

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
WERNER A. SCHWARZ
U.S. Army, World War II
2008

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Schwarz, Werner A., (b.1914). Oral History Interview, 2008.

Approximate length: 53 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

Werner A. Schwarz was born in Germany in 1914. Escaping persecution as German Jew, he emigrated to the United States, in the 1930s, travelling via Belgium, France, Spain, Morocco and Brazil. In 1942 he was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to England. Werner describes taking part in the Invasion of Normandy where he landed on Omaha beach, and the subsequent Battle of Saint Lo. He tells a story about being made mayor of a town in Germany, due to him being a native German speaker, and being in charge returning foreign laborers, who had been working in sugar factories, from across Europe, back to their home countries. Schwarz discusses his duties after the war was over, where he was stationed in Bavaria and tells another story about arranging with a local distillery to produce liquor for the U.S. troops. He describes returning to the United States and his life after service. Schwarz also comments on visiting Eagle's Nest after the end of the war, and meeting a family friend from Germany, in France, during his service. Lastly, Schwarz reflects on being German-born and serving in the U.S. military during World War II.

Also on the recording is Schwarz's wife, Henny.

Biographical Sketch:

Werner A. Schwarz (b.1914) was drafted into the Army in 1942 and served during World War II in France and Germany. He was discharged in 1945.

Archivists' Note:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript.

Interviewed by Katherine Plane, 2008.

Transcribed by Kylee Sekosky, 2014.

Reviewed by Helen Gibb, 2015.

Abstract written by Helen Gibb, 2016.

Interview Transcript

[File 1]

Plane: This is an interview with Werner Schwarz, who served with the US Army during World War II. This interview is being conducted at Mr. Schwarz's home at the following address [REDACTED] Madison, Wisconsin. On the following date, August 6th 2008 the interview is Katherine Plane.

[Break in recording]

W Schwarz: I actually—I came from Germany and then to Brazil and from Brazil, I came here. I got the job and from there I got drafted, right?

H Schwarz: You got married and then you got drafted. You got married in 1942, March 1942, and you got drafted.

W Schwarz: Yeah, in forty-two and—

H Schwarz: He got drafted in 1942.

W Schwarz: But, I tell you something.

H Schwarz: And then you came back in 1945.

W Schwarz: It took me, I think two, three years to get into the United States, and I was here a while. How long was I here for? About two more years, and I was drafted in the Army and went right back to Europe.

H Schwarz: You see, I think, excuse me.

W Schwarz: You know, we are Jewish and they were after us. So, I had an uncle. He got me the ticket for Brazil and money, a little money, not much, and from Germany I went to Luxembourg. I had another uncle there. From there I went to—

H Schwarz: Le Havre. Marseilles. Le Havre.

W Schwarz: No, no, in Belgium. Where was I?

H Schwarz: Antwerp.

W Schwarz: I went to Antwerp, got on a boat and then to Le Havre, France and from there by the way of Spain and what-not, the boat stopped there. And in fact, I was two days in Casablanca and went to Brazil.

H Schwarz: I can show you the route. We have route on the map, how we went.

W Schwarz: Well in Brazil, I was an illegal alien. I was a tourist and that was only good for a certain time, then I had to disappear. I went from one of end of São Paulo, that's where I was most of the time, to the other end and finally I was in the jungle-

Mato Grosso. It means “big woods.” There I felt not safe. It's such a complicated thing, it's—I can talk for two hours and it's the same thing. Well I got here and after a couple of years I went right back where I came from- Europe, England.

Plane: What did you do in Brazil to work, for work?

W Schwarz: What did I—what didn't I do? I worked in a toy store. I washed dishes. You name it, I did it, just to stay alive, but somehow that uncle of mine got me in São Paulo a place. I stayed there for a while and then my uncle who was here, not the uncle that sent me the papers—it was a mess, believe me.

Plane: Where did you come to in the United States?

H Schwarz: To New York.

W Schwarz: What's that?

Plane: What city did you come to in the United States?

