

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM F. SCHMIDT

FOR THE  
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INTERVIEW BY  
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KURT PIEHLER: ... This begins an interview with William S. Schmidt on April 28, 2000 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler ...

JERILYN EVANS: ... And Jerilyn Evans.

[NOTE: MR. SCHMIDT'S WIFE HAROLDEAN IS ALSO PRESENT AND IDENTIFIED  
HEREAFTER AS DEANIE]

PIEHLER: And I guess I'd like to begin by thanking you for coming here on your way to a veterans' reunion in Johnson City.

WILLIAM F. SCHMIDT: You're most welcome.

PIEHLER: And I wanna, I guess, go back to your parents, and could you tell me a little about your ... father and mother, I guess, beginning with your father.

SCHMIDT: Okay, my father was a—at the beginning, was the president of a little school, academy and seminary at St. Paul Lutheran that is no longer in operation. It went belly up during the Depression ... and then he went to Concordia College as a college professor. That's the home I grew up in. My mother was from near Iron Mountain, Michigan, and she had her training at Oshkosh Normal, and became a schoolteacher and then a YWCA worker. [She] went on to Baker, Oregon, where she met my father, who was a home missionary in the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. And they got married, and about a year and a half or two years later, I was born. Two years later, I think. Yeah. And I was born in Spokane, Washington. [I] was two years old [when] we moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. [We] lived there seven years near Lake Phelan. Then went to Moorhead, Minnesota, on the campus of Concordia College, and lived there seven years. These were the beginning of the war years.

When I went into ninth grade, Hitler went into Poland, and for six years, the world was involved in war. And my involvement didn't happen until—I was kind of watching a war like you'd watch a basketball game, at that time, because we weren't in it. But then Pearl Harbor happened when I was a junior in high school, and then I knew, and everybody knew, if you were a boy you would be in the service.... I took a test that I passed, for the A-12 program, and became a reservist in the Army Specialized Training Program, so that when I graduated from high school in 1943, I went to Indiana University and had a term there, a quarter there. After that, I had Christmas at home and went to Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis. And after going to that fort, they sent me to Fort Benning. I was going to become a soldier but, of course, to go back to the campus. However, in the history, Eisenhower was concerned because he had lost about 70,000 fighting people in Italy and elsewhere. And he thought he needed people. He didn't care for engineers or doctors. He swept the campuses and closed the program, and 5,000 of us went from our basic training to Fort Bragg, North Carolina with the 100<sup>th</sup> Division. That 100<sup>th</sup> Division had been in Fort Jackson before this time [and] then they had some Tennessee maneuvers. And the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne was kind enough to leave that area to get ready for D-Day, and to let us have all of their nice places to stay. That's where we stayed. And they tried to make soldiers out of us. 5000 of us were really college boys, and so it was an interesting [and] different kind of group. But the sergeants and the low-ranking officers, and all the officers, had

been busy for several years training people to be soldiers. And I don't know what—how good a job they did, but they did not have as many casualties, I think, in that division as in some other divisions. But that could have been because of the circumstances we were in. But ... they tried to keep casualties fairly much to a minimum. They didn't, for example, in going to Shirmeck—toward the end of November [1943], the—probably the battalion was stopped at a little place, and they didn't have a whole lot of people there. They did have some weapons, and they used them rather well. And instead of storming the place that evening, they let them pull out and ... then we went on our way to take what was our objective. In other words, we could have expended a couple of platoons going into that—uh, basically it was a ... tavern and a few ... stone buildings, and—but we did not do that.

But going back into the—basic training was just basic training. In those little huts down in Georgia with those little stoves that they had that you could make cherry red. 'Cause the huts themselves were miserable and I thought Georgia was in the South, but I think it's near the North Pole! And they had these little buildings that ... would say on the door, "This building will burn in fifteen minutes." And of course, we had a little fun with that statement. I thought they starved us, but evidently, they didn't. But the PX did have sweet potato pie and pints of ice cream. So that sustained us ... in whatever they were feeding us.... You know, infantry basic is like infantry basic and everybody had it.... You had to learn to fire the various weapons. When I got to [the] ... 100<sup>th</sup> Division, they put me into Company H. And that would be in the machine gun—heavy machine gun, water-cooled. And I worked with that for a couple of months. I got there maybe in April. They had a time when we went to shoot those pistols. I could not even hit the wall. (Laughter) And I don't know if that's the reason they transferred me to Company E ... as a rifleman or not, but I know that I was transferred ... from H Company. I could carry the tripod. I was the first gunner. Later in the war, I met my third ammunition bearer. And I said, "What are you doing?" And he says, "I'm the ... gunner." I says, "Whatever happened"—and I ticked off the other fellows. And this one, mostly—one had been killed and a couple had been wounded so that they weren't back with the group anymore. So, being a heavy machine gunner was not a good occupation. Being a rifleman wasn't all that good, but it was—I mean, you were just one rifleman out of many, but they [Germans] just loved to get those machine guns. So, I was glad to be a rifleman.

Now where are we? Are we in Fort Benning, Georgia? No, we're at Fort Bragg. And Fort Bragg—I wasn't the greatest soldier because they—we had a sighting [of] our rifles, you know to make sure they would get into a small pattern. And then they told us to clean our rifles and I, for some reason, no-good reason, thought that cleaning the rifle also should mean to clean the sights [and] take those apart. (Laughter) So I don't know exactly how well I did on the shooting that next day, but that was what counted. And—but I did well enough to get some sort of a marksman's badge. They didn't give badges too much. We never saw the badges. They were busy training us to go overseas.... My father came into North Carolina ... towards early part of September at a meeting that he was going to [for] some religious group. At that time, he was the pastor at Youngstown, Ohio. He had a Lutheran Church there. He asked the person that was conducting the meeting, or the host of the meeting, if he could see his son in Fort Bragg. And he said, "Fort Bragg is closed down." And it was closed down in September some time. There were no passes, no encouragements to go out and see anybody or do anything. And then we got on the train ... toward the end ... of September, I presume. Time was never very important. I

didn't have a watch, and you didn't have to know anything, just listen for what the sergeant told you to do and do it. And you went to bed when they told you to go to bed, and you got up when they woke you up. And that's army life. And ... I was just a young kid, nineteen, quite unsophisticated at my nineteenth birthday there at Fort Bragg. We took a train up to New Brunswick, New Jersey, Camp Kilmer. I called ... Dad and Mother, from Times Square. Got a one day pass in, half one in one day, and half one in the other day. And he—I said, "I can't tell you where I am or where I'm going to go. And he said, "I think it's something about trees isn't it?" And of course, that's a Kilmer poem. So, he knew, everybody knew where we were. The Germans knew where we were. They welcomed us when we got to Marseilles, but that's a little further down in the story.

They loaded us onto the George Washington. That used to be a German ship called the Deutschland. It was a rather large ship. That is, that's where I was. I don't know that the entire division was on that ship, but in October, we went over the North Atlantic route. If you looked on—if you thought of the ship life, we were down in E deck. I think there was no stairway any further down in the ship. And we had it kind of figured at a certain place on that wall that's where the torpedo would come through. (Laughter) So, we ... were aware of the fact that they did sink ships. And the latrines had two designated toilets for the use that they said they had crabs. I didn't know what crabs were, but I knew they were bad, and that therefore you didn't use those two toilets. (Laughter) But I think that was just another way of having—they were the most convenient in case somebody really needed to get in there and throw up. They had salt water for our showers and our washing. They gave us canteens of water, and that annoyed us no end ... having messages over the ship's radio telling the sailors not to waste the fresh water in the showers. We were getting saltwater showers with saltwater soap. And I had one of those Gillette razors that scoot up in the handle, which was totally useless by the time we reached Marseilles because it rusted. I don't remember shaving much in the service. Actually, once—no—in stateside yes, I do remember the chaplain came to see us one time in France and I got a hold of razor and knelt by a brook. This is like in November. And so the water was not warm, and smeared a little of that lather on and hacked away so that I'd look good for the chaplain who [was] gonna have communion. Only time we saw a chaplain—I personally saw a chaplain.

PIEHLER: Which denomination was he? You don't even remember ...

SCHMIDT: No, that was never really important. I think when we were at the base we knew a certain person was ... conducting Lutheran services, which when we had the choice we would go there. But, I wouldn't have the foggiest notion who the chaplain was or where he was usually. Um, and this is the only time I saw him. And—so we ... had a communion service out in the woods, and dressed as good as we could.

When we reached, we were reaching a town of Raon L'etape. And in that town square there are two things of interest. Raon L'etape is on a river. This was the river that the Germans had set for their winter line. But, the 100<sup>th</sup> Division was able to take that town and there's a plaque to that fact. Also, in the town there was a plaque to the mayor, and it's an important plaque to them. The mayor and several others, I don't know what the exact number is, were gunned down by submachine guns. You know, not ... killed in the ceremonious way but just with the German burp gun. And they still resent that to this day that they were killed that way. And you can still

see the bullet holes, the places where the bullets hit the stone pillar in that town square. So, I recommend a visit there.

We were in reserve. Our Colonel, Colonel Tyson, became the second in command of the division. I don't know who our regimental commander was. I had no idea. But the other two pulled rank on him because—so the 397-398 had all the good stuff. And I think our battalion commander became the regimental commander. So the other two battalion commanders had the opportunity to—we were in reserve, but then we had to do some work. But, our battalion was still in reserve. So that we missed out on that first week of doing anything that would be constructive or destructive, however you look at it. And then we basically were in forest. We were in the lower Vosges Mountains, which are not very well designed for tank. And in fact there is a book by, I think his name is Bonn, a West Point graduate, whose father I guess was in our division. And he pointed out that from—he wrote a book from October 15 to January 15, [on] the 100<sup>th</sup> Division at that time, and the Seventh Army. But in our area, basically there was no air cover, there was no air force, there was no air support, there was—I think there was some bombing. But, not very close to us.... Maybe strategic bombing, but not support bombing. And then, there was no place for tanks. The terrain just didn't allow it. There'd be the roads, and you'd put these mines out. Just lay them on the road. Because a tank is a kind of a clumsy, thing and it can't turn too well. But the trees had been [cut] I'd say with TNT or dynamited so that they were laced. They would take [the tree] and cut, and they would make the trees go over the road this way, and then criss-cross it this way, this way, this way, this way. So that you might have several hundred feet or more than that of criss-crossed trees over the only roads. And other than the roads there was the hills and the forest. And ... so tanks—we ... saw some light tanks.

At ... one time in November, I believe, we were at the left flank. That is our unit, was at the left flank of the 100<sup>th</sup> Division, and we saw some people that were a right flank of the Third Army. And so we had that contact. But of course, the Third Army left us to do their work at another place. And then we had to move north, and as we moved north into the place where they were, I guess, we were closer to at the town of Bitche, in Lorraine France, which is in the lower Vosges Mountains. And that's part [of] the southern part of the Maginot line. Those fortifications still are there. Could they be there after all these years? Are the pyramids still in Egypt? We're talking three-foot thick walls and maybe even thicker than that, concrete, solid concrete reinforced with metal. And, yes ... they are still there and Fort Simserhof. It's a tourist attraction and is being renewed, reestablished, so that people can go down there and see what it was like when 800 soldiers were put into that fort.

In the terrain, of course, there were the usual things, the rails that you'd have from railroad cars stuck into the ground, concrete embedded so that the tanks could not get into certain areas, and other areas there were the barbed wire. You had the little short spikes so that if infantry was moving over a certain part of land and they heard the firing, they'd probably drop onto ... the ground, and they would impale themselves on the spikes. This—neither one of these two things ever happened. That is, we didn't deal with that. We were in the positions that had been captured perhaps but we had roads and paths so that barbed wire was not a problem.

I suppose that tactically they thought—our people that were meeting us—thought that it was always good to get through a village and then put your infantry people on the ground several

hundred yards beyond the village. I think that's so the officers could live in the houses. We were in houses occasionally, I think there were—our squad was in a bedroom, we had a bedroom, but that's [for] nine men. It was—our squad was down to nine men at that time. And so, that was our time with some French people, but they spoke German. [Of] course we're talking Alsace-Lorraine.

The one battle that we had, I didn't take part in it because they took our platoon to be the guardians of corps headquarters wherever that was, and we were out of it. The interesting thing about that was to stand in the chow line. Now as a soldier I ate K rations. K rations are gigantic boxes of like Cracker Jack, and the entire meal is in that Cracker Jack box. And you get three Cracker Jack boxes and that's the day's supply. So we ... thought it was like heaven to go back to a place where they had showers, they had clean clothes [that] we got, and we heard people griping about how terrible the food was. They put too much sugar on the oatmeal. I mean—it really ... tore us up about how they suffered. One person said that he had gone way up to the front lines where the light mortars were. Well, the light mortars are not quite on the front lines, you put the mortars just a little bit behind. So it was—to us it was humorous. And then we went back. But during ... our absence a flak-wagon, which is just a platform with a gun on top of it and they drive them around, had gone in amongst our people and inflicted some damages before it was destroyed. That is, the track was knocked off and it couldn't move and it became a good target. And so that was the end of that.

Around Christmas time, I remember on Christmas Eve, being in a building. I have no idea why we were there. But I never knew why we were anyplace! (Laughter) They didn't give us a map. They didn't tell us anything. And our sergeant was a ... fine man. He's undoubtedly a fine man.

EVANS: Is that Sergeant Sims?

SCHMIDT: But if Sergeant Frank Sims had been in the Air Force and for some reason they decided he should be an infantryman. But he was—I don't think he was quite as swift as some of the other sergeants. And he wasn't quite as bold as some of the other sergeants. But at any rate, around Christmastime we were at someplace in a building and the man mentioned it was Christmas Eve. I didn't know that. And the next day—now we're fairly clean and we've probably shaved and maybe bathed. I don't know. But when we left we went then into the area of Bitche, into near Fruedenberg Farms by the end of the Maginot Line. And each night they put us at a different place. But we didn't walk around during the daytime. They had a disappearing gun. We've been in their Fort Simserhof and seen it. It would be like a hard core and then when they got ready to fire it, they would raise it on up so that it could shoot. And it had a 360-degree range of view. And if there was any movement during the daytime, they fired that gun. I remember being out in the field laying out there where I was supposed to lay out, and there was a lieutenant and another person ... were walking at like eleven o'clock in the daytime. I mean it was bright. And all of a sudden heard the whistle and they hit the ground and the lieutenant got up and he said, "105" and went on his way. He knew where the gun was. It didn't matter.

