drafted.

MacDonald: What year were you drafted?

Schulties: Just let me think. It was the first draft.

MacDonald: Before the war started?

Schulties: Oh, yeah. In 1941 I was here. Well first of all, I had passed exams with the college, and I was given the [inaudible]. And in the meantime a party from Fort Atkinson called and asked me to interview for an estimator down there. And I called them back about their services, but somebody else asked me before you do. [Laughs, coughs] So I went down, and I think I was the 32nd Division.

MacDonald: And how old were you when you got drafted?

Schulties: Must've been about twenty-seven, twenty-eight.

MacDonald: And you were one of the first drafts in Door County?

Schulties: Yeah, yeah.

MacDonald: And how many men went with you?

Schulties: Oh, I don't know. There were two or three trucks.

MacDonald: Really?

Schulties: Oh, yeah. It was complete. We organized the 32nd Division that time. And now there's a hundred Infantry Division; they're overseas now with what's happening. There I had my basic training

MacDonald: Where did you go for basic training?

Schulties: At Fort Livingston, the whole Division was down there. From there I had my basic training at Infantry and was transferred to the engineers, 107th Engineers, that was 127th Infantry Division, Company A, that is the one that is overseas now. Anyway I was made Corporal. For a couple of months I did all the carpenter work over there. So anything needed done I had to do it.

MacDonald: What was it typically like in the Army pre-war time?

Schulties: It was strictly training. That 32nd Division had a beautiful way of training and it showed up afterwards from another Division that took over there. Anyway I was made Corporal and sometimes I went down in the spring and then I went down I think it was March in town. In October, they passed the Twenty-Eight Year Law I was made Corporal before that and I came home with a Corporal inactive service.

MacDonald: What did that mean the Twenty-Eight Year Law?

Schulties: Anybody that was drafted that was twenty-eight years old was sent home inactive service. And I went back to my job again. December third is when I left for the war. I knew when the war was started that was December sixth. I said "well here I go again" I knew I was going. Thirtieth I got my orders to return to service. And I went back to Livingston and the 32nd Division had already moved on to Fort Devens, Washington. And I was transferred to the 28th Division and moved in. Well it was a different type of explaining things. They had a blackout so everything was blacked out. There was one tent there with lights in there. I was on guard duty that night and I said "hey by the way, guys, turn off that light, don't you know there is a" and he started spouting off. I said "turn it off or I'll cut the wires," since I had the authority of a guard. Finally, someone from another station called in that there is one building with the lights on. So we had the Sergeant At Arms, Sergeant and Lieutenant and we all went down there. We had to break in the door turn the lights out. Well there was more fuss about that goldarn door than the blackout. And then the Army went through to get something change and they organized two new engineer regiments. They called us the Special and the Irregular Engineer Group. Formed myself, Staff Sergeant, I was made Staff Sergeant, a cook, a sergeant and there was four of us and a truck. They gave us a truck and a tent and chased us out of [inaudible] and start company. Well we went out there set up the tent. We set up and everything about two days later is when the officers first came. And within a month we had a complete company. A complete company and I was the only one that knew anything about training, so I studied the training, I didn't know basic training. And so there was another party that had basic training in ROTC, so he knew a little bit so he helped out and me. Organizing all the men together and they were all older men. I had one that was forty something years old, carpenter. And they were all engineers, carpenters. There were in our company I had two complete drift bearers, professional drift bearers, two steel men, four carpenters and the rest were just kind of helpers. We organized that company into an engineering unit. One of the officers, they were Cool [??] Dam Engineers and they knew their type of work but this was different again, smaller stuff but they helped a lot. They were wonderful officers. We had a company commander at that time was a Captain and he used to stop me a lot of the times and tell me different things, how to do this and how to do that. And I appreciated that and afterwards he transferred around. He was a Colonel with Colonel Hyde and he was sent down to London right away.

I'm getting way ahead of myself here, after being Camp Greenborn [??] blackout out railroad; we didn't have a window we could see through. We didn't know where we were going, we didn't know nothing. One of the

guys said, he peeked out and happen to see something "We're in Pittsburgh." We got to Fort Dix then and had basic training about a month. And then we got orders for overseas duty July 2, '42. We were on high sea.

MacDonald: Where were you headed?

Schulties: We were headed for England.

MacDonald: Headed for England.

Schulties: England, yeah.

MacDonald: So they took you over on a troop ship?

Schulties: We went over on just one ship, a special I would say, a flag ship. We went over on a flag ship. And we didn't know it at that time but we heard afterwards that General Roosevelt was on that same ship. Going over a submarine attacked and our ship dropped off two big bombs in the back and then we had a cruiser on each side of us. And then one cruiser turned around so fast, I never saw a ship turn around. And they dropped two bombs from the back and we were watching and everybody was as quiet as a mouse. Not a peep said but everybody was adjusting their belts and—

MacDonald: Uh-huh

Schulties: They knew it was going. And we kept on with the convoy. We had a convoy go over as far as you could see each way were ships going over. In England, I think it was Liverpool—

MacDonald: Can you tell me just a little bit about going across, what type of living conditions were on the boat?