W Schwarz: New York.

H Schwarz: New York City

W Schwarz: Everybody went to New York you know? That's—I had no idea, never heard of Wisconsin.

Plane: What did you do when you were in New York?

W Schwarz: When I was in New York? Well, I got a job in the garment center, and from there eventually I went into the army and that's it.

Plane: Were you drafted?

W Schwarz: Yeah, when was I drafted? It should be on the—[pause]

H Schwarz: I think 1942.

Plane: 1943. February 20th 1943.

H Schwarz: Oh yeah, it was just before we were married one—we weren't married one year. We were married eleven months, that's right. Yeah, eleven months.

W Schwarz: What?

H Schwarz: You were married. We were married exactly eleven months when you were drafted.

W Schwarz: Eleven months.

Plane: But you weren't a citizen when you were drafted?

W Schwarz: No, I wasn't a citizen, but when I was in the army, they made me a citizen after a certain time, in Baltimore, I believe. Yeah.

Plane: And then they sent you to Germany? They sent you to Germany?

H Schwarz: No, no.

W Schwarz: They sent me to—

H Schwarz: England.

W Schwarz: Sit here, Henny.

H Schwarz: They sent him, they drafted him, he was in the States for about six months, was on renewal, was here and all that, and he came home for two nights and told me he was going to come home every night and I was very happy, and after two nights he went—he didn't come home any more, and he went to England. He was sent to England with a full ship, you know. And, I hadn't heard from him until—that was September. I hadn't heard from him until Christmas. That I found, finally had a letter, he was in England, and he was in England until June 1944, where he came across with the tanks and on to the beach of Normandy.

Plane: What did you do in England?

W Schwarz: What did we do? Actually, we was sitting and waiting to go, uh, to France, you know? To invade France. And they trained us, and we worked on tanks, and we didn't do anything special or spectacular. We just waited the time for the invasion to start and we were sitting there, and eventually it started, and we loaded the tanks on boats, and we got to get towards Omaha Beach. But while we were on those boats with the tanks, we couldn't land there because there was a big storm, and we were sitting there for two days, and everybody got seasick, you have no idea. After about two days or something like that, we finally could land and bring the tanks on, and that's the way it was. From there it was one thing after the other. But you have here, let me see this—[pause] You should write in here, "Saint-Lô". There was a big battle. It was so big, eh, it was like Armageddon, the end of the world. You have no idea, nobody, you got to be in with that, and we didn't know, "Are they shooting at us or are we shooting at them?" Unbelievable. The next day, we went to Saint-Lô. The whole city was pulverized. We had to put gas mask on—the dust and everything would affect you. You have no idea.

Plane: So what country was that in?

W Schwarz: What?

Plane: What country was that in?

W Schwarz: France.

H Schwarz: France. Saint-Lô in France.

Plane: Okay.

H Schwarz: Right there after the beach. As a matter a fact, the acquaintance of ours, who was a navigator, was also stationed in England and America from Wisconsin—

W Schwarz: Henny, Henny, never mind.

H Schwarz: And he wrote a whole book about Saint-Lô. Was a terrible, terrible battle.

W Schwarz: You see, needless to say, when I was in the army, I was only here not too long. I had talk a bit English, you know. In Normandy they are the hedgerows, I don't know if you've ever heard of it, but the veterans think they know, you can't get through them. It's impossible. So, I was standing guard there, and—

H Schwarz: Well, let's—if you want to explain something, the hedgerows in France are like borders of somebody's land, and they are there for hundreds of years so they are like—you can't even go through with a tank. It was impossible. They are like granite, you cannot—that's trees, I mean it's nature, but they're so tough and so hard from all these years, hundreds of years, that you can't—they are known, hedgerows are known in Europe, and he used to tell me about it in his letters.

W Schwarz: So anyway, I was standing guard there in the hedgerows and all of a sudden, I hear something in back of me, and—well, I was alert, and I was apprehensive, and I didn't go through the procedure. If somebody comes in front of you, ask, "Who's coming?" This was in the back, I didn't wait and ask. I fired my submachine gun and quiet. And the next day, you know what I killed? A cow.