After Christmas, each night when the sun went down we went to whatever our new position was. And then that night we were there in the new position. By the way we had no tents, we had no blankets, we were just—had our army clothes. That was ... what we had. And on the 29<sup>th</sup> there

was a ridge which some of our people were in, where the Germans sent a patrol and captured three of our people, from our platoon but not from our squad. Not from our own personal people. The next night I found myself in one of the holes where the fella had been taken from. That was on the 30<sup>th</sup>. That was an interesting evening for me 'cause you ... come to your position in the dark. It happened to be moonlit nights. So all you have is the light of the moon, and you see where you are. Then you wait 'til the moon goes down and then you go to another position. And [at] that other position—because we had been out in the open, Frank felt as though—our beloved sergeant felt as though we should at least be inside where we could be dry and maybe even warm. And so, he made it for us to go to a blockhouse. The closest blockhouse to the town of Bitche or “Bitch,” France. And ... that’s where we were on December 31. We took turns doing whatever our duties were.

My duties were up in a ... tower which would be like on the second floor of the blockhouse. But it’s also on ground level, because a blockhouse is built into a hill. The blockhouse had the point of denying traffic to the Germans. And we had a bazooka team, but we never found out what their names were. But the bazooka team came up from the ... depot, and they were there. And I was taking my nap at about oh, about ten, eleven o’clock. But around eleven-thirty or so the Germans threw grenades into our doorway. And that woke me up pretty well and it stirred us all up pretty good. And a lot of activity [followed]. We threw hand grenades out. I didn’t throw personally any hand grenades out because only so many people could get into that little narrow entrance. You know, it’s like a tunnel coming into the thing. But then the sergeant sent me up into my turret where I spent most of the rest of the time period.

The—there were a group of three of their people [that] came by us and ... one of them met his match. He died there very close to the ... turret. Another guy may have gotten hurt, I don’t know. And another fella didn’t get hurt and threw a grenade into our thing and then ran away. But we understood then that we were in a very bad situation. That is, they could come up to that turret, and get to us at any time. And we couldn’t see to the left. Well, we didn’t know that to the left was a twenty-foot drop down to the road. We had no idea where we were because we came there in the dark. During that day, they pushed our group back about half a mile. However, we were somewhat ahead of ... what is called the front lines. And so therefore, we saw no activity. And around three o’clock that afternoon there was considerable discussion on this and it was unanimously agreed that we would go and surrender. Which is what we did. And it’s kind of an eerie feeling to walk—to look at these guys, and know you’ve hurt one of them. And you thought maybe he was somebody’s brother. And you didn’t know what they were going to do. But they treated us quite properly. They got us into the neighboring blockhouse. Blockhouses always were built in twos. There tend to be dorm areas and outside of the blockhouse, dug in positions. Ideally, when the blockhouse hasn’t been destroyed—as this one had been so that there was metal hanging all over the place—they would have a number of men, maybe a couple of squads, and they would go on out and man machine gun positions and other things.... But we were it. The nine, the eight people there were it.

So we walked on out with the traditional pose [with] your hands behind your head. Do not carry your rifle out or make any menacing gestures. Which is always—I’ve always wondered these people that resist arrest and get hurt a little bit, I wonder what they’re thinking of. But, that’s another story. They took us to ... the other blockhouse. And then they sent somebody back with

an explosive charge so that if there was somebody hiding in that debris and rubble that they would be hurt or they'd be killed. And after that they had some people went up and retrieve the body. And four people carried the body to the command post, which was about 100 yards away from us down toward the town. And—what amazed me was that when they dropped the body in front of the commander he didn't reach down to look at him, he took his toe and turned the head so that he could see who it was. And I thought that was very bad. I thought that was disrespectful, I didn't think that our people would have done that.

Well, we left him and we were walking then toward the town. It was getting darker. And all you could see was the people with the submachine guns on either side of you. And you didn't see any place where they were taking you. And we remembered that in November they had done a bad thing with the prisoners. We didn't exactly know and yet we weren't going to test anything. We just walked along and then finally there was a sliver of light and we went into a room, ... the interrogation room. Others were there already, Americans. Basically, what they wanted only to know was, "Where are your gas masks?" Our gas masks came off about the third day we were there.

When we got to Marseilles, going back now, this is—we're talking October, end of October, we got off the ship and went to a meadow about, oh, eight miles north or six miles north, ... we're talking open field, and we pitched tents. And I remember talking to the doctor the next day. I said, "I ... had to urinate about eleven times last night and that's not normal. I must be sick." He said, "Where were you sleeping?" I said, "I'm out there in that field." He says, "Well, try to stay warm and dry." (Laughs) You know it was just ... the circumstances there. As we drove up from Marseilles, I should have said this sooner, we were trucked up that Rhone Valley. And we observed that a number of columns of Nazi armor and vehicles had been destroyed. So, we were going past their destroyed vehicles in a truck that took maybe, what, a dozen of us. Our rifles loaded at that point. We didn't have ... our guns were not loaded down in the ship I'm sure. But we were given ammunition and ... we did have rifles that were loaded, with the safety's on, and just sitting in the corner of the truck and just rolling up the Rhone Valley.

Going back then to the prisoner experience. It's probably late at night. Again, I have no watch. Had I had a watch, I'm sure I would not have had it very long. We were ... with people. That next morning they had us walk with guards and with some ... vehicles that had things that they were carrying. I have no idea what they were. And that next night, or that next afternoon we were at the Siegfried Line. Which was that close. That night from the Siegfried Line they packed us into our first train ride. The trains are called—train cars—streetcars are called "forty and eights." For forty men *or* ... eight horses, not *and* eight horses. They loaded us ninety [prisoners] into a car. And that would be in the evening. And the next morning we were at our destination. But it was pretty crowded. And they had no lavatories in each of those freight cars. But we did still have our steel helmets, so there was not a problem. And they had little windows at either end. So that the fellas next to the window had to tip, and then we'd pass it back to whoever the helmet came from. We always hoped that they did number one. Number two was very bad. (Laughter) So that was that first ride.

We got into a little room. I think there were sixty people in the room. We'll say about that number. And it was just a room without windows. We had no idea where we were. No idea



what the name of the town was. We were there for a couple of days. They had I think about, we'll say about twenty-three bowls for the soup, or maybe seventeen. I think there was three groups. But I got introduced to German cuisine. I never got to the first helping on the bowls. I never got into the front of the line. But after the first ... person ate from the bowl, and wiped it pretty clean with his fingers, then the next person took the bowl and got his food and ate and wiped it pretty clean with his fingers. I was number three both times. Then the next thing we heard that the bakery had been bombed. How do we know that? Well, they stopped feeding us. What was the facilities, the lavatory facilities in that place? There were two rather large containers toward the door, which during the daytime wasn't all that bad because you could see them. But at nighttime it was kind of interesting. There was a seventy—there was a three-day period when I didn't personally have any food, and two-day period when I personally didn't have any water [or] anything to drink during that period of time. We had a ration of liquid in the morning, as I recall.

Then we went from there to Ludwigsburg. And now I know where I am. It was a horse stable for the S. S. And it was used after the war by the American military to repair furniture. But it had that little depression in the stone so that they could sweep the stables out. And along the sidewalls where they would have had horses they had the three-tiered bunks, doubles and singles, and a ... straw pallet that you could lay on. And I recognized where that was because when we were taken out to go to the next place there was a statue, a bust of a man, a memorial to the First World War. And we rediscovered that with my wife and I when we went back probably fifteen years ago now and when it was still being used as a military thing. And the fella, the sergeant there said he remembered the beds ... the bunks. In other words he had been there when they took the bunks out to make room for their repairing furniture for the American military that would be stationed in Germany.

The place there—lets talk about the lavatory. The lavatory was up some steps and ... there was ... some sort of a beam that you could hang yourself over. And there was just kind of a ditch with running water. And that was the toilets, which this is okay. Uh, by the way, I'm not washing, because I'm not having any water to wash with at any point here at this time.

One person forgot to salute a ... German officer. But we didn't know what officers looked like. We had no idea ... how you could tell rank because they all had lots of funny stuff on their shoulders. But he got into, they said, into trouble and was put into solitary because he didn't salute. But it was at Ludwigsburg where they took—I had a blanket. I don't know where I got it. But you know, you learn to grab things. And I had the lining of my canvas coat. We had a canvas coat and shoe packs. Like overshoes with a ... fibrous matting at the bottom. They were not for walking long distances. But they were not bad, I think maybe it was a pretty good shoe. But he took my lining from my coat. So all I had then from some time in January on was a thin canvas overcoat, raincoat. And of course the OD's, the olive drab uniform pants and shirt. That was it. So I was cold most of the time, an unpleasant remembrance. He took ... the blanket I had copped. And he took the lining of my coat. And I had no headgear. So I had to use the hood, which, the guards made fun of me when I was at the work camp. But you know, you had to survive.

From Ludwigsburg we took a probably several day's journey. By the way, at Ludwigsburg they also gave us some bread, probably a rather large piece of bread as I remember. I ate all of mine. Some of them left some of their bread back. And I remember having memories of that in the months later. Oh, if only I could have taken and picked up all the bread that had been left and put it in my pockets I wouldn't be hungry now. But that, of course, didn't happen. Our trip to— from there to Muhlburg was by way of Hamburg. And this was the only time that we were in a bombing raid. It was a small bombing raid. There was only, I think, six planes. Each dropped eight bombs but it could be the other way around. But at any rate it was kind of exciting because they started—each plane did its job one at a time. And so it got to be increasingly nearer and nearer. And we were pretty close to the floor of the car. Actually, possibly praying a little bit that the anti-aircraft fire would kind of scare our pilots away from where we were. Because it—we had visions of the ... bomb landing close. And we were three feet off the ground. You're not on ground level. You're ... above ground. Where were the Germans? They were in the shelter, the air raid shelter. How long did the bombing raid disrupt German transportation? Possibly twenty minutes. About twenty minutes later the trains were rolling and we went on to Muhlburg. So, it—they just scared a bunch of American prisoners. That's, that was ...

At Muhlburg we got our dog tags. And they didn't ever refer to me as Schmidt. They referred to me by my number, which was planted on my dog tag. And they—I learned German: *neunzehn, seiben, seiben, achtzig*. And that I found out later on was how you read those numbers out. That person read the numbers. We were taken to Muhlburg. We were maybe there for two or three days. The memory of Muhlburg is this: that it was really a first-rate prison. I mean it had double barbed wire. It had guard towers. It had lights that went around. And you know, that's really better than Hogan's Heroes ever had it. I mean it really ... good stuff. (Laughter) And the soldiers were always there. And we were in barracks and on the floor of the barracks just laying on—I don't even think we had mats. But then we were assigned—I was a private. As you know privates could be put into labor. Non-commissioned officers could not be forced to work against their will. And officers were never asked to work. So that was the differentiation. When you see Hogan's Heroes, [it's] not true because you have an officer, you have non-cons, and you have privates. And it never happened that way. And I understand later that we had in our work camp a man of confidence. Somebody that related. But he didn't outrank any of us. 'Cause we were all PFCs. So there was no rank involved. We were all just plain privates.

But there was communication. Did I know about it? No, I didn't know about it. I went into my little cabin. I woke up in the morning when they told me to wake up. I went out and responded to the roll call. In prison camp there, the work camp, after the roll call we got our breakfast. Our breakfast was a bowl of ... ersatz coffee. I think burned barley, boiled. We just got the water, we didn't get the barley. And then we went to work. And what was our work? Well it usually involved a pick and a shovel, either one or the other. Sometimes we picked and sometimes we shoveled. My first project were putting in what we'd call telephone poles. But they called them power poles. And you'd dig a hole four feet deep and of a certain width. When you get the hole deep enough then you ... manually ... push the pole upright. Like they did those ... stone things that the Egyptians had. But two sets of people would have poles connected with a heavy cable.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

SCHMIDT: ... you'd give them a heavy cable. You'd get them under the telephone pole and you'd get it up a little bit. You'd hold it there and the next people would move it a little bit more. And of course you're putting it into the place in the hole. And eventually you got it straight and it was straight enough for ... our supervisor. Then we were allowed to put the dirt in and stomp the dirt down. And so that's what we did at the first.

What I personally did at the first.... I also learned how to split wood. I didn't know how to split wood. I was a basically a little town boy. We didn't have wood to split. We had coal in our bins in Moorhead, Minnesota. And I found that you can't just put the log on end and make in go apart. You had to put it on something solid. But I learned that, not because anybody told me or showed me, I just learned it because they gave me an axe and said, "Split the wood." Or, I think he just pointed at it 'cause how could—there was nobody talking English. That was a project that lasted one day. And we worked around their camp headquarters for a couple of days, including building a road which meant putting stone down on—little stones on big stones [with the] big stones at the bottom. Little, little, little that made the paving.

But our biggest project—before I go to the biggest project we went and did some power poles along the Elbe River. The camp was near Bad Schandau. As I got out of the train I thought I should look and see where I was. And it was at a train station. And I presume we walked across a railroad bridge. I've been back several times to look at this place. And we got to our camp. The camp was still under construction. The reason that the power poles were even put up there was so they could have electric lights to light the perimeter. At the beginning there wasn't hardly any lights. How would the guards know who to shoot? And how could they aim good? So we were putting up the lights and they were doing other building. But it was a brand new work camp, 400 or so people probably. We went out to do the same thing, putting up poles, and I saw my only time to see a Jewish camp, this is for Jewish men. And they ... weren't working. And—but they were being harassed by the guards. Made to line up for counts. I had no idea what the counts were for, because I mean, where were they going to go? They ... were wearing those funny suits. They couldn't ... get very far.