Schulties: Well, they were English at first we were wondering if we were going to get any food, English food. They said [inaudible] one day the Colonel came down there and saw right through there and he saw people complaining about bugs and everything inside the food. And he went down there, looked and dumped the whole works out. You weren't even supposed to dump a cigarette in the ocean. And he dumped the whole works out there and we very good food on the boat for us. He dumped the whole thing out in the ocean and we had American food then. It was nice calm. Going over was just like walking across this floor. Not a ripple all the way over. And when we entered England I think it was about the next day we took off and we got off the boat. And the people in the streets pulled down the shades. They closed the doors. They didn't know who these boys were. The troops walking in, they didn't know nobody told

them. We got on the trains, I don't know if this is where I was, and we got as far we went to what they call Caroms Downs; that was an orange [??] camp. That was our base camp then for all of over.

MacDonald: Was that camp pretty crowded, lots of soldiers?

Schulties: No, only other company. It was a smaller group. It was English built, it was a nice camp.

MacDonald: Regular barracks?

Schulties: Regular barracks yeah, new barracks. Everything was perfect; we had good [inaudible] from there we had a gun emplacement. They had set up—it was English gun emplacement there. We had air raids every night.

MacDonald: Did they bomb the camp at all?

Schulties: No, it was far enough inside. That was the Croughton Downs; southwest of London near Andover area. We used to go out on the street and get on the bus and go to London and see sculptures.

MacDonald: What did the people think of the American soldiers over there?

Schulties: They were nice, people were nice there and after all they wanted to know what was going on. So we started working out there. Started to build what they call a little quonset hut, pouring concrete and it was sent in a Stars & Stripes article that time the 342nd engineers poured enough concrete to make a four foot sidewalk from New York to London. Pouring concrete all the time, we poured our slabs for everything. And from there we built camps there and then we got orders to build the 8th Air Force command post. And it was a very big building; that is where I received my education some. I went to school, had extra schooling that came in. We had to build a great big truss, I think it was about twenty-four foot long all pieced and taped together. And then poured concrete and built our beam and I had one fellow there that knew a little bit about wires and this and that. And I put him in charge with two men. And I told them about the wires because I knew every wire. Where there was some flaws he had a sketch, and I did do that in that course that I took. And being construction foreman I had to take care of everything. From the construction of the floor but it was American plans anyway. So we built that.

MacDonald: Was that a headquarters building you built or were you building hangars.

Schulties: 8th Air Force command post. If you see them on the movies, everything's black, inside there are no doors. Opened like walking into a cave before you get into the building. From there one part of our unit started working

with the airports on making steel air parts. We took the steel crew that knew about steel and threw them in and started another Sergeant. He knew about guns and the officer and the crew built airplane hangars and airports all over England. They were gone all the time. And my crew always did work around camps and this and that and boot camps. My outfit was a fun outfit, we always had fun. We had two guys from Tennessee and Kentucky, played violin and guitar, so every night they had a hoedown. It was always fun. I remember one night they were playing outside and the guys would talk around there, "Hey, how about a square dance?" My dad used to call the Fort Atkinson square dances. I happened to remember a couple of the calls so I did the calling and we had a square dance. And one of the officers came there and he shook his head. "I never saw anything worse" [coughing,laughter]. They were having fun with us and—

MacDonald: Did you see any USO shows when you were over there, the music and stuff.

Schulties: Yup, we were working over in England and alas everything was the big deals Air Force and this and that. And at last the colonel said "That is enough now, tomorrow the whole regiment is going to the Bob Hope show." The whole regiment walked out and went right in front of Bob Hope. I sat maybe about that far away from Bob Hope at that time. He said "Guys were working here all the time and they are getting no respect." The colonel was good and from there we were going to different places we had to change; from Croughton Downs we went to another place called Wantage that was more west again. And there we had other types of work, different camps and different things. I had to know what was going on all the time. My orders came in from headquarters. I never had an officer in my unit. I had one once maybe for about for a month. He came and he said "Sergeant" I had all the men lined up where they were supposed to go. If somebody wasn't no good out in the field I would put them on guard duty or kitchen duty, duties like that. And it worked out perfect. The lieutenant came in from the West Point "Sergeant tomorrow we have back to the old system, changing things; every man takes a chance, this and that." I said I wouldn't do it. I said it is working good now. He said "We'll try it." Next thing two trucks standing near while they are driving and the captain came up "What's these trucks doing here?" "They are on guard duty." And the lieutenant came up and said we are going back to your duties. He said "You did okay" well he was a nice guy. We talked things over but always talk things over. The first man who came over was a captain he was with a transfer and the colonel going to London. He was a high engineer anyway, so he was made major. He would always watch out for me. And one day he called me up to his office and he said "Sergeant, you did a terrific job with the men. Every man seems to know what he's doing and knows everything." He says "No man indispensable, do you want to work or you want to boss? Let me know

tomorrow morning." That was it, next morning I went to there and told him "Sir, I'm the boss." He said "Okay." We did a whole lot of work anyway. Everybody had his job, if a carpenter knew what to do, professional men. And in a couple of months I had five or six more carpenters learning what they were doing, see. And same with the brick layers, everybody knew. One time we were building the American huts. We came in for a new camp and it was set up. The whole unit came up in sections so we were building a unit and I had taken two huts and take them to another place and set them on top of the forms that the British had made up already. Well I took a walk there and threw them up there and set up two barracks. And jeez there was one guy, nothing fit, oh man!