H Schwarz: Well, it frightens—it can be frightening.

W Schwarz: That was in—

H Schwarz: In France.

Schwarz: Huh?

H Schwarz: It was in France.

Schwarz: In Normandy.

H Schwarz: Yeah.

Schwarz: And I mean, it's just what comes to my mind now, and in the Battle of the Bulge, I don't know if you ever heard of it? You know the Germans infiltrated, there was a whole, whole mix-up, and I was put in charge to pick up some gasoline for the tanks, in Belgium. We had to go to Brussels, so I was in a Jeep with another guy, and he did the driving, and he had to give the password, you know? There were stops every two, three miles, very apprehensive. So, he gave the password and all that, keep on driving. So, finally he said, "You know, I'm getting sick and tired, you give the password." Me. So I didn't think. I gave the password and boom two rifles in my face, in our face. You see we— when you come from Germany, we

speaking German. We have trouble with the "v" and "w's." I don't know if you know this, but uh—

H Schwarz: Well, it's a known fact.

Schwarz: Yeah, so anyway, they didn't believe us. We talked to them. We ended up for a short while in some kind of a camp. They thought we were Germans infiltrating.

Plane: Wow.

Schwarz: Yeah. They asked me the password. I gave it and then they asked me something about baseball, which I still don't know, and then we ended up for, I don't know, an hour or so, in some kind of a camp. They held us, they sent the runner back to find out—

H Schwarz: They were prisoners of war for one hour [laughs].

W Schwarz: We were prisoners of war.

H Schwarz: American soldiers were [laughs]—

W Schwarz: In the American army.

H Schwarz: American Army [both laugh].

H Schwarz: Stupid, no?

Plane: That's incredible.

H Schwarz: But that's a fact. The German people cannot pronounce the "v's" and the "w's" like an English and that's how always people could tell if you were foreigner, you know, because if you were born American then you have no problems. But even if you learn English fluently, you still have that problem with the "v's" and the "w's." So, that's how they could tell, you know?

W Schwarz: What else can I tell you?

Plane: Were you actually on the beach at Normandy?

W Schwarz: On the line to battle—

H Schwarz: Werner! She asked you if you were on the beach in Normandy!

W Schwarz: Of course!

Plane: Yeah.

H Schwarz: As a matter of fact, we went back. We were back in eighty-four, I believe. We visited—I have cousins in Paris. We visited France, and my cousin's young son drove us one morning to the Normandy beach, to Omaha beach where he landed, and it was a very, very emotional visit, because he remembered certain parts of—of the *landschaft*. What is that?

W Schwarz: Huh?

H Schwarz: The scenery, you know? You see now that we get older, our German comes back and we don't get—we forget English. It's very strange. And I spoke to a doctor. He said to me that your mother language is up there, and as you get older, it returns. So, we have sometimes trouble translating different words, you know?

W Schwarz: Yeah. On the line, the Battle of Saint-Lô, you—nobody can imagine. It was Armageddon. I thought it was the end of the world. We were an outpost guard, I think six of us, something like that, and all of a sudden, hell broke loose, but you cannot imagine. We were on a small hill. That hill was vibrating.

H Schwarz: And they were in a tank.

W Schwarz: It was unbelievable.

H Schwarz: And when we were back in '84, we went to Saint-Lô, and there was a big sign up by the mayor's office, and it was so shot up, it was unbelievable, and the United States sent the money to build up Saint-Lô again. It's a big sign there.

W Schwarz: Yeah.

H Schwarz: It's a very important battle.

W Schwarz: When the battle was over, we went through Saint-Lô. I told you, we had to wear a mask to get through, and on the hill, it's like a valley, there's a river, not a big river but—and it goes down and up like something that's very tiny Grand Canyon, and there's Saint-Lô, but later on I found out that the artillery was shooting in there at the fly—the airplanes were shuttling from England to drop their bombs, went back and forth, and back and forth. It was unbelievable, and once that was done, then things got much, much easier. So that's about it.