The other observation I had is that we went into their camp one day to either get tools or put tools away, but I presume it was to get tools, and we walked past their—what we call the dry rations.... I haven't told you about supper yet. I mean that was really a treat. That was our food. At any rate, we went past the dry rations and I saw what they had. And when I got back to the camp we had the same dry rations. We were doing ... work and they weren't and I felt a little resentful. But I can't tell you anything about the camp. I don't know where it was and I presume it was one of those temporary things that's long since gone. And—but there was that little camp. They could have been put on a railway train and put to Dachau and I don't know that by the way or the other.

Okay, we get back from work. Which our greatest project was near Konigstein, which is just downstream from Bad Schandau. And there, there was no nice roadway. And we took dirt, put it on a little train car, and they took the dirt away. I didn't know where they put it. But Konigstein also was a fortress, it was a castle. That'll come up a little later on. We worked and I was told that the women that were scattering gravel toward the riverbank, they were Russian

civilians. I don't know that to be a fact either. 'Cause we never had any contact. We were supervised in this project by people in black uniforms. Organization *Todt* [a Nazi construction company] ... I believe that they would be S.S. And so they—we didn't ... aggravate them whatsoever. After we were done with our work for the day, and that usually was—it got to be eventually eight carloads of dirt. When the eighth carload was done then we were ready to go back, it really took us all day, we got home for dinner. And what was dinner? Well, they [gave us] soup. Now the Red Cross man eventually told them that they had to do something other than throw frozen cabbage into ... boiling water and call it soup. They had to put something else in it. And sometimes they put potatoes in it. And that was good because they peeled the potatoes before they made the soup out of them. And some of the fellas had access to the pit where they threw the potato peelings. Unfortunately, it was fairly close to where they threw a lot of other things that weren't so good. And I tended not to want to eat that because it sounded to me like it was too close to sewage. But a lot of people did. Even in our little hut we had, I believe it was twenty-three people. And toward the end of the time I wrote everybody's name and their address. One of those people I'm still in contact with. He lives near Burnett, Texas. I am going to see him in about four days. We were in the same ...

PIEHLER: What's his name?

SCHMIDT: His name is ...

DEANIE: Virgil Davis.

SCHMIDT: Virgil Davis. I didn't remember the name either.

PIEHLER: I have a terrible time with names so don't—it's definitely not a sign of age.  
(Laughter)

SCHMIDT: The soup then, I don't really know that it got any better. It just got different, Kohlrabi. We didn't have access, we were working with dirt. But we had no access to food. We weren't working in a farmer's field. So we had the soup. And the dry ration was bread and either the square loaf, it was not square, it was rectangular and square. It was what they called military bread or the round rolls that they said were two kilos. And those loaves were cut into seven pieces apiece. So whatever that number was. Now, the recipe for that bread included many of the things they have in diet bread. We call it cellulose today. They referred to it as sawdust. Sawdust and flour and water and whatever else they put into it, that's what we ate. I figured, looking at some of the documents, probably six to eight hundred calories a day is what we were working on. And most of us lost a third of our body weight or a fourth of the body weight from that. At the end of April ... we went out to report for duty in the morning and I collapsed. And so then they said that I didn't have to go to work and they took me back to my bed and I stayed in my bed for a couple of days and then they sent me to the hospital. An opening had occurred either Oral Roberts had been there with the healing ministry or the fella had passed on. Not a lot of death in our camp. I've heard the word sixteen. I've heard the word twelve. I ... saw one body in a place where they were waiting for burial and we know that some ... of them died but not a ... lot of them. We always assumed that it might have been from ... malnutrition, whatever. So I was in the hospital. Was there a doctor in the hospital? I don't

know who that man was that looked at me. Just looked at me, that's all he did. I ate the same food that I would have eaten when was still going to work. So, all it was that I had [was] bed-rest, they gave us bed-rest.

Then eventually there was a lot of noise out that the Russians were coming. We had heard the guns for quite a long time. We had some British prisoners that actually had escaped after the commandant of the camp had made an announcement that was told that anyone who escaped would be killed. They escaped toward the Russian lines. And they came back. They preferred to hide out in our camp than to try to go through the very wide German lines going up to the Russian lines. And then what would you say to a Russian? "I'm an American, please ..."—you know. Sometime during that time word got out that our commandant had offered freedom to any of us who would take—and rise up for the fatherland. And we would be set free. Nobody accepted that offer. And at one day then toward the end some of my friends got me, including Virgil, and put me on a stretcher and we walked and walked and went across on the ferry. I didn't know how I got across the river. I thought they took me over on the bridge. Which I kept looking at that area and there were no houses there. But they took me on the ferry. The ferry is still operating. The engine never wore out because the ferry itself is a boat that is moored to a rope. It's a boat on a rope. And if you set the tiller one way or the other the current will carry it across the river. You understand what I'm saying? The force of the river. And that's how we got across the river. And we went to do ... our work in Konigstein.

They took me to a house. They said it was the Red Cross man's house. I don't know who it was. I know there were four of us in his back room. And eventually ... I was taken up into Konigstein itself. I don't even remember that. I was probably too sick to really remember that. And I had my first meal. And I was told by the nice American man, one of our soldiers, that I was eating hog brain, scrambled hog brains on barley. Well I—you know that's a delicacy. And really it was a very good meal. I appreciated it because we really weren't up to eating steak at that point. Konigstein was also the place where they held certain prisoners, and you might do a little bit of your research in that area. And I rode in an ambulance to the M.A.S.H. unit with the head ... of the Netherlands Army. The top general of the ... Holland Army was kept there evidently. And then I went to the field hospital. We were put on a cot. You could feel the grass under the cot, the tent over. And I ... was not allowed to get out of the cot. I think the orderly thought I should get out of the cot. He resented having to empty the urinal to do those other things. And also he was giving me penicillin, I think every four hours. I know that I had seventy-two treatments of penicillin. So—and it was 40,000 units which they said was a big deal. And I ended my treatments in the Paris hospital. And they were saving the urine from the people that were getting penicillin because it was I think such a rare drug at that time. Not only was I getting penicillin I was getting soda and sulphanilamide tablets and being asked to drink large quantities of water to flush out the system and get back into shape.

So we are at a field hospital. I have no idea where it is. All I know is that one day they took us from the field hospital and put us on an airplane. My first airplane ride was an ambulance plane and I got to be on the level that you could look out the windows so I could see, you know, the land going away from me and then I could see the land coming back. And we landed in Paris and were in the hospital there. At that time and I cannot find that hospital in Paris and it probably is not a hospital anymore, but it was one of the three highest points of Paris: The Eiffel

tower, the Church of the Sacred Heart, and this hospital. And the top of the hospital, that was a high point. Now it's buried with other high buildings. We don't know—I do not know where it is. And I was there in a ward. I loved that. There were six or eight of us in the ward. That was fine for about two days. And then I was moved to a private room. And I hated it because I was by myself all day. And I could have anything I wanted to eat. And anything I wanted to drink. They had eggnog, fruit juice, water, and just encouraged me to ... get as much nourishment as I could possibly stand and handle. I asked the nurse, who was the only human being other than the French maid who cleaned the place up from time to time—the only person I saw except the doctor probably—that I would like to have a pass ... just to see a little bit of Paris. “That would kill you,” ... she said I was not up to that. Eventually I remember staying there at the Fourth of July [and] being visited from one of the people at Youngstown who was a member of my father's church who was stationed at Paris. And he came up to see me. That was the only person that I saw ... toward the end of my hospital stay.

What communication did we have with the family? Possibly [it] should be mentioned that while we were at Ludwigsburg we sent a letter, a postcard, back home. It was ... a form and you've seen many of them I am sure. But basically you checked out that you were alive. And they received that close to the time of Easter. And during that time that I was missing in action my father's older brother's son, Robert Schmidt, second lieutenant in the Seventh Army or Third Army sector, quite close to where we are, where we were put into battle, he was missing in action. He is still missing in action. So he is one of those that has never been found. So ... we're not talking about Vietnam or Korea or some obscure place. We're talking about France. And they've never found a body. At that time that he was taken, toward the end of October of '44, the Germans were using our uniforms to try to penetrate our lines to do mischief. So that I would rather guess that's what happened. All of his uniform was taken and used and he was just thrown into a ditch somewhere. He'll never be found. So that was the communication.

The other communication came from the lieutenant, Lieutenant Walsh. Some thought of him as not being a—you know—well at any rate here's what he did. He wrote a letter to my mother. “Dear Anne,” he'd never met her but he knew what her name was. And he wrote a little newsy chatter letter about what was going on. It had no military significance by this time in the letter. And it said, “by this time you know that your son is taken prisoner and is in good hands,” whatever, to try to encourage her. And then he wrote on a little bit more diddly-daddly, didn't mean anything. And signed it off. And sent it and it passed the censors and then mother knew from the lieutenant that I'd been captured. So, I can't remember now which they found out first but that was ... it.

Going from the Paris hospital we took a train to Cherbourg, near Cherbourg. And it wasn't Camp Lucky Strike or any of those that you're familiar with. It was a—some hospital tents, six or eight men to a tent, whatever it was. And we got on the U.S.S. Meraposa [from] the Matson Line, a hospital ship. They—we had our records with us. We could have read all of those things that answer the questions we had. How much weight did we lose, that sort of thing and other interests. One of the boys had been shot very close to the spinal cord so he was in a body cast from shoulders—we're talking the month of August maybe ... yes—I'm sure he was ...

Now let's talk about the hygiene conditions. Sometime in the middle of December, or toward the end of December, I bathed, I put on clean clothes. Sometime in early May when I was recovered by the military they took my clothes, bathed me in the bed, I presume, and I asked them, "Where are my clothes?" They said, "We burned them. They were full of lice." We got one time at our camp, which was by the way one of thirteen camps of 4-A, which was in there near Hohenstein. But that was just the administrative headquarters. We walked the road back to Hohenstein from approximately where the camp was ... Deanie and I, my wife, and we walked that road. The only thing that I can remember is that there was two German soldiers that had been recently back from the Russian front that were considered a little shell-shocked and their behavior was not totally appropriate. I think our guards at our work camp really appreciated the fact that the noise was to the east of them and that they were with us quiet people who weren't going to hurt them too much. So the guards there made a to-do about one of the prisoners that I saw. That was unpleasant for the prisoner, but generally speaking we were not mistreated. Isolated incidents—one time a fellow cheered an American bomber plane coming over on a Monday and he got hit by the guard. But the guard had gone home on the weekend and his home had been destroyed and his family killed. And so he was a little uptight so we kind of excused that conduct. But generally speaking it was good.

Sometime in April we walked from our camp to Hohenstein, to the castle. And outside the castle gate there is a building which I presume is where we took off our clothing and put them into little baskets so they could be fumigated. Because we had visitors all the time, we had little lice. In fact, they were the only friendly pets we had. Then they took us and let us go into this large room. And we saw the shower room, say, fifteen years ago the iron curtain was still up and they hadn't done much with it. Now they have re-modeled that part of the castle. So you wouldn't see that. But there were shower heads, just like the ones they talked about at the gas chambers we didn't know what was going to come out of it but it was just water. Not steamy hot. And they gave us something, I think it was called soap but I'm not sure. They basically wanted us to bathe. But we hadn't bathed since sometime in December and of course we did get a haircut sometime in April. I remember the man that looked at me. I had not combed my hair. I didn't have a comb. I hadn't shaved. I hadn't done anything with my body. I didn't have any mirrors to see what I looked like. And he said, "What a mess." That's what my wife occasionally says, "What a mess." (Laughter) But I probably was a mess. But we had a shower and that was the only ... cleansing time. And I wouldn't say that we were terribly clean but they killed all the lice that were in our garments. Of course we got back and the lice that we in our mattress were still there of course. So I don't think that it took them too long to re-occupy where they were on our bodies.

We got to the hospital ship and took that ship over to Boston where we were met by some nice nurses, and they cared for us, and they went on to White Sulfur Springs, to what was the Ashford General Hospital, I guess it's now called the Greenbriar Hotel. I happened to see General Eisenhower who was down on the lawn. And I was up in the six floor or whatever. We rejoiced when the Atom Bomb was dropped because we knew that our 100<sup>th</sup> Division wouldn't be going over and trying to assail the island. Of course we were out of it. Our physical condition would not have allowed us to be doing anything. But we really rejoiced when the bomb was dropped in August. The second bomb was dropped and they finally gave up. It saved a lot of lives. Not only American lives—because a lot of these protesters during the hippie years, well their daddy's

sperm would have been washed ashore on some Japanese island [and] they would never have been around—but a lot of Japanese lives would have been saved by those Hiroshima bombings. Because they had saved, as I understand, five cities that they didn't destroy to be kind of examples. And they bombed two of them. Two out of five isn't bad. But the rest of the cities were totally destroyed, devastated. And I believe ... they said [during] the firebombing of Tokyo, which had been a little bit previous, that more people were killed than had died at Hiroshima. I guess it's wrong to incinerate you with atomic power, but not wrong to incinerate you with napalm or whatever else they used in their firebombing. But we couldn't see the difference ourselves at that time because we were glad the war was over. When I was—[I] did my ninety days going home to get fattened up by mama's cooking and came back to the hospital. And I was so glad to be home that I hitched-hiked from White Sulfur Springs to Youngstown, Ohio. The old-fashioned thumb wave. And went for Thanksgiving dinner with my folks and then I hitch-hiked back because I only had a three day pass or maybe a four day pass you know.