He had everything crooked and you heard him complaining. And he said "Sergeant what ya going to do?" I said "First of all square it up, see how much we are off. And then get one truck on one corner and another truck on the other corner and push that thing together." Then the Captain came there "What are you guys doing?" I said "That building is not a square so we are squaring it up." He said "That is kind of a funny way of squaring it up." So anyway—he was—captain was good. He always sided with me and the whole crew. And he did a lot of work and then he worked up to—and we drove inland. As we were working there, I think there were about twenty something units. We had Bakers and he says "Sergeant come over here, I want to show you something. I want to talk to you" Wait a minute, you know—"They know what you are doing? You are building those buildings in a hundred and twenty-nine hours." Each one I was turning in at a hundred and twenty-nine hours. Standing there, every man had their job. From smith lock that was his job, floor section, upper section, roof section. And colonel came to me and said "How many feet of wiring do you have here?" "I couldn't tell you" They won't take all, just take half of it; what they need. I said "No, no, no how much wiring do you need?" No reason for that, he said "It is all right" and by the way, not a glass in the windows? "No worries Sir, I will have a professional glazer up here." So he taught a couple of other guys how to raise the windows, teaching, and one guy teaching another one. While we were in Grove, England the major called me over and said "There are some plans on the desk there." And he said I've got a job here, I don't know what to do, we are supposed to build it, a sewage disposal plant for the city of Grove—

[Break in recording][End of tape one, side A]

MacDonald: This is tape one side "b" and Milton is talking about building a sewage treatment plant in Grove, England.

Schulties: And I looked it over and I said "I think we can do it." He said "by the way it is the metric system" I said "well give me a metric rule." I had used a metric rule when I went and took that course. It was about twenty feet

across, a circle and built all out of brick and coming down at an angle. And the bottom was maybe about ten foot. And from there on it had an angle come up. We had to build our wall way out at fifty feet straight out to the brick. And it came out about two foot wall around the whole thing. One of the guys who went down there started running around that thing to get out and that started the whole thing of everybody had to run down there and try to run around in there. We made fun. And the captain came down and says everybody sitting around, sitting down, work done. He said "What is going around here?" And I said "They are trying to running around that pit. They are to get out." And one of the guys said "Captain, let's see you do it." He took off his jacket. He got down the pit, seven footer to run around that thing to get out. We had more fun that time—that is when we worked our company. Discipline, the highest discipline, there was nobody disapproved, and it was called for it. I had one fella, First Sergeant would go on weekend sometimes; I'd be acting CO. He was always coming in late. "I covered you for three times and that's the end, the next time you go." He didn't try it anymore.

MacDonald: He believed you huh?

Schulties: We always had fun and everybody had respect for another. A lot of times guys waiting for mail overall—'42 when we first got over there and everybody had just gotten married and this that and some guy didn't get mail the other guy would read off his mail for him. It was a big family. We always worked together, the whole crew. I was attached to the 9th Air Force building a hospital, a quonset hut hospital. Pouring that hospital, that kitchen, operating rooms, the whole works. The Ascot Racetrack, that Ascot was built, so from there we built that thing. And I know one time some WAC Sergeant came there and said "I'm going to jump on you, Sergeant you in charge here?" I said "Yes ma'am, anything I can do for you?" "I want that silver over here and this has to be here, this has to be here!" I said "Sergeant", she was a Staff Sergeant too, "Sergeant if you want those changes you better get me in contact with the head of the English Government first." Not much I could do about it, see they asked me in a nice way. I said screw that's the way they wanted, had she not jump down on me and I was busy. And another time I was walking from one place to another and somebody hollered from across the road in a Jeep "Sergeant, you in charge here?" I said "yes, sir." He said "Well what's these trucks doing here?" "I don't know; they don't belong to me." And I could note he was a Colonel Major and the next morning the captain came to me "What happened yesterday?" I said "What'd ya mean? Captain, I saw an officer yesterday that I didn't recognize, can I apologize to him?" He turned me in. "Well what charge will you cop to?" because we didn't have the discipline that was over, if there was something particular we pursued it but otherwise you here there and there. So next morning, I had orders to walk to headquarters and report to a First Lieutenant up there.

And I went up there and reported to his office. And I said “You called for some information?” and he said he wanted to put carpeting in there, a hundred square feet of it. I said “Lieutenant” I said “you take your width and your length and multiply it and take that nine square feet is a yard.” He wanted the whole division that whole thing but I said “I’m awfully sorry Sir, but I’m trying to build a hospital” and that didn’t help any either. The major came down “what’s going on down here, you meet that First Lieutenant?” “Yeah” If someone asked you a question—I walked to that one place for nothing. I didn’t have no car or truck or anything. I walked back had a job again. They beat me a little beat. Anyway, so I finished that hospital and so I happened by that time we were ready for time, we were called for special duties—retraining with trucks and building bridges and all that stuff, pre-training. We were in Weymouth, England. They had the trucks going into the water with long extensions on the exhaust, retraining. We knew what we were scheduling for

MacDonald: The invasion, huh?