Plane: How long were you in France?

W Schwarz: Huh?

Plane: How long were you in France?

W Schwarz: I don't know. No idea.

H Schwarz: Well, with the whole—as long as it took for the American army to go to Germany, you know, back to Belgium, but he was in France for a while.

W Schwarz: You know, it's too bad I never got to my home town in Germany. You know, we were in the northern part of Germany and I come from the south. Ask me questions.

Plane: [Laughs].

H Schwarz: I tell you. Our life alone is a book, you know? You could write a book about our life, including with the war.

Plane: What did you, what was your everyday life like in France after you got through the battles?

H Schwarz: What was your everyday life like in France?

W Schwarz: In France?

H Schwarz: Yeah. I mean, explain to her what you did with the tanks.

W Schwarz: Well, the thing was that I was in the ordinance heavy maintenance, which means we fixed up disabled tanks, and the tanks had to be picked up in the field wherever they were and I was, we were three fellows on a rig, we'd lift the tanks, you know, we took them one by one in the area and they checked them and fixed 'em, what could be fixed. That's what I did I didn't fire any shots or anything, just a few tanks. [Phone rings] I fired a shot in Aachen, Aix-la-Chapelle. There was a house—I was on guard duty again, there was a house there and no buildings supposed to have light, you know? The blinds have to be drawn and all that, and well anyway, the blinds were opened and closed and then opened and closed, and I got wary. I figured there are Germans in there, and they are signaling something with the thing. So, I fired the shot in there. Out came one of our officers and, "Who fired the shot?" Laugh, laugh, laugh. It turned out to be, they're having a good time with some girls up there, having a nice party [laughs].

Plane: Did you get in trouble?

W Schwarz: Huh?

Plane: Did you get in trouble?

H Schwarz: Did you get in trouble?

W Schwarz: No! They got into trouble. Nobody really got into trouble. We had a nice bunch of officers, very nice.

H Schwarz: You see, he was pretty lucky, because in France he spoke quite good French. He was able to himself with French folk. In Germany, he could speak German. So it was a very good thing for him to be able to talk to people and all that, you know? Like if, I remember he told me one time they were always looking for eggs, you know, and some of the farmers would give them eggs, but he was able to talk French. So, the farmers gave him right away, you know. So, the guys always said, "Werner, go ahead and get some eggs," or something, you know. So, I mean, these things were all very good for him 'cause of the language, and of course in Germany, he was speaking German, you know, and they put him in one little place. They made him a—almost like a *Burgermeister* there you know, to take care of the town, because he could speak—I mean, he speaks today yet perfectly good German, you know. So, it helped him a little bit with the, during the war, the languages. You know, I tell you something. History is really something like, um, like if you want to write about certain times. He was not a soldier in the field shooting, shooting, you know. He was with the tanks. They went out to the front

to pick up the bad tanks and bring 'em back and repair them and bring them back. So, he was not in the shooting was per say, you know, but of course he had to know how to shoot. He had a gun and all that, you know, you never know. His experiences that he had, like what he told you now, little things, you know. It's very funny. I mean some of the things are very funny, but he was able to understand French, so that was good for him, and he could speak German. So, that helped him a lot, and he was sent to the European theater, you know.

Plane: Do you remember any specific people?

W Schwarz: What?

H Schwarz: Do you remember anything specific?

Plane: People. People.

H Schwarz: Yeah, with people?

W Schwarz: No, not really. I had to job in France. I had a good buddy, he took pictures, and I—my job was to get film for him, you know, so that we could take pictures. I got a whole bunch of pictures, which he took, but we were in France and in Germany, I was able to do that for him. I mean it has nothing to do with the war. It was his hobby.

H Schwarz: Well, I don't know. I mean, I don't know. This is so very silly, what you're talking about. This is not what this young lady wanted to hear.