And the—I was transferred from there to Camp Atterberry, Indiana. And at Camp Atterberry they asked me how many points I had. Well they get points for how long you were in the service and whatever. And I told them the number of points and they said, "Well you're not getting out." And I said, "Yes, I am getting out, I'm a former prisoner of war." Of course they were dismissing us right out of hand. They knew they didn't have much use for us. Couldn't get much out of us anymore. From that little experience of war I can say that my father did not send me to college. But my uncle did. And I went to school from January 1946 and I got my degree from Middlebury College in August of 1952. I got two degrees from Capital University which is now—first one with a college degree. I went to school every summer except two. I didn't go the first summer because I was getting fattened up. And the second summer I didn't go because I lived out in Iowa and I worked at the corn packing plant. And I was very proud of this for just one reason. I was injured. I was in the silking room, the corn silking room. I was a foreman. I hurt myself and my hand wouldn't allow me to do that kind of work. So I went home. And the foreman of the plant came to my house and said I had to go back to work. That ... the other people I was supervising weren't doing their work and they ... wanted me. And so I went back to work and worked 100-hour weeks two or three weeks in a row. And that would have been in the year about '49. Then for three summers I went to Breadloaf School of English. I heard Robert Frost read us poetry for each of those summers. It was a gentle and wonderful place. I got a degree from there and also from the seminary and following the graduation from Middlebury College I had taken the rest of my graduate work in English Literature at the University of Pittsburgh during the summer that I was there. No, I took—the University of Pittsburgh was the summer of '48. I was getting my grad—just my regular B.A. degree worked on. And I went the next summer—I was training to be a pastor. So I was trained as a pastor at Ohio University—at Capital University. But you go for one year of practical training and since I was at a school that had a graduate department in English I took the requisite number of hours I needed to get my Master of Liberal Arts Degree from Middlebury College.

And once I got those two ... degrees I was licensed to preach and ordained to preach. My first congregation was five years in Chicago, Illinois where I learned what life is really like. The children were very nice. I hadn't understood what eighth and ninth graders were like. I said to one of them during a catechistical class, "You took the words right out of my mouth." And he said, "That's unsanitary." (Laughter) They ... had a certain way of dealing with me that kind of a



helped me grow. That was five wonderful years. Seven years up in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, a rather large parish. I think they had 2,000 adults at that time. And they have 3,000 now. So it's a fine parish. I went to Dayton, Ohio for thirteen years and during those years they were very tumultuous. We had five children with my first wife whose name was Anne. And, but some place along the line she had some emotional problems or whatever. So she got into the hands of a psychiatrist but don't—I won't talk about that. It's just that she was on medication. And eventually we went—I got to Lancaster, Ohio. And the bishop—preachers don't get divorced just like a person that was working at a gas station. The bishop sent the two of us to a hospital in Chicago to be evaluated. We came back and followed the plan of evaluation. And one day she said she wanted to live her own life and I said, "Well don't tell me." Write it down. She wrote it down. I showed it to my—to the head of my elders, the president of my congregation, and to my bishop. And the bishop said, "Come in on Thursday with her." And we went in there and talked and we had what is called a dissolution.

A year later I married this great lady whose name was Haroldean but she preferred to be called Deanie. And we were down in Memphis, Tennessee, which was kind of like a honeymoon for us. Lovely town, great town to live in. Five years there, then five years up in Ironton, Ohio. And there I retired and we came up to where the grandchildren were. We have—she has three children with two grandchildren and I have my children and grandchildren and they're all within an hour's drive, except I have a son in Alice, Texas and she has a daughter in Andes, New York. And neither of those have children. So all of the grandchildren are right at home and life has been good.

[In] 1980 I became a member of the American Ex-Prisoners of War. I just became a member. I got the magazine. I knew the fellas in Lancaster and then I went down to Memphis and enjoyed that. And [I] got to meet those people. I got to be a chapter commander. The year I was chapter commander we had a convention of the Tennessee folks in the ... hotel there in Memphis. And the great the thing about that was we had the best convention they ever had. Because the Schlitz Bell or Stroh Bell, or Coors Bell, whatever it's called now, they allowed you to have an evening where they would furnish the room and beverage. And ... (Laughter), well soft drinks too, you know for those who wanted them. So we had a barbecue brought in and the following night we had a banquet in the hotel where we had the convention. And I was very proud of that convention because it was two banquets and we used the Schlitz Bell, Stroh Bell, Coors Bell or whatever it's called. Then we went up to Ironton and I joined the Flatwood, Kentucky, Ohio/Kentucky chapter number one. Went to the convention. By this time we started going to conventions. I went to the convention in Seattle. Deanie couldn't go because she was teaching school. But I flew on out there and as the representative of all the votes in the sovereign state of Kentucky. Then coming back ... to Columbus we joined the chapter here in Columbus, Ohio and I've been chapter commander there. But about six years ago, my wife suggested me to somebody of the department that I should run for an office that nobody was running for which was called the National Director. So I won that office with no opposition. Two years later, I ran for the same office again against opposition and narrowly won two years and the other fella won one year. Obviously, there is a lot of political turmoil in our area. Then two years later I ran for National Junior Vice-Commander but nobody was running so that was not hard for me. Last year I ran for National Senior Vice-Commander and there ... was another person running and that individual was also from the State of Ohio. And is also the National Commander of the Korean

POWs or Korean War vets or whatever. So he's a very ... fine man. But I prevailed. And next year I presume, and this September I should be elected the National Commander of the American Ex-Prisoners of War.

PIEHLER: ... We loved your story and I think Jerilyn—we both have follow-up questions. I want to go back. I want to ask you one about yourself. What denomination—what synod were you in, in the Lutheran Church. Were you Lutheran Church Missouri Synod or ...

SCHMIDT: I was a—let's go the whole way. I was baptized, joined the synod of Ohio. I became a member of the Old American Lutheran Church after we moved to Youngstown but I was confirmed in the Old Norwegian Synod there in Moorhead, Minnesota because there wasn't any Germans. And this is more of a ...

PIEHLER: This is one of my questions about your father. Because when you were growing up the Lutheran Church was still very much different Lutheran Church and then in the early '60s they start merging along and across.

SCHMIDT: My grandmother lived with us. I—this is the person that—of course my sister lives here in Knoxville. She could tell you what a pack of lies I've told you—but—especially about growing up. But my German—Swedish grandmother lived with us most of the time through college. She always felt as though one of her sons should have the farm and—but—during the Depression he had lost the farm and they lived in these humble circumstances. But her daughter, the oldest daughter, my mother was the oldest daughter in the family, so she was the keeper, the care keeper. Though my grandmother died in the state of Washington when she visited the other daughter, the younger daughter. So that was an influence in my life but—yes I'm presently an Evangelical Lutheran ...

PIEHLER: ELC?

SCHMIDT: ELCA.

PIEHLER: ... Did you remain with the American Lutheran Church when it ...

SCHMIDT: Yes, I was in [the] old ALC and then the new ALC and then I was in the ELC and then the ELCA, yes. I'm a straight on down Columbus, Ohio Lutheran Trinity Synod, The Trinity Seminary, Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary. Yes sir.

PIEHLER: I guess I wanted to talk a little bit more about your parents.... Your father had a very interesting career in the sense that he did mission work and then taught and then took a pastorate again. What prompted him to ... [make] these career changes?

SCHMIDT: I think he just got sick and tired of being the bottom dog on the—in the Norwegian community. He got—later on we found out that he was being given a lot of the assignments where other professors didn't have that same burden. But—and during that time period he was sent all over North Dakota and Minnesota to find students. And some of the other professors were having vacations. So they were working him to death.

PIEHLER: So his German background was not an asset to Trinity?

SCHMIDT: Oh, definitely not, not in Moorhead, Minnesota. But he ... wanted to go back into the parish but he was always an educator and he was in the ... board of higher education. And then when the church got to be the present church ... he was the head of the board of theological education. And he was very proud of the fact that he could run that board without a salary, with a part-time secretary, and do all the work that had to be done. And he had very strong feelings about this and that. But that when he retired, because you had to retire at seventy years of age, and he was proud of the fact that he did not—he was allowed to continue on into the next year even against the constitution because they were having a church-wide gathering. So he got to stay a little ... bit longer because he was a good man. And he ... was honored at the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination. The president of the church was there. And [at] the sixtieth anniversary of his ordination the head of the seminary was there, Dean ... Dr. Fendt. And the sixty-fifth anniversary of his ordination, which was just shortly before his death, the head of the board of theological education was there to celebrate. So, he was very highly honored within the church for his work in higher education. And he was considered to be one of the better preachers and I think he was probably one of the best preachers. He had a good background in history and ...

PIEHLER: And he lived a very long life. He was born in 1894 and died in ... 1981 that's a ...

SCHMIDT: Mm hmm. The interesting thing about it is that dad was always of the opinion that he would die before mother did. And just remember this: when she died we were in Dayton, Ohio and—so we then—I had in my hand at that time a call to ... go to Lancaster. Well that was a no brainer. We ... went and—dad—the house was big enough dad could be with us and whatever. He lived for four years. She was four years older. So his prediction came true. She outlived him by a few days. I mean if you look down at the table ...

PIEHLER: When did your mother pass away?

SCHMIDT: In the year that we left there she was eighty-seven.

PIEHLER: And that was—do you remember when your father died?

SCHMIDT: He was 87. It was in '77.

PIEHLER: 1977?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And your mother also, she was ...

SCHMIDT: She was 87. And so—I don't say he had a death wish or anything. But I'd say that—well he got increasingly weak and possibly [got] better care by his eldest son, which is me. I'm sure—I'm not a nutritionist you know. I don't know anything about that. He ...

DEANIE: Then he broke his hip.

SCHMIDT: Huh?

DEANIE: He broke his hip. He broke his hip.

SCHMIDT: Oh, he—well his hip broke and he fell or he fell and he broke his hip. We never quite knew which one. But I suspect it would be—maybe it was a fall.

EVANS: How much influence did your father have in your relationship with him that made you want to be a pastor as well?

SCHMIDT: It's hard to say, because I think that—I was in the church all that time. In high school I was considering going into science and engineering, 'cause that was my strong things ... math and science. But overseas—I don't know—I just—it just kind of felt like I'd be going to Cap University. In fact I had a Cap University handbook—well you know the books that they had. And I remember reading that when I was at some place where we were, maybe at that building we were in that Christmas Eve. But I remember reading through that and the one thing he did say to me—well he said two things that might be of interest: he asked me to promise I would not drink or smoke in the service. That kept me out of some activities that some of my other squad members—but I digress.

PIEHLER: So, you never had a drink in the service or ...

SCHMIDT: Not until I got back to here and probably at White Sulfur Springs, West Virginia. Okay.

PIEHLER: That's pretty faithful.

SCHMIDT: ... I've done dad pretty well there. The second thing is, I'm a chess player. Not a good one. But I'm pretty good I can beat—I could probably beat you. I could beat her.

PIEHLER: Oh, you could beat me. I haven't played in years.

SCHMIDT: But there is that painting that is used in devotionals. The devil is seen standing up like I mated you. And a chess ...

-----END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with William S. Schmidt at the University of Tennessee, in Knoxville, Tennessee, with Kurt Piehler and Jerilyn Evans. And you were just—unfortunately the tape had just cut off and you were telling a story about ...

SCHMIDT: Okay, the story is about a painting where apparently Satan is playing chess for a man's soul. And he seems to be triumphant but a chess master examined the board and said as

long as the knight and king moved together—now you see that could have some religious significance—that there is no checkmate. And I ... thought of that in the service. That is, in the overseas service. And it stayed with me and possibly was the most influential thing he ever said that led me into the ministry. I suppose the memories of the battle [on] January 1—by the way, New Year's Eve, whatever you plan is, [it's] fairly tame to what we experienced—but that evening was snow-covered. Now you understand I'm looking out a window at ground level on a snow-covered scene. So it was basically quiet with one exception. There was about a thirty-minute barrage of our guns on our position. They programmed this. I mean it was for our benefit. It scattered the enemy. So they were doing a nice thing for us. The sergeant, however, felt as though he wanted a report of where each of the shells was landing. So he expected me to look out the window and watch the shells land. So ... after that it was very quiet and there was no movement. They did not want to move there. In fact, they had other places that they were moving. And there was snow—the whiteness of the snow, the fullness of the moon on the moonlit night. It was rather an interesting picture. You know you sit there and you meditate. So.

PIEHLER: ... By the same token ... it is sometimes not easy to be the pastor's son or daughter. You didn't ever feel any tension ...

SCHMIDT: I didn't have very much of a sense of that because I was a campus brat 'til I was a junior in high school. Then when I was a junior in high school we moved from Moorhead. High school was 400 into a class where there was well over 1000, in my class. More in my class in Rayen School, Youngstown, Ohio than we had in the whole high school. And Moorhead was Anglo-Saxon Protestant, mostly Norwegian. We had some blacks. One was ... the maid of the mayor and the other was the chauffeur of the mayor. And I once was doing some work selling books or something in [the] northern part of Moorhead, which is an area that we seldom went to because we were in the south side by the campus. And a dog was pestering me and a black lady let me go through her house and out the back door so that I could get away from the dog. So, that was the only personal contact that was strange. But I get to Youngstown and Rayen High School was one-third Anglo-Saxon, one-third mill workers children, which were white but they were a little different than people from Moorhead, Minnesota, and one-third were black—approximately. So it was a mixture of people that I'd never seen.... When we came we went on a train from Moorhead by way of Milwaukee and we'd gone to the zoo in Milwaukee on a bus. And I actually saw a man sitting while a woman was standing up in the bus. And I'd never seen that at Moorhead. It was a totally different world. And Youngstown, when a fellow said he was beating up his old man. I couldn't imagine. (Laughs) Just what sort of life do these people have? It was just a different a life. It was just a strange life and the high school was so big that they didn't—most people didn't [know] I was a pastor's son or whatever. So that never affected me.

PIEHLER: So you spent the bulk of your years growing up in Moorhead. What did you come to Moorhead for?

SCHMIDT: Okay, I was—I went into the fourth grade in Moorhead, nine years old. My ninth birthday was in Moorhead, Minnesota. My junior [year] in high school—by the middle of my

junior year dad chose to move out which I thought was a terrible choice because all my friends were in Moorhead and I was uprooted from them. That was fairly traumatic.

PIEHLER: Plus it was a very different school. I mean the way you described it, it sounds like it could be a little rough and tumble.

SCHMIDT: I think you ... have it right on the head. A different kind of people and trying to get acquainted with that large a number. In Moorhead most people I knew went to Trinity Lutheran Church. It was a big church. There were a few—that's the group that we were with. And they had a large Luther League. There were other people, but religion didn't really enter that much into it but we gravitated around our friends and most of my friends went to Trinity.

EVANS: Were you close with your sister Marianne growing up? Were you ...

SCHMIDT: Oh, we were three years apart. She—we had different friends. She claims I teased her. I think possibly I did. And probably wasn't a very good brother to her, probably wasn't.