Schulties: We could guess. We build a bailey bridge at night and over a ravine.

MacDonald: Can you describe what a bailey bridge is?

Schulties: A bailey bridge is sections of steel, everything is in sections. You lay down a flat unit on a track and then that track you set up your uprights on each side. And you push it out and you keep pushing it and you add another section. And you’re pushing the edge out and the other side of the bridge there is the planking already up for the approach from the other side and everything was working nice. And I said to the captain “Maybe you see what they are working on the other end there.” So I said “I will go look” and I go over and in the meantime by pushing all those planks tipped over. And second set of planks and there was nothing there and I fell down about twelve feet. And I landed on my neck and my shoulder. And I was knocked out and they got me back. I was feeling woozy a little bit. I stayed there at the job anyway. Next morning, went to the medics, they didn’t know what to do. The Colonel, Major and Captain all came to my tent. They said “Sergeant, you belong in the hospital” But the Colonel said “but we need you.” That is what he said “we need you.” You don’t do anything at all, you are off-duty. You can do what you want to, take care of yourself. When you are all right we want you to let the office know and you’ll go back to duty. I was laid out there for a good month. That thing hurt real bad; oh man! A storm or something would come in and that shoulder would hurt like heck. We knew we were scheduled for and then we went from there to another camp there, doing nothing, just waiting. An all-out invasion and we knew where we were going. In the meantime, a Captain, Officer—Sergeant said “come here and close the door. You see that briefcase? See that I have that with me at all times!” I’m sitting there

watching and apparently the guys outside started to whisper. “What does the Captain got in that briefcase that he’s always carrying?” “I don’t know.” “Whatcha watching the Captain for?” You know across the street there I had to cover up all those guys asking questions. I knew that was orders for the invasion. I asked him right away “those orders for Division?” He said “I wish I knew.” That’s what he told me and I could guess too. Anyway, we boarded the LST a division tank and we went through out the whole night. And we landed on I think off of Utah Beach. I know that Utah and Omaha were sources. I think it was Utah Beach because the insignia was the little bird I had written down where we landed. And we had to jump off the ramp there. It was about three and half feet of water something like that, took off from the water right off the beach and up the hill. On the meantime three of us fell in a shell hole.

Macdonald: Now was this after the invasion?

Schulties: This was D plus eight we landed but there was nothing within ten square miles. That was already in the clear. We had lights out where we were supposed to go up there. We had lights out all the time, mirrors and everything going on. We found the area we were supposed to go. And once they came in with the car and one of the lieutenants started hollering for his head officers, his sergeants, rather. I said “lieutenant for God’s sake shut up. You want to get us all killed?” Because the damn PN told me the day before they had cleared this area so we would have been close to the lines. It quieted down—I found him outside a fox hole and took my helmet off, cleaned out the fox hole crawled in it soaking wet, covered me. So we got organized then next morning we went back to the place by the coast where we landed. And there, I don’t know what possessed this lieutenant to walk out in an area out there and there was a mine, signs for mines there. And he walked up to one of the Sarges, I don’t know what for yet and the sergeant says “Lieutenant don’t move, don’t move an inch!! I am going back up a little bit, you are standing on top of a mine” He stood there until we got a mine detector. We got him to back out of there and when he came in that poor lieutenant caught it. I should say the sergeant, he studied mines. He went to special school on mine detection and defusing but it was quite good. Then the next stop we went out on—we had some POWs cleaning up the areas around there. There was about forty, fifty POWs and there was one specialist—Usbecher [??]—Hitler’s Elite was in that group. And he was always walking around not doing anything. I couldn’t figure out. I told one of the staff sergeants I was watching him. I said “something is going on but I just don’t know what it is.” I told him to get the cook. Our cook was German. So I go and get the cook and find out what is going on. And he came there and mingled with the guys around there speaking German, this and that. Found out, the specialist was telling the men “don’t worry they’re coming back after us.” He kept walking around. I went to the MPs, the priests are there. I said

“the guy out there in that green jacket over there, he’s telling the men not to worry that they will be coming back up for us.” I said “Get him out of here and I don’t care what you do with him, that’s your job.” They said “what do we do with him?” I said “it’s your job; give him regular water I don’t care.” They took him away anyway. I had my crew working nice, everything was such a mix up there, and everything was torn up there. It was a mess and we are trying to get a road opened this and that. And from there we went up to Rome. The first sergeant came in and said “Sarge you are supposed to go back to the office now.” So I went to the office and tent there. The Colonel Major says to us “come along with us tomorrow morning.” I didn’t know what was going on. I was following orders. We went out on the railroad tracks.