Plane: You want to talk about—

W Schwarz: Wait a minute. I'm—it's written here. I don't know.

Plane: It says you earned a medal for good conduct, a World War eleven [II] Victory Medal.

W Schwarz: Yeah. All these little things.

H Schwarz: He gave them all to the children, you know. We gave his whole thing to my children, to my daughter. Because, in case we die, she has all the stuff, you know, but wasn't anything extraordinary I would say, you know. I mean he wasn't in combat, he wasn't the infantry.

W Schwarz: You know when the war was over, we were in Germany, I ended up being a mayor of a town.

Plane: You did?

W Schwarz: Yeah, sure.

Plane: What town?

W Schwarz: Klein Wanzleben

H Schwarz: Where is that near at, Werner?

W Schwarz: Huh?

H Schwarz: Where is that near at?

W Schwarz: Near, it's not too far from—I would say about fifty, sixty miles away from Berlin in northern part, near Magdeburg, but on this side—on the left side of the Elbe River, and they made me—I was running the town.

Plane: How long were you mayor?

W Schwarz: Huh?

Plane: How long were you mayor?

W Schwarz: Oh, I don't know. Until the war—I would say about six, eight weeks, I'm guessing but the name itself Klein Wanzleben. You don't know any German at all?

Plane: No.

W Schwarz: “Little [inaudible] life”

H Schwarz: Crazy. “Little [inaudible] life.” Yep.

Plane: So what did you do as mayor?

W Schwarz: Well I had a quite a important job, because they had big sugar places there, farms, and they made sugar and they were a lot of workers from Poland, from Russia, and they were not slave labors, they were workers, you know, and from different countries. And, know here's the thing, I was the mayor, but on top of me was a first lieutenant. So, one day while, when we got there, they told me, "Go to the supply clerk and get a pistol." I didn't have a pistol. I had a rifle. “And, you work with the—” What's his name, forgot his name—I think he was from Boston someplace. He was the head—my head but he didn't do anything, he couldn't do anything. So, my job was to get those foreign workers back to Russia, to Poland, and there was some from Italy and what not, and that took time. Most of them were glad to go, and some of them didn't want to go. So, I had to get into Helmstedt, which was a railroad station and get them on different trains. It was quite a—quite a thing.

Plane: So after you were mayor, did you leave Europe or did you stay there for a while?

W Schwarz: What's that?

Plane: After you, after you were mayor, did you leave Europe?

W Schwarz: No, no.

Plane: You stayed?

W Schwarz: No, when the war was finally over—

H Schwarz: Which was 1944.

W Schwarz: We went—that's in northern Germany, and then we went—that became later on the English section. And we pulled out and we ended up in Bavaria, that's in the far south in the Alps there, and we were there and from there we went home.

Plane: What did you do in Bavaria?

W Schwarz: What did I do? Let me think a minute [pause].

H Schwarz: The camps, Werner, with the people.

W Schwarz: I was put in charge entertaining the troops. We didn't do a darn thing. [Plane laughs]. You know? I was put in charge of a small hotel, and there was some German entertainers there from Berlin, which were down there because it was safe during the war, and we had a hell of a good time. Where was the town Henny?

H Schwarz: You didn't tell me that. You told me a different story.

W Schwarz: Huh?

H Schwarz: You told me a different story.

W Schwarz: Oh, *ja, ja*. In that town—

H Schwarz: You know, you Werner, you know. I don't know. You were down in the south, there were a lot of camps of displaced persons.

W Schwarz: Nah, they—

H Schwarz: You told me.

W Schwarz: Yeah, that's—

H Schwarz: And that's—

[break in recording][00:31:22.27 to 00:31:30.02]

Plane: Okay.

W Schwarz: Yeah, we were in Bad Reichenhall—it's a spa. So, one day they told us, "Well, get a truck and go to Frankfurt, and you pick up some wine there." You know, the war was over. So, we went to Frankfurt and got the truck load of wine, and we got it back, and—the Americans at that time, maybe even now, they are not so keen about wine, more hard liquor. So, I asked about this and I got all that wine there. What can I do? So, we said, "Well, up on the hill there is a—"

H Schwarz: Distillery.