PIEHLER: What did your parents—how did they, your father was employed, but how did the Depression affect your family? How tough was it—ministers don't get paid a lot even in good times.

SCHMIDT: That's right. He was the president of this little college. And at the time I remember, now I was just a kid, eight years old, seven years old, and I'm seeing boxes of books in hallways. This is from such and such a college, in Nebraska or someplace, that's folded. And then the knowledge that possibly this college would fold. And it did a year after he left. He went to Concordia and ...

PIEHLER: So the college that he was president of, what was the name of that again?

SCHMIDT: St. Paul Luther.

PIEHLER: And that went out—it did in fact it did go out of business.

SCHMIDT: It did go out of business. It was near Phelan Park. We lived [at] 1313 Earl Street [which] is two blocks, from the edge of the water. It's a great park. And 1000 Ivy Street, when I was a real little kid and had to go to kindergarten at Farnsworth School, I walked six blocks across some streetcar tracks. The old Phelan line that went into the park there.

PIEHLER: Was your family able to make ends meet?

SCHMIDT: Okay, cause they eeked out—I think mother waited till the twenty-eighth day to pay the—you know you have those days of grace on the insurance policies. They were just eeking by and in fact when I came back.... When I went into the service, I don't know what a private was getting at that time, but I think that most of my money was being sent home. And so dad felt a little bit bad about that ... but I mean that was a supplement into his income. And they had to use it. And this is back in the early '40s. Of course, I always had a little job, a paper

route or doing yard work or whatever for spending money. 'Cause we didn't have much money. But I wasn't aware that we were poor because most everyone else was living at our same level.

PIEHLER: I assumed that particularly when your father had churches that you lived in parsonages? Or did your ...

SCHMIDT: That's correct. I lived in parsonages six times and he was in a parsonage in Youngstown and he was in a parsonage in Waverly when I was out of the house then.

PIEHLER: Your parents—your mother was Republican. Was your father also Republican?

SCHMIDT: Yes, very much so. He was very disappointed that Marianne was a Democrat. And it really almost killed him when after McGovern spoke in Dayton, Ohio on the Watergate. And I told him—'cause then I looked around and I said, "Who's helping me here in Dayton with this inner city church?" And there were five city commissioners in Dayton at that time. Four of them, when I ... left that church, four of them had been in our church building for meetings within the month before I left. I knew all of them. I knew them by name. I knew—in fact I worked with one of the Democratic people that eventually became Lieutenant Governor, Paul Leonard. And I said, "Who's helping me. It's not the Dem ... it's not the Republicans. It's the Democrats." And so after hearing about Nixon and McGovern I decided, hey scrap that Nixon guy. And then that ...

PIEHLER: And then your dad ... remained ...

SCHMIDT: Because dad was always of the impression that if it hadn't been for those meddling newspaper people that were doing bad things to this nice man.... (Laughter) So we didn't talk much about politics after that.

PIEHLER: I assume he was not a big Roosevelt fan then ...

SCHMIDT: Oh, no, no, no, no, no, he—in fact he criticized Roosevelt.... I think in '32 he came in and talked about the problems of the cotton farmers, but we're talking Minnesota and he felt as though had he dealt with the problems that were really on our mind—Minnesota's a funny state you know the labor party was very strong for a long time and, oh you know that history—and now they've got uh ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, Jessie—which is to me so shocking that he's coming from Minnesota, just, cause I think you'll enjoy this. I often say to my students that Minnesota is a virtuous state, because when I was applying for jobs I liked to go to Minnesota, because it was virtuous. And that's why Jessie Ventura is even more of a shock to me ...

SCHMIDT: Well, we know what to read in the papers, and most of that's a lot—though there is some truth in the newspapers; the sports page is always true—usually true, mostly true, the funny papers, you can usually find some truth there. (Laughter) Is there any other place in the paper that's true? I don't know. I read the funnies and I read the sports page and I do the crossword puzzle and that's true.

PIEHLER: Did you play sports growing up?

SCHMIDT: Uh, I'm fairly uncoordinated, well first of all when I got to Cap, I was very thin and I was still recovering—and when I was growing up I played all the sports really. We had a hockey rink behind our house uh, one block long and a half-block wide. They flooded that every winter and that means if from Thanksgiving to Easter we had ice behind our house and we played football and baseball but never very well ... but we played athletics. And in college, I probably did the obligatory intramural stuff, but in college I was the editor of the school newspaper, *The Chimes* for one year—I was on that staff for four years. I was a bridge player, ... played duplicate bridge.... One of the team of four things to play to hands against Charles Goren and I was Oswald Jacoby with my partner and ... we split the boards which was the best you could do. I mean you didn't beat 'em, but they didn't beat us either so we felt good about that.

EVANS: ... Staying with college, do you think you would have gone without the G.I. bill?

SCHMIDT: Oh, I don't know that—I think the G.I. bill was [the] most wonderful and I think it ought to be for our military people coming in now. But it would be hard to think of getting that much education, certainly the way it was. But everybody was on the G.I. bill and the colleges changed. We were like uh, six or eight hundreds students at Cap and now it's a couple [of] thousand, and ... the schools all blossomed. But you had all of these returning servicemen that had been taught skills that were no longer in use and what are you going to do with them? And the idea of sending them to school to train—because I did give thirty-eight years of income tax and social security taxes or whatever, and others gave more taxes than I did on a preachers salary—but still they got some return from me—so I think it was a good program. But would I have gone? I don't know. It would have been a longer—different life certainly ...

PIEHLER: I want to ask something, because I forgot to ask you in my preliminary survey ... where were you born and when were you born?

SCHMIDT: I was born September 9, 1925 in Spokane Washington, Walsh County, and when I was two-years old my father was then a professor at Spokane College. Previous to being the professor there ... he had been a home missions person in that area where he met my mother. He planted some missions that are still in operation [in] Port Angeles [and] Baker, Oregon, whatever. When I was a two years old we moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, on that campus, across from Gillette Children's Hospital ... which is a fine medical center, I remember it as Gillette Children's Hospital. And ... after I got out of third grade I went to Moorhead Minnesota, and that's the story of that life.

EVANS: So you had traveled a bit before you ...

SCHMIDT: Actually, we didn't have a car until we moved to Youngstown.

PIEHLER: That was the first time you had a car?

SCHMIDT: The first time the family had a car. And we took driving lessons and ...



PIEHLER: Including your father?

SCHMIDT: Including my father. And dad wasn't able to go there the first day when we had a member of the congregation take me for the drivers test, which I passed, so the next day I took him for his drivers test 'cause you had to have a licensed driver, right? And he passed and so that was the first car that we had. And we ... ourselves didn't travel. He traveled—he had a clergy pass which meant he traveled very cheaply on train, and his travel was by train, or if they wanted him to go out and look for students, which they often did, you go from high school to high school, you would have somebody drive him. Somebody from the college would have to be a chauffeur.

PIEHLER: I can't imagine such an existence.

SCHMIDT: ... Concordia College was a time when the students were poor. One student paid his tuition in apples, or at least part of his tuition in apples, and I know ate apples, I think then that they sold the apples to the faculty. (Laughter) You will like these apples.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you were some kind of faculty brat, could you describe, because it sounds like you spent a lot of time ...

SCHMIDT: Well we were on the campus all the time. Uh, basketball games, football games, we'd get into them easily one way or another—and so we saw a lot of the college athletic events, college basketball and college football at that time. I remember when Hamlin came up one year, they marked the football field out with coal, pebbles of coal because there was several inches of snow on the ground. But it was a nice life, we had a large yard in Moorhead loaded [with] forty-nine box elder trees, ... five or so cottonwood trees, we had two apple trees, a plum hedge. We're talking about a quarter of a block square was our yard. And they built the—Old Ylvasaka Memorial Library, took some of our trees. But some of the trees are still there and I can recognize them, you know how you can recognize a tree, you know where the branches are, whatever.... On the lily pond we did our rafting.... There was a thing under the street where the sewer pipes went, that was a frequent place. Yeah, we just hung around, hung out. Bicycles, that was our transportation ...

PIEHLER: ... Did you go to movies a lot growing up?

SCHMIDT: Uh, went to the Princess Theater across at Fargo, North Dakota and ... there they had always a serial, and at least one cowboy show, and, of course, the cartoons and next week's events.

EVANS: And how much did you pay to get ...

SCHMIDT: I don't know whether it was a dime or—I think it wasn't very much because my folks didn't have all that much and—but we walked over there—walking. Sometimes we used the little funny street cars that they would change it from one direction ... to the other direction by just making the seats go up and it probably only held about twenty-five people or so and—but

[we] mostly rode our bikes. By the time we were old enough to have bicycles then the neighborhood was ours. The strongest influence in our life, basically growing up in Moorhead, was the ... shop teacher from the seventh and eighth grade. They built a new junior high school—Frank Roof was his name, he was from eastern ... Indiana, from a farm in eastern Indiana and that was his story. But Frank Roof—when they built this new high school they had intercommunication where the principal could listen in every room except the shop room, because of course with the noisy instruments you couldn't have that in the shop room. So, occasionally he would explain things to us in the shop room where the door was locked and he talked to us. He also administered punishment. He had a leather strap which I saw only twice. He had a board with holes [in it]. I saw that a couple of times. I never got hit, but the punishment was publicly administered and ...

PIEHLER: What would he talk to you ...

SCHMIDT: We're not talking about the birds and the bees, we're talking about shaping up or shipping out. I mean we're talking about let's get serious here ... about life goals or whatever, scaring the heck out of us really.

PIEHLER: So he really viewed himself as really to keep everyone on a steady course.

SCHMIDT: Yeah, he ... also was a ... reserve policeman, and on Halloween he ... would ride, 'cause he knew everybody, and every boy had to take seventh and eighth grade shop. And there was not a boy in the community who could be a troublemaker, because you didn't get to be a troublemaker in the ninth grade, or eighth grade. I mean he knew us all by name and uh ...

PIEHLER: And he could ... if he needed to be an intimidating ...

SCHMIDT: There was intimidation.... He wrote up police reports. We found out later that none of the reports ever went anyplace. But he was the school person that was the regulator.

PIEHLER: Were you ever a Boy Scout?

SCHMIDT: Yes I was. I got to be a Second Class Scout and never could be a First Class Scout because you have to know how to do signaling, and that's the only thing I failed in the military. You know they had this test where you're supposed to hear "dot dots" and I never could, I didn't understand that. I did very well on all the other tests, because I did get into ASTRP, you know, but ... that's as far as I got. [I] enjoyed Boy Scouting and went out to Camp Shawandase. One overnight—the snow was always on a certain side of the pine tree. And was it cold? It was cold. And did we sleep? Nobody slept a single wink that entire night! We were so miserable. It was a terrible event. It did shape me up for being in the army because we were mostly cold and miserable and.... Just, one night I mean I can remember being, you know, what you'd call a fox hole, but it's not a fox hole, it's just a trench kind of thing, and it was there when I got there. And unfortunately it had several inches of water in the bottom of it and then there was a wooden box. And I sat on the wooden box in the trench because you never knew when something was going to come. And the next morning my body was just totally cold, and the men, they came with coffee, hot canteen cup of coffee ... and finally I just kind of—but I think maybe the

Germans were as in bad shape as we were. They didn't eat any better, maybe we ate a little bit better. And what was funny to see them run they had that gas mask hitting their rump, and that was kind of funny to watch that. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Um, how much did you, growing up, how much did you know about what was going on in the world ... in the thirties? 'Cause you were quite young and a lot's happening, it sounds like you were keeping yourself pretty busy with ...

SCHMIDT: Well, we knew ... about the Spanish Civil War. Remember my father was a professor so we were into that. He was also the debate coach and therefore some of the social events were to go and listen to debates, on whatever the subject was. And, um—I think we were very well aware, we knew when Mussolini went into Ethiopia. We were in an area that was fairly isolationist. [William] Langer was the isolationist senator from North Dakota. Lindbergh was the individual that was favored by the Concordia group. And I think until Hitler invaded Norway—that would have been a turning point.

PIHLER: So that—you could really feel the Norwegian invasion?

SCHMIDT: I wasn't aware if they did or not. But I do know this, that you'd pretty much follow it like you'd follow a baseball game or a football game. You didn't really feel involved. There was pros and cons about all those things we were giving to Great Britain. Why should we give Great Britain all these things? My father's comment about the French, "50 million Frenchmen can't be wrong." Oh, no! Any number of Frenchmen can be wrong! (Laughter) I mean there were certain prejudices that were a part of the family growing up.

PIEHLER: Did your family—your father is [of] German descent. Did you have any relatives in Germany or was that very distant?

SCHMIDT: Not that we know of. Dad—both the Swedish and the German people came over on three different boats. My father's people came over with two children, well three children: a half-sister, and a sister, and a brother of dad's. A child I think was born on the sea or was an infant and he died.... But they came from Danzig. And Deanie and I went to Gdansk and also to what they called the town that my grandmother came from whose name was Carolyn Peters. And Grudziadz I think, or something, up the Vistula River. But we went to the St. Barbara's Church where my parents, my father's parents were married and where my aunt and my uncle were baptized. And, of course, Dresden—Danzig was quite a bit different than it was at that time. About forty percent destroyed they say, how do I know? I went up to Sweden and Deanie and I had both been to Sweden into the church where my mother was baptized. And later I went by myself on a Euro-Pass and—they moved when she was two years old to another parish. I went and saw that church and I also went and saw the church my grandfather was, but also the house where he grew up in. And I knew that the storm cellar was the one that he knew because the concrete was scratched 1799. He was born around 1860. So that was the storm cellar he knew. The shed was his shed. And the front part of the house, of course it had been added onto, was the house he lived in. So it was quite a stirring event for me to have that touch of my roots

...

EVANS: And where was this at in Sweden?

SCHMIDT: In Sweden near Ljungby. And that's spelled with a J. And mother's people—her mother came from Gavle near Sandvikan in the town of Hugbo is where the church was. And then ... we saw, I saw, the pastor of Sandvikan Church and he told me the name of the parish where they had moved to. So, I got on a bus that night and went to that place and talked to the people and looked at the church records and whatever.