I am pretty sure it was the Tertian [??] Marsh with the First Division Air Force men. And they this marsh and they had the railroad tracks had run right through that marsh. There were a number of places where there was kind of a river, creek connected and there they had bridges, steel bridges and both ends bombed out they were sitting in the center and so we had a look and then went back to the car. And we went back to the headquarters again, off to do this and that. Took us back on an LST and the next morning he said "Sergeant what do you think about that job out there?" I said "There are forty-one ways to do it. Build a crib and we will swim it in there and sink it and jack up the bridge first and start with the full abutments on the ends. And that is what you’re gonna do." That officer, cluck—"where in the world did you hear about a crib?" Well we had an old dock out on Sturgeon Bay. I'm at home, every winter that was our work and fixed that old Brandeis Dock. Water underneath there, salt and timbers in this and that. It was all you could do to build the bridge. Sink it, and jack up the old bridge. He shook his head and said “I never seen such an unusual—a crib.” Anyway we went up there and we started building up the crib. We were in [inaudible]. You could see that they had one gun on the opposite side over there. They couldn't find the gun. Four days, they were looking for that gun. They drove themselves crazy looking for that gun. I a lot of times wonder Donald Olsen, the cub man, if he wasn't the man up in that cub thing. I wish I had known. So at last they had found the gun. The company next to us, D Company I think, they were on the next search. Every time they set up a pile driver it was shelled. Anyway, came back. We went out there, started, the officers out there some different outfits, checking what they were doing out there. There was a one-star General; I don't know who he was with. The MPs opened the fence because beyond that it was the front lines. Anyway, I—we had a truck. The general over there says "good luck fellas; take care." That is what he said; we were coming and going from that place where we are staying. It was an orchard. In that orchard I spotted it. One of the movies, I think it was the Eisenhower movie. I spotted that orchard, we stayed in that

orchard. And the field artillery was down behind the hedgerow maybe a hundred feet back overnight. They were firing all night.

Macdonald: Could you tell us a little bit about living? You know, did you live in fox holes or tents?

Schulties: We had pup tents, yeah. One night, that gardener in that orchard, I don't know where it came from a piece of shrapnel about a foot above our head through our tent. I don't know where it came from. I didn't hear any firing of any kind.

MacDonald: What kind of rations did they have for eating?

Schulties: We had C Rations all the time.

MacDonald: So you had cold food all the time for quite a while huh?

Schulties: Yeah. From there from working there at the bridge we got orders to leave that job and go up to Cherbourg to go work on docks. Cherbourg was just taken and we were just behind the lines again. So we went up there and started working on the docks. The second day we were there a Frenchmen came up there "There is a German up in my barn" but there were no officers around so I said to the sergeant and two others "Go ahead you're the boss now." I said "Gee what should I do?" And that Frenchmen was anxious to get the German out of his barn. So I said "Okay go and get the cook." I woke up and got the cook again. We went out to the farmer. Myself and another Sergeant and we went into the barn. I covered him. I had another guy cover me and we shot up into the barn and he came out. They came out and this little German, I could understand a little bit. We took him back. "Fresen?" Friday—three days, he didn't eat. We gave him a C-Ration. We gave him cigarettes. He was the happiest man. Told him don't be afraid, the MPs would take good care of him. I told him don't be afraid of anything, I said. And when he left us he hugged all of us. He was so happy to be captured. The MPs—the cop stood there and said what in the world is going on around here. I called him, he jumped on me. I said "awfully sorry sir. A Frenchman came here and said they had a German prisoner up in the barn and we should go get him. There was no officer around to go ahead so I had to take responsibility" "Well I know why don't those things happen when I'm around." Anyway I wish I had been around when that happened. Anyway we keep up our work on the docks. We did all our work. And then one time a Captain came up and said "Sergeant you are supposed to report to the Naval Headquarters." I jumped in the jeep and went over there. The guy had a diver and he gave me a drawing board and a ruler. And they explained to me the diver was going down below. Find that place for an explosion where he can set a post for the dock plus a key. And he wanted to find out what is below there. He

had gone down there. We had corresponded back and forth, phones and I asked questions and he tells me what things are going on.

[Break in recording] [End of tape 1, side B]

Macdonald: Tape two of Milton Schulties and he is talking about being over in Europe, an Engineering Battalion and they are doing docks in Cherbourg, England. Go ahead Milton.

Schulties: Cherbourg, France

Macdonald: France, I'm sorry.