W Schwarz: Yeah, a small distillery, a man and his wife and what not. He can distill it. So, I went up there, told him. He said, "Yes, I can do it."

H Schwarz: Excuse me; you see that's all because of the German. He could speak German.

W Schwarz: Yeah.

H Schwarz: That was all done in German.

Plane: Yeah.

H Schwarz: That's why they sent him up there.

W Schwarz: Yeah, so anyway, we went up to him, and I told him, "Make me strong liquor." "How strong?" "I don't know how strong. I don't drink or hardly ever. Well, the very strongest you can. Stronger yet." "Okay," he said, "I can do that. How old do you want it? If I make it" —I'm just guessing, I don't know anymore— "If I want to make it three years, it takes one day. If I want to make it ten years, it takes three days." So, "Okay, make it the strongest." I took that down to the company area, and we had a big party. Now I don't drink. I drink that much liquor, but the other guys, they all got drunk. And the following day—I meant, I was sitting in the park. Somebody came running. "The whole company is sick. Boy, you are in trouble, you with your liquor there." They weren't sick, they were still drunk. He made the strongest thing you can imagine.

H Schwarz: Well, you see, now Werner, there is another explanation for that, you know. I mean, you tell this young woman stories, she thinks God know—you know, my oldest brother in-law was a chemist and he worked for Schenley's [Laboratories, Inc] during the war. And they were making penicillin and all that stuff. But, Schenley was a distillery from liquor, and let's—I'm just giving you a number now—let's say eighty was very high. But, what he didn't know, because he was not used to liquor all together that in Europe if you say eighty, they make it a hundred and sixty, because it's always double. So, the liquor was like pure alcohol. So naturally, they all got drunk and sick, but he didn't know that. He said, "Well, I remember in the United States, you make eighty, eighty-six that's pretty good strong liquor," but you know. But in Europe, when you say eighty-six or eighty it's double. You know? So that's why the people all got so sick. It wasn't—so, when you tell these stories, you have to explain why that happened.

Plane: That's okay.

H Schwarz: 'Cause, you know.

Plane: That's okay.

W Schwarz: So.

Plane: So how did you get home?

W Schwarz: How did I get home? Let me think a minute. Uh, we went to Sal—no, where did we go? I forgot.

H Schwarz: You came from France.

W Schwarz: From France?

H Schwarz: Yeah. Marseilles, I think you came from Marseilles.

W Schwarz: I really don't remember anymore.

Plane: That's okay. Do you remember—did you come back to New York City?

W Schwarz: Well, we landed in the south.

H Schwarz: Virginia.

W Schwarz: In Virginia and we went on a train and up to Fort Dix. That's where I was—

H Schwarz: New Jersey—

W Schwarz: Inducted and there—

H Schwarz: That's in New Jersey and from there you took a bus, or you took a train. I don't know what you did.

W Schwarz: Yeah on a train. We went on to Grand Central.

H Schwarz: Yeah then you transferred—

W Schwarz: No, no Penn Station.

H Schwarz: Then you took a train from Jersey.

W Schwarz: And then to Penn Station, and I got out, and I was bewildered, you know, while I was just years in Europe, New York was a wild city. I got dizzy. I really got dizzy. People come, go, up, blah, blah. I went on the subway. I was in a daze, because she couldn't come and get me in Fort Dix. It was impossible. So, I finally—I had forgotten what subway to take to the Bronx. So, finally, I got organized and what not. It was an ordeal. You have no idea.

Plane: So how did it feel?

W Schwarz: Huh?

Plane: How did it feel coming home from Germany? I mean, going back to Germany and then—did you feel like you were a citizen of the United States?

W Schwarz: What?

Plane: Did you feel like the United States was your home? Did you feel—

H Schwarz: Did you feel the United States was your home.