PIEHLER: You mentioned being seventeen when Pearl Harbor occurred. Or how old were you when Pearl Harbor ...

SCHMIDT: I was a junior in high school when Pearl Harbor occurred.

PIEHLER: And this is in Youngstown?

SCHMIDT: I was born in '25, so was I seventeen or was I sixteen? I think it was '41. I think I was sixteen. I was seventeen when I was a senior and I didn't get to be eighteen until after I had graduated for a couple of months and that's the reason I went to Indiana University as a reservist. Because I was too young for the grown-up army.

PIEHLER: ... You were in Youngstown when Pearl Harbor occurred.

SCHMIDT: Yes, and they, for example, had blackouts. And I remember going into the car to get something and the light went on as you opened the door and I thought, "Oh my goodness, I violated the blackout." (Laughter) And we had in football games, they would have a thing where the lights would be off and they would light a match or a candle in one part of it and [say], "See how you can see that light from a distance. How important it is." Youngstown, Ohio they had these smelters with Bessemer converters with shooting hot iron and slag and stuff up into the ground. My car light—what German plane is going to be able to spot it? (Laughs) I think they would hit those steel mills before they would hit our driveway.

PIEHLER: You were in Youngstown when defense—after Pearl Harbor in particular there was a real demand for steel. How did that effect Youngstown? I mean you were still very new so you didn't ...

SCHMIDT: When we came from Moorhead, Minnesota where you could wear the same white shirt for several weeks and you made a habit of taking it off after church, hanging it up, and putting on your other clothes. But we had to—I had to buy a suit. My dad was the pastor and we had some shirts. And for every day the shirt was grimy, dirty. The windowsills are dirty—gritty, gritty dirt. We stayed with somebody, in somebody's house who was a member of the parish, while they got—they made arrangements for the parsonage. But it was a grimy, dirty city.

PIEHLER: Did it become grimier as the war went on?

SCHMIDT: It was always compared to Moorhead, Minnesota which—we had dust. I mean North Dakota would come over and visit us. Well they'd send their farms over. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So you remember some of the dust storms?

SCHMIDT: Oh, sure. I can remember a golf course in Valley City, North Dakota. We went to—not to play golf, but dad was at a meeting. And I was sitting at the golf course from the greens, from near the greens, you could look out and you could see the fields of wheat. Occasionally you would see a vehicle between the fields. And there would be highways, but other than that it was unbroken sea of wheat out there in North Dakota. In the greens, which really should be called blacks because it was oiled gravel I believe. You know, fine gravel that was used for the greens. There were no greens. I mean, how could they have greens? [They] didn't have any water! If they'd had any water they would have put it on the field I presume. But I can recall that. And I remember that somebody said that North Dakota or the people out on the prairie would join the navy because they were used to that waving of the wheat. (Laughter) You know it was like the ocean. I would have joined the navy myself except my eyesight was such that I couldn't pass that test. I would have gone into the V-12 program, not the A-12 program.

PIEHLER: So you did try for the V-12?

SCHMIDT: No, I knew I couldn't. I had 20/30 and you had to have 20/20 vision. So ...

PIEHLER: At Youngstown did you have any jobs, pay jobs? You mentioned having small jobs growing up like the paper route. Did you, after 1941 work in any ... factories?

SCHMIDT: During the Christmas season of '42, '43 I worked at—near the diamond in Youngstown, Ohio which is right downtown at Kliven's Jewelry Store. And he evidently liked me well enough that he wanted me to work Christmas Eve and he would take me home. He drove me to the church, so that I could be at the service. And I still remember him saying—asking me why we Christians made so much of Jesus. And I thought later I wish I had given him a better answer 'cause I didn't really answer him at all you know. But I ... dusted off their—dresser sets were a big thing there. And occasionally we'd go down to Obie's, which was on the other end of Federal Street, which was kind of a pawnshop and junky store. And we would get many of their boxes and we would re-price them for a few dollars more. We thought, you know, what the heck.

PIEHLER: It sounds like a classic retail ...

SCHMIDT: Yeah, and occasionally they'd let me sell things, but not very often. I was basically helping out in the store. Of course I got no commission on it. But that was my job. And I'm not sure if I was under social security then or not. When I got back into ... college, I worked and did house chores for people and that sort of thing. First job I guess would have been at the corn-packing plant. And I was very proud ... that even when I was injured the man would say, "You have to come to work," which, you know, says something for my work ethic.

PIEHLER: Did—in your high school in Youngstown after Pearl Harbor were there any scrap drives or bond drives or any rallies or anything to support the war effort? You mentioned the blackout restrictions.

SCHMIDT: I think my folks would have been into that saving of the fat and the cans. We were doing that at home I'm sure.

PIEHLER: But you don't remember anything special at your high school.

SCHMIDT: Nothing special. It was just what was happening and when you're a senior in high school what do you remember? I mean, we were looking forward to graduation and all those nice things, you know. In fact that summer before I went ... to the University of Indiana, I went to Camp Fitch as a cabin counselor, tent counselor actually. And for ten weeks or whatever the number of weeks was I had a group of boys that I took care of. And there was a fellow called Wally who twiddled, which meant he had a big key—one of those keys that you open sardines with a long stem, and he would twiddle it on his leg. And he would watch it. Now obviously he was not the brightest of the bright. His father—he was in my cabin so that his father had given some money. And I was able to have some money. And I was so ashamed of the fact that I was going to leave a little early and so I wasn't earning my full amount for Wally, the twiddler.

PIEHLER: Was the camp, was it ...

SCHMIDT: Camp Fitch was a YMCA camp off of Lake Erie and near West Springfield, East Springfield, Ohio, near Conneaut. I remember that summer—no not that summer, I served as a table waiter as a—the dining hall superintendent which made sure that everything was clean. We saw the Pittsburgh Steelers play I believe the Birmingham farm team of theirs. And that's the only National Football League game I've ever seen. We saw in Memphis group, what was it the Memphis Belles?

EVANS: Chicks?

SCHMIDT: No, no, the Chicks were the baseball team. But we saw the ... football team play in a big stadium there. But ...

PIEHLER: You mentioned you'd ideally wanted the ... Navy but your eyesight—and you decided to enlist in the Army.

SCHMIDT: I signed up for the ASTP program to go to college. I wanted to go to college.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

SCHMIDT: I didn't want to go to France—but you know if that's where they send you, that's where you're going. And if you're there you do what they tell you to do. And you don't complain. I mean you just do what you have to do.

PIEHLER: You signed—you enlisted in 19—in August 1943 in the reserves and then how long were you at Indiana? You were ...

SCHMIDT: For one term. That would be let's say September to early December probably, whenever the term would be over, whenever the school term would be over. Then we went home and we were told to report to Fort Benjamin Harrison on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December. So it was right after Christmas. And so I got out on December 17<sup>th</sup> two years later. That was before Christmas so there was only one Christmas into the service, which ... was interesting. That was a very—I didn't even know it was Christmas really. The only holiday that was very sentimental was Easter. We were in prison camp, and they had an early morning service and I can still see it. You know you look out the window and you can see the barbed wire and you can see the guard and we were trying to have a service conducted by some other prisoner of war, not by me for sure.... But during the prayer what he was doing was remembering all the good things that were going on and it made us—if we hadn't been home-sick before that made us—that was the nail in the coffin! But then we ... got back to our barracks and we had our special Easter dinner. We had mashed potatoes and we had gravy. Oh, that's it. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So that was the extra treat.

SCHMIDT: Yeah, that was the extra treat. They had a sauce they put on the potatoes that must have had the essence of meat someplace.

PIEHLER: Somewhere along the way.

SCHMIDT: Toward the end of the time the group was—I was still in my hut and I hadn't been moved to the hospital yet so I still knew what was going on, what happened is they came back and they saw a dead horse in the field. That meant that the next morning they went out and they butchered the dead horse. And they brought the meat back and some of the meat got into what they had. And one of the fellas brought in a horse bone that, you know—well you know it's food. Kroger's does the same. They call it 'Krogerizing,' they tenderize the meat and let it age a little. So the horse was dead and getting tenderized out on the field. Picky, picky, picky.

PIEHLER: No, I just don't—well I guess one of the things you're conveying is you can't be too squeamish.

SCHMIDT: Oh, prisoners of war—the sanitary conditions—we didn't look at each other [as] clean or dirty. And with working a full day on our type of rations there wasn't really much camaraderie in the thing. You just got your rations and you ate them. There was some talking, but not a whole lot. And the only thing we talked about was food. In fact ... they had a Red Cross package—we never had a full Red Cross package but I think they had four in a box, and somebody mentioned wanting to be with his wife. And then we realized that sex had never really reared its ugly head.

PIEHLER: Really? You didn't really talk about women?

SCHMIDT: Oh, no. We talked about women. We talked about our mothers and how they cooked. (Laughter) We did recipes. What the difference is between butterscotch candy and caramel candy. Yeah we talked about women all the time if they could cook.

PIEHLER: What did you study at Indiana?

SCHMIDT: I was an engineering student. Therefore, I studied mathematics, physics, chemistry.

PIEHLER: Now ... you ... were in the ASTRP so that my sense of that is a little bit different from the ASTP.

SCHMIDT: Yes, we were going to the same classes and wearing a uniform and doing everything they did including the short arm inspections. But we didn't get a cent.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay so you were ...

SCHMIDT: We were in the reserves.

PIHLER: You had the drill and the discipline.

SCHMIDT: Everything they did.

PIEHLER: But no pay.

SCHMIDT: No pay.

PIEHLER: ... How did you pay for that semester?

SCHMIDT: Well, we didn't pay the university for anything. They gave us room and board.

PIEHLER: So you did get your tuition, room, and board?

SCHMIDT: Oh, of course. We were just there and they were teaching us and they supplied all the supplies they gave us. And we probably got money from home or whatever money we had. Not much money was involved. I remember that taking a young lady out and I think a lemon phosphate was a nickel. You ... can spend an entire evening with one liquid phosphate. I mean ...

PIEHLER: I'm going to ...

-----END TAPE TWO SIDE ONE-----

SCHMIDT: ... Remagen Bridge when we came over and that shortened the war a little bit. And basically, I wanted to see where that bridge was because when they got over the bridge and could end the war that quickly, because like I say they carried me out.



DEANIE: It wasn't until about year ago that he found out that his good friend Virgil Davis was one of the guys who carried him out.

SCHMIDT: I didn't know who carried me out. I just know I was carried out.

DEANIE: Virgil.

SCHMIDT: I mean how do you know?

DEANIE: He said, "I carried you out."

PIEHLER: I should add on tape that you had prompted your husband to reflect on how you—just before I started taping, that how close your husband was—it was a touch and go situation and you might not have made it.

EVANS: Do you remember how much you weighed when you left the camp?

SCHMIDT: Left what, the prison camp?

EVANS: The prison camp.

SCHMIDT: Well, 105, go five pounds either way on that. 'Cause we were basically knees and ankles. And there was no—when they were shooting me with drugs, ... the penicillin, there was only two places where there was much muscle mass. It was either the left cheek or the right cheek toward the ... posterior.

PIEHLER: I would just go back, back to Indiana a little bit and your early war [and] early army experience. Did you think ... the government had promised you would finish college? I mean what was your reaction when you heard about ...

SCHMIDT: No, I didn't know that the government promised me anything.

PIEHLER: So you didn't feel like ... because I know some of ASTP people. In fact I talked to one ASTP who is still mad. He ... very much feels that he joined the Army and, you know, he ... was almost asked to join the ASTP and they promised him that he would finish college. And then they broke up the unit and put him back in the infantry and it sort of—they told him he had to go into infantry. That would have been fine but [he says], "I was given this other promise and I expected I'd be able to ..."

SCHMIDT: Well he did have the G.I. Bill

PIEHLER: Yeah, but ...

SCHMIDT: And my goodness I had 1946, '47, '48, '49, '50, '51, and most of '52. Seven years on just two lousy years and only two months of actual combat. And only maybe a couple of you

could probably limit that down to a couple of days that you're actually to any affect. So, I don't I think ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, well I also think he was reflecting ... his attitude at the time, he also did go back to school on the G.I. Bill. What ... was it like to go? I mean you were with a pretty bright group in Indiana.

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes.

PIEHLER: And I've been told that the NCO is not the—there's different kinds of brightness but that the NCOs—they [do not] ... necessarily have a lot of book learning.

SCHMIDT: That's right.

PIEHLER: And it can also be a kind of salty group to say the least.

SCHMIDT: We did not notice that saltiness ... but when we were in the—I wouldn't say we had that much feeling toward the NCOs at Indiana University or whoever was doing that.

PIEHLER: Yeah, Indiana—but the 100<sup>th</sup> ...

SCHMIDT: But the 100<sup>th</sup> Division—we recognized that ... we were superior students but we also recognized that these guys were training us to do something that we didn't know anything about. And that it was a different world. That was their world. And since that time I've learned to appreciate just what good people they were. They ... helped us survive and actually I could just say one thing of a little pride: the Fortress at Bitche was never taken by anybody in modern war. Never taken. The Germans—it was given to them. The ... whole country gave up and then they got it. And in the Franco-Prussian war they didn't take it. And, in fact, the French walked out of that fortress under an armistice with all of their battle flags, all of their munitions, whatever. The first group that ever took that town and that fortress was the 100<sup>th</sup> Division. And therefore they wanted to make our general—have you heard this story?

PIEHLER: No, no.

SCHMIDT: The general was made an honorary citizen of the city of Bitche. And therefore since we are his children we are all the sons of Bitche!

EVANS: Wow! (Laughs)

SCHMIDT: The 100<sup>th</sup> Division is a very special division.

PIEHLER: Thinking back on your training you joined the 100<sup>th</sup> training and that's what—did you do a full ...

SCHMIDT: No, no, no. It had been training and they had been sending people over, but now it was going to be a division that we trained together to go over.

PIEHLER: To go over. Where did you ... do your basic training in the division? How did ...

SCHMIDT: Fort Bragg is where I joined the division. I did my basic training at Fort Benning, did my training then as a division to be a part of a company.

PIEHLER: Yes, you joined the division after doing basic training?

SCHMIDT: That's correct.

PIEHLER: ... Did you do your basic training with the men you would serve with? Or did ...