Schulties: Anyway we finished and I went back there with the lieutenant and he said "That's pretty darn good, you did a good job." So they knew what to do down below. They had what they'd call a mushroom explosive. Set it in one place and it kind of goes in a small area like mushrooms. The blast set for post for a bridge across. See over there, when you build the docks, that's where all the big boats used to go. The Queen Mary and all those boats they had docks on the other side and that was all damaged. So we on the other side had to build wood docks and start working on railroads, there are rivers there too. And so we worked on the docks, had to build this box, a concrete building oh about twenty-four foot square, two foot of concrete. They didn't know how to get it out, so they drilled holes all around that thing and trying to blast it through. They got the blast off and all it did was tilted the roof and lifted it up, that is how much concrete there was so I don't know what they did after that. Anyway, we left there and we went from there back—I shouldn't get that far ahead. When we working on the bridge there. One of the—I don't know if it was Carlton [??] or Chard [??] the river went through there. And they had two [?] locomotives. They were all smashed to pieces. And the other one had damage. The captain and the men went up there and looked it over. And they took off—they had one welder, they took off every flume, welded the flumes up, welded the machine up and he started it up, operationally. He got the Regent American—it is the highest honor you can get. We were all so proud of him. We had that old look on him, fluffy [??] but that is the only one we had working around there. Otherwise everything was damaged. Railroads, track was all over then the time we were walking down to go there. We coming back the officers and I and let me tell you. Shelling a gun out there, over us maybe about fifty feet, to be honest it exploded them. We were covered with dirt and everything else. The captain got up and looked around at us and said "kind of close wasn't it?" We had to laugh, that never expected from him "that was kind of close wasn't it."

Schulties: We had to come down our bridge every night from the bridge we were working on and come to that little town. They bombed that bridge every—the MP had a stop watch when the shell would go, and once you tell him bounce it on and off, just take off. That's the way they bombed that bridge all the time. We had to repair—then from there we went to St. Lo working on the railroads. I had to learn all the railroad language. High volts, the power lines, I had to learn all the language of that. We were working there and there was a hospital there. One time a guy brought in a little girl all mangled. She had fallen onto a mine. All mangled up. They were also working a young prisoner, seventeen years old we found out later. He started clapping, his hands. I went up to the MP “better get that guy out of here. My men don't care for that, they have live ammunition and he can be a dead one” And nothing to it, “get him out of here”. He comes up to me and says I know what you mean. We were building a boiler room onto the hospital” He said “how many bricks?” I hadn't figured it out yet. I said “how many brick in a square foot?” He said “five.” He didn't believe me, better answer from me. I will figure out how many bricks to take off. I said “okay finish it up.” From there we were working there then the breakthrough started. We had orders to fill out for Belgium. So everybody was edgy, everybody didn't know what was going on. We got in trucks. Red ball [??] trucks came and picked us up, open trucks. I said “all right, we went into all Northern France. It started to get cold at night. I remember day and night four days it took us to get up there. They stopped long enough to give us our C-ration and eat it on the truck and keep on going. We were supposed to be by one bridge, the last bridge on the Meuse River. And that was our job, to protect. We went up and I walked up to there and said “Vince glad we landed there.” But then guys from the 28th Division were coming back from Bastogne, they caught it. They were given pack mules, boy they were so happy. I talked to some of them. A woman came up to me and she spoke English and she said “Sergeant I will tell you about that thing. That is where they used to hang people. Every ten weeks they would call around for ten people. And you're called and you were hung.” We don't realize what all they went through until people tell you about it. She said “I was waiting for my turn too.” I would say we were there for a while then we went up to guarding that bridge. We had wired that thing. We had wired it up to blow it up. It never got that far see. They got through Versailles, had they got through there we never would have won that war. But they caught them in time.

Macdonald: When you were over there you mentioned how cold it was, did you have winter clothing.

Schulties: Our regular clothing.

Macdonald: I mean did you guys have a hard time keeping warm at that time because it was one of the coldest winters wasn't it?

Schulties: Kind of winter yeah, it seemed more East was more snow and everything. There was no snow up by where we were. They had heavy overcoats. And there we did guard duty there. And moved back to France one day and next day move back to Belgium again, I don't know why, different places and then we went stayed up to this old castle in Treseene[?], Belgium. It was an old castle, half of it was falling down already and that is where we stayed. I was on guard duty there and we had patrol duty every day and one time, waited for the call—our orders were to take off and it didn't come in, it didn't come in, it didn't come in. The captain said "better take off anyway". I said "Captain, I am not going up there without a password." So while we were talking it came in, and we took off and it was an hour late. As we were coming around the corner, we were quite a ways out already; there was a group—maybe three farmers. Over there the farmers had bunched together. They had three farms together and they all come running up in the street. I am thinking what the heck is going on now. "What happened, what happened?" "A half hour ago this road was scaffolded." Had we been on that road, and I got the guys together "you better thank God we were in the right place." Seems we were by it all the time. I'd say—up from there we then went different places in Belgium and way on up near the German lines. And the Dutch—Montserrat [??] one of the trucks went off on of the edges one of the days, my trips becoming harder every time. The war was ended when we were at Munson we were supposed to go in two days over to Germany just everything happened so quickly.

Macdonald: When you heard the war had ended what was the feeling of the guys you were with?

Schulties: Well, there wasn't too much said about it, everybody was so quiet. Everybody was quiet. We went downtown, nothing going on downtown. So everybody was glad it was over. Everybody was appreciative about going home now.

MacDonald: Now was there any thought that some of the men would go to the Pacific because the war in the Pacific was still going on?

Schulties: No

MacDonald: No?