W Schwarz: Did I what?

H Schwarz: Of course, when you came back after the war, did you feel that the United States was your home?

W Schwarz: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

H Schwarz: You had your wife there, for goodness sakes. It's got to be your home.

W Schwarz: No, I—no way I wanted to go back to Europe or anything.

Plane: So what did you do after you left the military?

W Schwarz: After I got out of the Army? Uh, I went back in the garment center, and I worked there for a while. And then, slowly I got organized, and I worked in a place like Home Depot, but much, much smaller. I worked there for a while.

Plane: Did you ever go back, go back to school?

W Schwarz: No.

Plane: No.

W Schwarz: I had my mother here, and I was married, and I had to work. That was a big mistake, I should have done that.

Plane: Did you become involved in any veterans organizations? Any veterans' organizations?

W Schwarz: No. I tell you the truth, when I got out of the Army, you know, that was it. I had enough Army, and I tell you, I went in New York a couple a times to the—I think it was the American Legion. I went there, and all they were talking about, the Army and drinking beer and the Army and drinking beer. And the stories got bigger and bigger. Everybody was a hero, and I had enough Army.

Plane: Is there anything else that happened in France that you can think of that we didn't talk about?

W Schwarz: Well, I tell you, we were—there's a lot of funny stories. We were in Méru that's about twenty miles from Paris, and the Germans were on the run already. So, we were in that town, and I'm on the street talking to somebody, looking for some wine or something, not for me, but for the other guys. And, there was a lady looking out of the window. And this was about—heaven knows how many miles from my home town where I was born. She's looking out the window and looked at me, and then she said, "Aren't you Werner Schwarz?" in the middle of France, near Paris.

Plane: Wow.

W Schwarz: I was dumbfounded. I looked at her and said, "Yes, I'm Werner Schwarz." "Is your mother's name Tilla?" "Yes." "I remember you from a particular town in

Germany. I used to be friends with your mother and all that.” And, so I said, “What are you doing?” “I was hiding here in France while the Germans were occupying.” That was an unusual story.

Plane: So looking back—

W Schwarz: Huh?

Plane: Looking back on your war experiences and the whole experience, um, how do you feel about—how do you feel about all of it?

W Schwarz: I tell you, it was a great adventure. While it was going on, I could have done without it, but looking back it was a great adventure.

H Schwarz: You know, it’s uh—if I may put in some words. It's a very, very, uh, strange—it was a very strange period.

W Schwarz: You know, I come from a long line of warriors.

H Schwarz: I was just going to say. I was just going to tell that story.

W Schwarz: My grandfather was, in Germany of course, was in the—

H Schwarz: 1870.

W Schwarz: 1870, in the French-Prussian war, a German soldier. My father was in the First World War. He was killed.

Plane: Wow.

W Schwarz: Yeah.

H Schwarz: He was a German soldier.

W Schwarz: And I was in this one. So—

H Schwarz: That's what I wanted to say. It's—this whole background of ours, you know, has a lot to do with it. And, it's very hard to explain to a young person, like you, who was born way after the oldest problem. To understand what we went through, you know. I mean, we were no children. We came here, we were adults, and so to live in Germany during those years, during those terrible Nazi years, and then finally getting here and becoming American soldier—actually, I was very proud of the fact that he was an American soldier, 'cause I wanted him to get off this German thing, you know.

W Schwarz: You know, while we were in Germany, in the southern part, we had a hell of a good time. You know there was nothing doing and they had, they entertained us, you know. I was in Hitler's Eagle's Nest, way up—I mean not on the—they took us there. They took us all over. It was nice.

H Schwarz: It was after the war.

W Schwarz: It was uh—

Plane: That was after the war was over?

W Schwarz: Huh?

Plane: That was after the war was over?

H Schwarz: Course, you have to explain that. It was after the war, you went to Eagle's Nest after the war.

W Schwarz: Uh—

H Schwarz: You know, after the war, all the Germans, there was no Nazi, they were all good Germans after the war and what they did.