SCHMIDT: No, the basic training, they were sent to wherever they were sent to and sometimes we met people that we could remember from basic training but it had no bearing. Five thousand of us ended up from ASTP from basic training to our division.

PIEHLER: Looking back on basic training and then your training with the division itself. What were the lessons you learned? Both the small ones and some of the larger ones.

SCHMIDT: This is a little thing. This is basic training and you are supposed to learn the manual of arms. Manual of arms means that you are to be able to move the arms around, left shoulder, right shoulder, whatever. And this ... sergeant thought that I was moving my head a little bit. And so therefore he was going to teach me a lesson. And so we stood back-to-back, bareheaded, with our rifles and we did the manual of arms. And yes, I moved my head, but his head never hit mine and so it was a poor lesson. He had the right idea but he didn't teach this guy anything. (Laughter) We did not train with the same people at Benning. Those people never, as I understand, go over with you 'cause there's a certain animosity that might go between and though it never, this term of fragging, which I am familiar with and you're familiar with, I don't think it occurred in our group.... There was good feeling, "We're in it together and we're going to survive together and we're going to work with each other together."

One little funny thing that happened—Thanksgiving; we were over in the battlefield and we'd been in this area for a couple of days and you could hear bullets whistling, but it was a safe area. But they'd had a battle previous to our getting there and a whole bunch of Germans had been killed. And it was very cold, so their bodies had been stacked, we didn't have to touch the bodies. And I'd never seen a dead body. The first dead body I saw was the leg from under a cannon, you know in the back area, of one of our guys and then, of course, I saw some more bodies. But—and here [we were] surrounded by them, maybe forty or fifty, you know stacked like cordwood in this area. We had a drizzly—we're talking France, we're talking November, we were going to go to our Thanksgiving meal in that setting, wonderful setting. And the—our lieutenant offered the two of us a drink and we both said, "No thank you." Now can you believe that? It does stretch the imagination doesn't it? But that's the kind of guys that we were in the 100<sup>th</sup> Division. Off the college campuses, I always thought of it as a big Luther League rally. You know going out with a Boy Scout troop because basically when you weren't actually being fired on you were walking a lot. And it's beautiful land. It's very nice. It's a tourist area, but it is heavily treed.

A story that could be told of that is one of our men who was missing in action was a fellow by the name of Maurice Lloyd. They knew he was killed, but they didn't know—they didn't have his body. And so he was missing in action. And he was killed about the time of their attack on us. About six years ago a hiker found some metal in a kind of depression in the ground. And that was Maurice. Now, Maurice is the saint of the infantryman. He was a Roman soldier that persisted in professing the faith that was killed in rank. Executed in rank. Lemburg was the area where Maurice Lloyd was and the patron saint of Lemburg was Saint Maurice. And so the mayor—we were back there for a little presentation and celebration and the mayor, speaking in French of course—but it was translated for us, he said, “There was a—Saint Maurice was our saint, and then Maurice from America came over to save us.” I thought it was a nice little tribute to this man.

PIEHLER: ... The 100<sup>th</sup>, was there any resentment that more of you were not officers. Because ... earlier in the war ...

SCHMIDT: No, not at all. We didn't want to be ... no, no. We understood that you could and we were qualified to go to OCS and that sort of stuff. No, there wasn't, no, no, not at all. Not among my people that I knew.

PIEHLER: What did you talk about? ... Because you've all been plucked out of colleges, so what did you talk about before you were a prisoner of war?

SCHMIDT: Well that'd be hard to say that I remembered much conversation. Probably what we were doing, what we were going to do, and what we had just done. And it would be very pedestrian things.

PIEHLER: Were you ever able to read when you were on the line? Did you ever read anything?

SCHMIDT: Yes, I had a Lutheran Book of Prayer and a New Testament. And I read in those. And [at] my confirmation experience they had us memorize five Psalms. And, of course, I had those with me, in my head.

PIEHLER: You didn't have to memorize a small catechism?

SCHMIDT: Oh yes, but that wasn't particularly needed until I had to teach it. And then I memorized it and for thirty-eight years I knew that very well. But then the—when I was in prison camp I had my little testament and I would read. And I read through the testament in prison camp. 'Course I had no glasses, and the type was small and the energy level was low so I didn't read much. But that is what I had for reading material. The other bit of reading material that I had was—I found it out in a field sometime in April, a proclamation and it was signed by Harry S. Truman. And it was like he was president. I did not remember him being on the ballot to be president. We did not know when Roosevelt died. Maybe everybody else knew but I didn't know.

PIEHLER: And so in the prison camp they didn't make ... an announcement that Roosevelt had died?

SCHMIDT: No, there was no announcement. The only announcement was to get out, "*Raus, Raus.*" And then you stood there and you gave your number and then they assigned you to being a—*Billfinger*, for example, is the only company I can remember and then you went with whichever group was going to *Billfinger*, whichever—whatever they were doing, digging holes or spreading gravel or digging, whatever.

PIEHLER: I'm curious. Being ... a soldier you said you spent a lot of time ... at several points in the reserve or guarding the command post.

SCHMIDT: Well, okay.

PIEHLER: Not all the time, but did you ever have a—you weren't on a line. Did you ever have a reluctance at using your weapon?

SCHMIDT: No, that didn't occur. Well actually it was used out of reflex more than anything. And I remember the gentleman, I presume he was asking for mercy or whatever, but of course I couldn't help him, but I didn't fire again. In fact we were told that the best thing you can do against the enemy is to wound him bad because that ties up more of their people.

PIEHLER: So you remember that instruction ...

SCHMIDT: Yes I do!

PIEHLER: To try to wound?

SCHMIDT: Yes I do!

PIEHLER: What was the most frightening experience, single experience, in the war?

SCHMIDT: ... The bombing in Hamburg I would say was the most terrifying. You really were not—you understood that the war was going on real close-by [during the battle] on December 31 ... there you were doing some action. But there [during the bombing] you were just lying on the bottom of the floor and you could be killed.

PIEHLER: There's nothing you could have done.

SCHMIDT: No, nothing you could do. You can't crawl lower than what you were. And I just felt that the Lord was going to bring me back. I just kinda thought that that might happen. So whatever.

PIEHLER: I'd be curious [to hear] your reflection on this. Because there is the cliché that there are no atheists in foxholes, but I've had a lot of people, they may not have been atheists, but

religion doesn't seem to have played a major role. At least they don't express it. What's your sense about soldiers?

SCHMIDT: I think that might be correct. I have no idea about the others. Of course, religion played a pretty big part in my life. But it didn't enter into too much of the conversation. And by the way, the kind of salty language didn't enter much into the conversation either.

PIEHLER: So you didn't—'cause G.I.s could potentially be very—G.I.s could really be quite coarse. But in your unit ...

SCHMIDT: In our unit, no. I would say not. In fact going back to Breadloaf School of English, I never—they were a bunch of non-theists, but I never heard any profanity ever. In fact, they could consider that a mark against the individual, showing that they were stupid, which I still believe. If you're gonna have to use profanity, you don't have a good vocabulary or a good mind to go with it.

PIEHLER: Could you tell us a little about the people in your squad that you went overseas with and you fought with? What was their background? You mentioned there were a lot of ASTP, ASTRP it sounds like the majority, what parts of the country were they from?

SCHMIDT: Well, the only one that I really basically remember well was the buddy that—the two of us stood together in that turret. And we ended up in the same prison camp and didn't see each other very often because just the energy of going into the next building—you just didn't do that very often. And there wasn't much communication in our particular building. The two guys from El Paso, Texas they were up there chattering. But basically, there wasn't a whole lot of communication that I could remember that took place. We talked to each other when we were in each other's presence. This is Bud Mathias. In fact I was an usher at his wedding and I was there at his funeral. So—but we shared time together after the service was over and were friends.

SCHMIDT: You got all of your yellow things marked off?

EVANS: Yeah, I'm just looking at the names in here. Seeing his name that you were with. And Rayburn Thomas.

SCHMIDT: Yeah, Thomas was the only guy down there that made any sense. I felt that he was the de facto leader, but I could be wrong on that. But he was a good infantryman. Sims was okay. I remember when we were in that place, where they didn't attack and but we were under fire and there was a little knoll there, and Sims said, "You go on up there and see what's going on." And so I did, 'cause the sergeant told me to and I told him, "Well, they're their shooting at us." So he stayed behind and the two of us—I think Whine was the other guy that went over, and I remember they put a—they had a bazooka type thing, a "Screaming Mimi" we called them. I don't know what the name was, but one of them landed fairly close to the side. You know that meant I was safe if it exploded that way. But it didn't go off. And I thought that was nice. I understand that some of ... their ammunition was sabotaged so maybe they came from one of Schindler's ammunition plants, who knows.

PIEHLER: What did you think of the Germans as an enemy?

SCHMIDT: Now?

PIEHLER: Well ... now, but also before you were captured and then how did being a prisoner change your attitude?

SCHMIDT: We were indoctrinated with nasty stuff about how terrible the Germans were and how terrible the Japanese were, of course. I don't know. I had really—no really negative feelings. I was raised with a bunch of Germans.

PIEHLER: I mean isn't there ...

SCHMIDT: People I knew, so they were just like us. I—you know, they had a job to do, I had a job to do. That was about it.

PIEHLER: Did that view change when you were in the prisoner of war camp?

SCHMIDT: Did it what?

PIEHLER: Did that view, "They have a job to do and you" ...

SCHMIDT: No they—I would have wished they'd have given me a sweater or something. But you know they did what they did and we were prisoners, so what could we say? And they didn't go out of their way to make life miserable for us. It was just miserable, just as it was. [They] didn't have to help it.

EVANS: I was just going to ask how your feeling changed after the war, when you came back to the United States about the Germans.

SCHMIDT: Oh, my goodness, I love Germany. And a German theological professor, a head of a seminary, came over to Columbus and we were down in Memphis and he came down to Memphis to be our house guests and we took him around for twenty-four hours. And we showed him everything from Memphis, Tennessee, which is a great city to visit. And we visited over at his house and he's been over to our house in Columbus. And we enjoy going to Germany. I feel at home in Germany ... even more so than Sweden. Sweden's a little harder to ...

EVANS: It's a little colder there too.

SCHMIDT: Well, if you go up into Gavle to the grocery store—well in Ljungby—you go into the grocery store in the winter time in November and October and all you're going to see is dirty old carrots and dirty old root vegetables. They don't have any fresh vegetables. Go down to Uppsala they have 'em. No, I have a good feeling towards the Germans. I respect them as a people and they are very inventive. We were smart and they were smart. And we used our smarts. One of the observations made by one of my members of the 100<sup>th</sup> Division was that as kids we learned to take apart our bicycles and whatever and we were fairly independent. And we

learned some skills that he felt that the average German boy probably didn't ... run into. I think in our play we became more creative than maybe they were. And they were not quite as creative. But according to the 100<sup>th</sup> Division in the—over the net, the web, whatever, they mentioned the fact that their divisions got down to thirty percent, and then they would put in a bunch of replacements, so you didn't have the feeling of unity, which would be represented by that officer just kind of using his toe to position the head, so that he could see what it was.... They had people from here and there in Germany and their dialects are different and they didn't have the cohesion and they felt this man that wrote the book, I think his name was Bonn, felt as though we beat 'em because there was better cohesion and better training together in our units than they had had in theirs. Because by the time we got into the war they had taken some terrible whippings all over the place.

PIEHLER: How many people did your ... squad lose, before you were captured?

SCHMIDT: Well, when I say it was a nine-man squad, one of them was lost to go back to West Point. And I really don't know that I could say that this one or that one was wounded. In our platoon we had some wounded, but I don't remember specifically that this person died this day ... in this particular battle. And none of us died in our particular battle. We were all intact at the end of the time.

PIEHLER: Did you get any replacements?

SCHMIDT: Yes, the two fellas who were on the bazooka team.

PIEHLER: Yes in fact they were ...

SCHMIDT: They were replacements. I don't know who they were. I don't know their names and we met them in the dark and they were downstairs and I was upstairs.

PIEHLER: You said earlier you ate a lot of K rations.

SCHMIDT: K rations, yes.

PIEHLER: When you were on the line it was seldom that you'd get a hot meal?

SCHMIDT: They brought coffee up. But I don't believe that they—well they couldn't 'cause they would be under fire where we were. So we ate the K rations and that was it. And a K ration box if you light it, you can boil a cup of coffee. It's got that much energy. So you can make that much coffee from the box.

PIEHLER: I take it you ... had no great fondness for the K rations.

SCHMIDT: I liked the cheese! (Laughter)



PIEHLER: You mentioned when you were back commanding—guarding the command post you got showers and dry-cleaned clothes and.... Besides that experience, was that your only experience of clean clothes and showers?

SCHMIDT: I think around Christmastime we may have showered. I'd like to tell you an experience that happened at the guard duty time. I was guarding the little alleyway going up to the officers' privy. You understand what's going on now, because it is the middle of the night. But I was in absolute shadows and there was no way the guy could have seen me. But when he got to within ten feet I gave him—I've got a good voice—I gave him a good halt and he stopped. Later on I used the latrine and I noticed that there was a pair of shorts.

PIEHLER: Soiled shorts! So you had really scared this officer?

SCHMIDT: (Laughter) I think he may have unloaded! But that was the only funny thing I can think of that happened. I don't know that he did, because I was doing perfectly-proper! He didn't reprimand me. I was guarding my thing and I did tell him, "Halt!" but I think he didn't think there was someone in that darkened thing.

PIEHLER: Is there anything we have forgotten to ask you or anything ... about your service on the line or ...

SCHMIDT: I don't think so. I think you've been very good.

PIEHLER: Did you ever see a USO show?

SCHMIDT: When we were in Paris in that hospital we went down for a USO show and the man, he was I guess a comedian, but the language was so filthy it put me off and I left. Now that's not to condemn all USO shows. And in fact I'm a USO volunteer and a member of the USO board in Columbus, so I have a high regard for them. They do wonderful work and whatever. But that show was a total bust, but you know.

PIEHLER: That was your ...

SCHMIDT: That was my personal experience. That was the way it was.