Schulties: We were overseas at that time and then our regiment was given up overseas. So we all came home together. We should have we went together we should've came home together. They had such a high ranking rating over in London that the engineers over there had earned such a high rating; they just kept the officers over there. One time they called me once

and said "go and get an I.Q. Test." I said "why do i need an I.Q. test?" "Want to be a second lieutenant?" Five of us went for I.Qs test, no score was so high we all could have been second lieutenant and major wanted me to be a second lieutenant, me and another—Hobbs. And he said "take the second lieutenant job." He took it but you had to give up six months of your overseas' rights.

MacDonald: Oh.

Schulties: I said "I am not going to, no more." Meantime I was up in Belgium, I don't know what happened. I was shipped back to the hospital in Paris. It was my back. I said I am ready to go home again and in the meantime that is when Buchwald was cleared out and they were bringing the equipment back. That is another scene I think of a lot of times. Just bones. And I did a month out there and then got a note that I should report to a Colonel up in office. And I got up there "belchen ein alfen" And he said "sprechen zein deutch?" "Em or so" is all I said. I should have kept my mouth shut at first. And then he said "Sergeant I know you are an Engineer, but I can take you right now, go into OCS, learn the German language and be an OCS operator in the frontlines." "Nothing good, I've been over here long enough not to go near the frontlines again." He said "remember I can call you any time." I said "You're the creep that [inaudible]" Like I say I got back into my company. Oh man, was it a big deal when I got back. I came out the first sergeant had already left to go home. And I was acting first sergeant. I came into that deck, that room there and I said "I need three men for work, work surprise." And one of the guys came up and he had an old coat there and he grabbed that coat and wrapped it around me and another two or three other guys got a rope and tied that coat with cord and tied me tight and carried me over and laid me across railroad tracks, just for fun. I went right along with it; we always had a lot of fun.

MacDonald: So you had enough points and get out and head back to the States then?

Schulties: Oh yeah, I was second one out. Now coming back—I was transferred from the engineers to another outfit. I was supposed to be over there for a while. I was transferred there waiting my number to come through, went to Antwerp—from Paris. I went from Paris to Antwerp, got the boat at Antwerp. Coming back we hit every storm in the North Atlantic. One of those ships they built in town. A lot of times they were in and out of the water. The thing would fall off in the back. The storms, toss you back and forth and alas we got back to Boston. I remember seeing Boston. I remember going with the people to headquarters there they got my papers mixed up. And then going on an overhead train and then I don't remember a bit of leaving Boston coming to Chicago—it is just blank. I don't know to till this day why it is blank!

MacDonald: Did you get discharged?

Schulties: Yes I had to come back to Chicago for discharge. They wanted me to stay in. I said "Stay in nothing, I had enough of that."

Macdonald: So what did you do after you got out of the Army then?

Schulties: I went back into carpenter work

Macdonald: Did you use any of the G.I. Bill that you were eligible for?

Schulties: No. I was thinking of going back and finish my design work, architect this that but then I thought I kept working around here. Nice work, I stayed a carpenter with my uncle.

Macdonald: Did you join any veteran's organizations?

Schulties: VFW

Macdonald: VFW

Schulties: Yeah and then in the meantime years ago back in the twenties my brother had an orchestra and I had a dance band. And we used to carry all of [inaudible] and this and that. He was killed crossing a fence, shot. Gun went off and shot him.

Macdonald: Oh

Schulties: I didn't do nothing and afterwards that I joined the barber shoppers' singing group. And we had a lot of fun with that we had quartet, four of us. Rusty Hinges that was some more fun. My later years then I was working and one guy from the Barber Shoppers from Manitowoc and we sang together and knew each other. He had passed away and the family owned a furniture store there. Part of it, they had it rented. And the partner was leaving so it was going to be empty, so they asked me if I would come and help them organize that furniture store. I didn't know what to do. Doing carpentry and design—anyway I gave it up the carpentry work and went to the furniture store. And we opened up a store specializing in Colonial and Early American and Victorian furniture. We were internationally known. People from foreign countries would come visit Manitowoc, they had to come, their parents had to come to show them the store. We had a nice a store. It wasn't big, just myself and one partner. One partner in the furniture we worked together. And when she passed away, I stayed there for a while. I had fun; I had a big problem in my leg so bum some of the time. I just limped and limped. I sent for some stuff and

within two weeks the pain was gone. [inaudible]—New Year’s Eve to May sometime but I am in and out of the hospital all the time.

MacDonald: What was the biggest project you built over there, what was the most unusual one?

Schulties: I would say the sewage plant.

MacDonald: The sewage plant.

Schulties: Had these great big beds of concrete and sewage would go from one to another and we had all these different units. And the best thing was in the meantime, that camp grew so fast we had to build another great big surplus tank out of brick.

MacDonald: Your service in World War II, what did that mean to you in your lifespan?