W Schwarz: I'm trying to think of something else. I don't uh—

Plane: Well, I was going to ask you, if you had anything else to say that I hadn't asked you about already.

W Schwarz: I bet you when you are gone, "Oh I should have told her that. I should have told her that."

Plane: That's okay. Well, thank you for your time.

W Schwarz: Well, thank you for being interested. Are you a friend of Kathy's?

H Schwarz: Well—Carol Sherman [sp??] and Kathy Lederhaus [sp??]

[break in recording]

W Schwarz: Let me get this in perspective. You know, being in the Army, the thing is this: you go on basic training and then you go to the placement depot, and they take so many men out. If a company is below strength, they fill them up from that placement thing. So, uh, we went there and then up all ten or twelve—I forgot how many—were taken out of that camp and put through the 503 ordinance.

H Schwarz: You can put it on the table there. This is for Micah. Here, you want a little bit?

W Schwarz: Put it down there.

H Schwarz: Would you like one of these? They're very nice.

W Schwarz: No.

H Schwarz: Now, put it over there.

W Schwarz: They sent us to the company to fill up. So, uh, the following morning there was roll call, and you hear all German names. "Graus, Schmidt, Schultz," everything—so next to me is a little Italian boy, he said, "Hey Schwarz, we're in

the wrong army." And his name was Stigliano. He became "Sticky," and after a while he became "Stinky." Yeah.

H Schwarz: He was a cute guy. Yeah.

W Schwarz: Yeah.

Plane: Where did you do your basic training?

W Schwarz: Huh?

Plane: Where did you do your basic training?

W Schwarz: Where?

Plane: Yeah.

W Schwarz: In Virginia at Fort Lee, I believe.

H Schwarz: I thought it was Camp Holabird.

Plane: Camp Hallaberry?

W Schwarz: Huh?

H Schwarz: Was it Camp Holabird?

Plane: Camp Holabird?

W Schwarz: Camp Holabird?

H Schwarz: Camp Holabird! Wasn't it in Camp Holabird?

W Schwarz: No, Holabird we—that was no basic training. It was in Virginia, Camp Lee.

H Schwarz: Camp Lee, yeah.

W Schwarz: Or Fort Lee, whatever.

Plane: Did you have advanced training? Advanced training?

W Schwarz: Like what?

Plane: That's what they do now is they go from basic to advanced training.

W Schwarz: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. They taught me how to—____[??] finishing and upholstery, can you imagine it?

H Schwarz: That I couldn't understand.

W Schwarz: Yeah, that was the advanced training.

Plane: Did you ever actually use that?

W Schwarz: Huh?

Plane: Did you ever actually do that when you were in the war?

W Schwarz: No, no. They had me sewing something together, and I leaned over, and I attached my fatigue jacket to a piece of cloth. That's how my advanced training was. No that was funny when they called—you see all the German names when they called at role called in the morning, “Schmidt, Schultz, Schwarz,” blah, blah, blah. The company formed in Kansas, and about half or maybe two thirds were Germans, which came from the Volga River in Russia. That's the whole—

H Schwarz: But not now, a hundred years ago Werner.

W Schwarz: Yeah, and somehow they settled in Russia but never intermingled with the people in Russia, that's you know—and somehow they all immigrated to Kansas, and they all could speak German yet, but the old German, the— you know, the German, or—every language changes over years and years—and they could speak German but the old German. And, they brought with them winter wheat, which is very important in, uh, that they have wheat. That's a very interesting thing.

Plane: So did the rest of your family stay in Germany, or did they come to the United States too?

W Schwarz: Well some twenty of the family got killed. My mother came, my cousin came—somehow I got him out—and that's about it. But, that's a chapter by itself.

Plane: Okay. Well, thanks again.

W Schwarz: Huh?

Plane: Thanks again. Is there anything else you can think of?

W Schwarz: I tell you, by the time you are downstairs, something comes back. I can't think of anything.

Plane: Okay.

[End of interview]