Schulties: There isn’t a day when you don’t think about it. By the way, my grandniece is a major in the Air Force Nurse Corp she was down in Tampa with General Franks. She was right with him and she went over and she was made captain. And she went over to Saudi Arabia and she was held underground at the office organizing the medical reports. She came back and then they had her take her exams for major. So she passed and now she is a major in the Air Force and in the meantime she wanted my history. So I wrote up my history on paper and who do you know. She came up to my sister and we were all there. My sister said “why don’t you dress up in your uniform once we never saw you in your uniform.” So she came down and she came up to me and said stand up. She opened a folder with a flag. I put that whole thing together, the flags, the colors, and a letter from the Army Chief of Staff, a letter from France. Right today she always sends me things from the Army. One of the things I—

[Break in recording] [End of tape 2, side A]

MacDonald: Side B and Milton is showing me—he has a nice framed collage of American Flag his great-niece had gotten for him. Also his uniform patches showing all of his ranks and his medals. You wanted to describe some of them of what you have?

Schulties: The white one was Pre-War and ETO over here, that is also up here, four campaigns. I was in four campaigns in France and Europe. The other ones are good conduct and different things. I have the gun medal, six bars—

MacDonald: Six bars indicating overseas duty. What is the red Keystone patch for?

Schulties: That is the 28th Division; that is the 32nd division; this is the unit special service overseas. I say from Private First Class, Corporal, First Staff Sergeant and First.

Macdonald: And he's had them framed up really nice and looking really good.

Schulties: Yeah.

MacDonald: He is showing; he also has framed up the 604th Army Engineering camouflage battalion headquarters.

Schulties: That was the unit I was transferred to to come home with.

MacDonald: Milton also has a folder with his discharge papers and many of his—

Schulties: I have all my orders from the time I got them I have every one of them. All my orders and then here is—darn gone can't see—there's my discharge.

MacDonald: That is his letter from Congressman Petrie.

Schulties: Yeah—she is giving citations here.

MacDonald: Pictures of his niece.

Schulties: Here is her office in the Pentagon when the Pentagon was bombed she was in Missouri. She said her room was all damaged, everything thrown around there. Now this is a picture I was down in Manitowoc I was showed them this group here. Here is a card I wrote all the different places that I worked. England, France and Belgium—all the different places that we worked. Next—

Macdonald: Milton did you ever keep in contact with any of the former people you worked with?

Schulties: A couple of them but they are all so far away. I went to Florida once. I came back and stopped at three places on my way back, that was years ago. Here are the three guys that started the 342nd Engineers. The cook was in there. And here is this area right here, docks and everything.

MacDonald: He is showing us diagrams of the docks that he built when he was over in Europe.

Schulties: This is the Air Force Command Post plans.

Mac Donald: And a number of pictures over in Europe.

Schulties: Here is the airplane hangars, steel work. The guys are way up in the skies on the steel work. My job in the steel works was there was a big 300 x 400 square foot organ steeple. All the footings had to be just perfect and that was my job to get the footings for the columns. They had to be perfect. It is a lot of extra work, airplane work.

MacDonald: Very impressive photographs.

Schulties: And right now I always have pictures of when we designed the new Veterans Memorial.

MacDonald: It is going to be placed in Sturgeon Bay.

Schulties: Yeah.

MacDonald: By the new city hall fire station-police station. Milton is showing a picture of the proposed Memorial that he has designed. He made a model of it.

Schulties: I don't know if they are picking my design or not yet.

Mac Donald: Okay, do you have anything else to say about your World War II experience at all? You went over it pretty thoroughly.

Schulties: We always had a lot of discipline. That shows up in all the guys. I used to get cards from all the guys. They respected me for what I did for them. Now we had two Italian boys, one was imitating Mussolini and Hitler. Those guys—one time I was in an Air Force base in an Air Force building. A truck load of brick—we were supposed to get some brick—the last truck was supposed to come in didn't come in. And the lieutenant said "where is that truck?" I said "I don't know" Sure enough two guys in the back of the truck imitating Mussolini and they had half the Air Force. I said "for crying out loud let's get this show on the road." They had so much fun. I think one had a mustache and the other one had his hair combed. One time we were down in near—I think it was Paris. We were so close to Paris we could ride a truck, took us down there once. We were walking around and all of a sudden a bunch of people were grouping around an organ grinder. I said "what the heck is going on down there?" I went down and two guys were imitating Mussolini and Hitler. And they had a crowd. They all had a crowd then. It was fun; we made fun out of everything.

MacDonald: What do you think was your most memorable experience of your war time?

Schulties: I think the invasion more than anything else, everything was so compacted, you didn't know where to walk. It seems that and patrols would be that. I know one time a British army with the Catholics took the trucks one way and the Belgians went the other way. And all wanted I wanted was to go to Church. One guy said "I don't want to go to church today." I said "come on we got to go to church today." All the guys in the truck were begging him. He said "I don't want to go; I am not dressed for it." One of the guys up in the truck said "I don't think the rest of us have tuxedos on." He got on the truck anyway. By the way, that was our only casualty.

Macdonald: Is that right?

Schulties: He was carrying tile, a big pilling by that bridge. I am pretty sure they were—I am not sure if he dropped it or stumbled on them or what. I wish we wouldn't have had any but—It's nice for all of the incidents and you wonder where they think of that you know.

MacDonald: I think you did very well here and I certainly appreciate it, Milton. And I am going to stop you here.

[End of Interview]