PIEHLER: I'm curious. When you—after you came back did you join any veterans' organizations?

SCHMIDT: No. Not until I came to the state of Ohio gave out free license plates to former prisoners of war. And one of the men from the congregation said, "Well, you were a prisoner of war, weren't you?" And I said, "Yeah." I'd never gone to any veterans' thing. I always respected the flag. [I] would not step on the flag in Vietnam time when that was being done. I was invited up into a home in Dayton. We were doing some local thing it was not in the Vietnam War but to get into his home I had to stand ... on the flag. So that I don't do. But, what was the question again?

PIEHLER: Just joining the veterans' organizations.

SCHMIDT: No, uh, 1981, sorry 1979

PIEHLER: When they offered free ...

SCHMIDT: When they offered free license plates and the fella said, "Well, you were a veteran." And I said, "Yeah." And I should get the free plates and I found out they were having the beginning of a POW group in Lancaster. And I joined. I thought, "Gee, this would be nice." Actually, it was a congregation where it wasn't straining my total energies, so I joined and I enjoyed and they started the group and so then I participated and was a charter member. [I] Am a charter member of that chapter. That's my first veteran's group sort of thing.

PIEHLER: But you never joined, say, the American Legion or ...

SCHMIDT: About three years ago I joined the VFW because there is a VFW about two—about a mile from our house I could walk to. And a former sergeant major is a member of our church and he kept asking me and the fella who's ... already died, George Fulecki asked me to join, and his widow said I should join. And they were going to raise the life membership dues and I thought, "Well I can get in for 100 dollars or 150." So I sent it in, I said, "Hey that's fine." We have an office up in the state building, and since I am the publications person for our state department, I go up in there to volunteer pretty often. And we are near the Veterans of Foreign Wars office ... state office. So it's ... good, ... it's a good group. But my energies right now are with the POWs.

PIEHLER: How often—I have a good friend who is an Episcopal priest ... I get the sense that you need to get material for your sermons. How often [does] ... your wartime experiences or your service experience surface?

SCHMIDT: It didn't surface 'til I was in Lancaster and already a member of the POWs.

PIEHLER: So not until the 1980s? Otherwise members of your congregation wouldn't really know what your ...

SCHMIDT: No, and my kids never really knew. It might have come out in a family thing when we met as a family gathering. There would be the mourning of the missing in action cousin of mine and my third boy is named Robert, in his honor. But it may have come up maybe in family things, but never as a ... part of a discussion. Never.

EVANS: How did you feel about your daughter entering the Air Force?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, yeah, I thought that—I was proud of her. She's a great gal. She did a good job.... She married a guy who ... did give her two children that are delightful.... She did ... honorable work for six years and she was at Hahn Air Force Base [Germany]. We went over, visited her at Hahn. Just as we were leaving—did she say anything to you, Deanie, that she might ...

DEANIE: She might be pregnant ...

SCHMIDT: She might be pregnant. So that we came back a year later and the baby was born and then we were sure she was pregnant alright.... And I was proud of her. I'm proud of all the kids, my five kids. They're all different. And they're all meeting life's challenge in their own way.

PIEHLER: Have any ... continued the family tradition?

SCHMIDT: Of what?

PIEHLER: ... The ministry.

SCHMIDT: Going into the ministry? No, although my daughter who went into the Air Force is a member of the church council and has been a Sunday school superintendent and is very active in her church. And I'm very happy about that.

PIEHLER: I'm very curious about—There's two things I want to ask about. I want to ask ... a little bit about your different churches and what they were like. But before that, you had mentioned the Vietnam War. What was ... your attitude towards the war at the time?

SCHMIDT: Okay, at that time. At the time I felt, "Hey if the government asks you to go, you go." And even then I had some boys that were going to be that age. When I buried the first, and the only time a Vietnam casualty, dead casualty, came back I started to think a little more deeply on it. Because ... my country and me here in different intercourse with different countries and nations may or may not be right. But my country, right or wrong. I began to be aware of it. I never was to the point where I would disgrace the flag. And when I was asked to sign up so a Lutheran could be a conscientious objector I said, "Well, what you have to do is, according to Luther, is to prove this is an unjust war. And if that's what your stand is then you're okay. Then you can be a conscientious objector." But, of course, they would not accept that so that the other thing about a peaceful protest is then you accept the prison term. So if you were really ... that much against war then you should really take—or become a medic, an unarmed medic. I'd give those guys all honor, because they got nothing to fight back with. I mean they're not to fight at all, they're to be totally unarmed. But they're in the thick of it.

PIEHLER: ... It sounds like you remember medics being in the thick of it.

SCHMIDT: Well I—not really. We had no medic where we were. The medics did their work with the people that were hit and I don't remember they—oh, we were in a column and a lieutenant got killed and a guy with the sniper rifle was injured—they sniped at us and made us aware that ... they're there. But, the medics did their work and we did ours and the medics didn't have any reason to make medical visits to me personally so I'm glad for that. I'm not a member of the Purple Heart Society. I was asked if, when I got out of the service—that is when I was being questioned after ... the war and prison—they offered me a Purple Heart and I said, "No, I—you have to have blood drawn and it didn't happen."

PIEHLER: ... I'm curious about some of your congregations. 'Cause you mentioned tangentially as we've been going through the interview, one congregation was an inner city congregation in Dayton.

SCHMIDT: That's right.

PIEHLER: And then you mentioned your Chicago one. Was it a working—it sounds like a more working class congregation.

SCHMIDT: Working class congregation. And I remember one of the fellas that joined. He said that he was so happy after he joined, he hadn't been a member of any church for a long time, that he would be singing hymns while he was working in the Pullman yard. He worked in the Pullman yard when that was still done. So that was back in the '50s. Another, Mike Brighenti, when it snowed—he loved the church, loved the Lord, he was out in shoveling snow so he lived back across, you know, real close to the church. I saw some changes in lives and it was ... great. And they were working class people that were honest, honorable people. Nobody had a big job. They all worked with their hands and their heads.

PIEHLER: What other type of congregations? What were your other congregations like?

SCHMIDT: Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. This would be a large—see if you've got 2,000 adults in a community of 14,000 men, women, and children you've got a pretty good size hunk of that community. And that was in many ways was the most successful congregation.

PIEHLER: Sounds like a more diverse congregation.

SCHMIDT: Yeah, no this church, we built the church. I told the bishop early in the ministry there, "You know, this thing isn't going to work. I need some money. I need help." And he says, "Pray about it my son." And—but we did get a church built there, it's a brick church that's I think very nice. We had a changing community and what it's like now, I don't know. But it was a solid building. The church in Beaver Dam has now gone up to 3,000 adults. And when I got there, it was an independent congregation. It wasn't connected with the synod. And, let's see, that was one of the projects I was to do. And they were having the old dues system, four dollars a year for a family. They needed to get with it and that happened. So that was good. That was seven years. But my wife at that time ... had a nervous breakdown. And we started these pill things. And I thought, "Maybe if we get back to Ohio she'd get better." So when that call came and I didn't ask for the call, but some people visited the congregation like they did in the olden days. And I thought, "Well, maybe this was the Lord's way to get her back to her folks and maybe she'll be happier." That didn't happen the thirteen years we were there.

PIEHLER: And this was ...

SCHMIDT: That was interesting. That's what was—NCR was big.

PIEHLER: This was in Dayton.

SCHMIDT: Dayton, Ohio. Yeah. And this was a political action thing where I knew all of the county commiss— all of the city commissioners. I knew them all. Worked with them all in a very close way, Mike Kerr, and the whole gang.

PIEHLER: What would you work—what projects were you involved with them?

SCHMIDT: Okay, well we were with southern Appalachian migrants and that's different than a black community, but it's not different from a black community in many ways. Because they still get dropped on pretty well. And they're lovely people. I remember going over to one lady's house to visit her and her husband was there and he offered me a slug of whiskey. That was ten in the morning. And I did the school thing, you know, walked house to house and tried to diffuse the situation. We had a little stabbing across the street from the school and we had ... several hundred people in our church. But we wouldn't let the police in. This was something that the community would do with the school people—no police. So we were respected on both sides of the wall.

PIEHLER: And this division? Was this black/white? Or was this Southern Appalachian?

SCHMIDT: The—we tried in vain to get black members. There was a community—one of these poverty communities or whatever you want to call them close-by. But we never were able—we had them for Bible School and there was no problem. The problem was with our silk-stocking congregation going with the cotton-stocking group, which would be the Southern Appalachian migrants. I was working with the Southern Appalachian migrants, but I was being supported by the congregation that met there on Sunday morning, so I was trying to tell them, "If you send money to missions in New Guinea you don't see who you're helping. Here when you put money into a program here at Dayton, we're going to help people that are living just down the block. And if they're coming in here you can see your funds in action." That was the pitch. And we did that for thirteen years. When I left ... they did an analysis of it and they gave a high regard for the way that we were regarded in the community, but not necessarily by the congregation. It was of course the congregation that you have to deal with too, so ...

PIEHLER: Well—before I ask you about your other congregations, I had a good friend ... and I have visited him several times, since I'm not in his church I—he's Episcopalian, and we've chatted a great deal since he can let off steam and it doesn't matter. And he said ... it's rough. There's a lot of competing factions and congregations can be difficult without having a will necessarily. How did you balance that?

SCHMIDT: Well, there I was raising five kids who were going to Oakwood schools, which is a high-toned area of Dayton, and that's where the parsonage was. And I was working with ... a nice congregation. It was—they were good-hearted people. But they were a little uncomfortable dressing down and I don't think you should dress down necessarily. But it—there was an evidence that the community was different than the people that were in the congregation.

PIEHLER: So, you had an older church but the congregation still remains with it, but the community around it ...

SCHMIDT: Yeah, the people moved out and, of course, they came back. And I tried to have them think of when they came back that there were the mission fields and that they should support the mission field and watch how it grew. We did a lot of things, after-school activities, for the grade-school kids that were across the street. And we had a close bond with the school person and with the YWCA that was across the street, so we ... worked in the community.

PIEHLER: It sounds like it was very fulfilling work.

SCHMIDT: I enjoyed it, yeah. And it was a high degree of energy. We did the Bethel Bible Study series, which if you're not familiar with it, it requires a pastor to prepare probably six to eight hours for the two-hour session that you're doing with the teachers that you're training to teach. And you do that for two years, and then for two years they had a group and we had eighty-nine out of the ninety graduates from the congregation. And that is a four-year program. And then it tailed off and people got a little bit further into it and then it died. But it was an interesting thing. The—one of my congregational people ...

-----END TAPE TWO SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: ... This continues an interview with William S. Schmidt on ... April 28, 2000 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler.

EVANS: And Jerilyn Evans.

PIEHLER: And just before the tape cut off you said that ...

SCHMIDT: A lady had said—we'd been doing the Bethel Bible series so that ... the congregation was getting Biblically literate but she was complaining that the preachers were afraid to preach on Revelation. Well, I knew a little bit about Revelation and I felt, "Hey, I can handle this." And I had another man with me from the first Sunday in Advent, which is we'll say early in December, until Pentecost, which is April, May, ... or June. We figured out a series. Every single Sunday the text was on Revelation. And we used the Johnshoy, Dr. Johnshoy's model as to how Revelations unfolds. It doesn't go in one linear line but ... there's parts of it that come back, refrain. And I would say that probably at the end of that year, if she understood what her question was, she could not say she didn't hear a sermon on Revelation 'cause we preached on Revelation. It was a ... fun thing to do. There were a lot of fun things in Dayton because home life was horrible 'cause the wife was having this nervous breakdown and the pills and whatever. But that ... was part of the life and the kids were part of the life and the work was a part of the life and we tried to ... do them all. Because she was not doing well—my wife was not doing well, I was the cook. And some of the ladies in the congregation were also bringing food over. One of them worked at one of the restaurants and I can remember [her] bringing over some tenderloin tips, a large thing of them. But I did the cooking and my little—my youngest daughter, Mary, because my hands were too big to go into a turkey, I taught her how to stuff a turkey. And when she was confirmed at age fourteen or fifteen she did the complete meal for a group of seventeen people. That means meat, potatoes, three vegetable always, and salad and dessert. She did the whole thing. That's the day of her confirmation.

PIEHLER: That's pretty ...

SCHMIDT: But that, that was another aspect of my life, trying to help the kids. And I went to ... Rice State University try to discover better ways of doing teaching. The Graduate School of Education—I think I probably have about twenty-eight credit hours in that, including psychology, which we worked on the kids. Try to wake—trying to get them up in the summertime when they didn't have to go to school, what we did was—I made breakfast but the cut-off time was a certain time. And I did the charting as to how many kids were up and how that was working out and I think the teacher enjoyed it. He said that I could have been doing it a little bit better if I did surprise reinforcements instead of reinforcements that you could—but I was trying to be as active as I could in as many things as I could. But at that point not in the military or in the veterans groups.

PIEHLER: And your next congregation, after that.

SCHMIDT: Next congregation was in Lancaster and that was when everything fell apart at the home. But it's an easy congregation. It was like, I don't know, 100 families or something. Piece of cake you know. I was there for about three months and I talked to the head of a—the synod head ... and I said, "I've been here a couple months and I've seen everybody, now what do I do next?" He says, "Give 'em a rest." But I'm a calling pastor and that's what I ... did.

PIEHLER: When you say you're a—so in other words you would make regular visits to ...

SCHMIDT: Oh yes, when I even had 600 homes in the Beaver Dam area I tried to call—in the seven years I'm sure I covered all those areas. And the only people that I missed were people that if I was in area number twenty-six. But they had moved ... into area twenty-six after I got done with twenty-six and they might not have ...

PIEHLER: So you didn't just visit the sick or the elderly, you tried to make it a point in your ministry to visit everyone.

SCHMIDT: Right, in Dayton I had thirty-seven shut-ins that needed a monthly visit. So the visitation was—I always felt was important. But I don't have the same feelings for visitation as my wife Deanie has. She thinks you should sit around for an hour or so. And I think that a visit—you do what you have to do and when you've done all you can do, then you go. But Lancaster was ... kind of a simple as far as professionally, I mean it was easy to do.

PIEHLER: Particularly from some of the descriptions of some of the things you did at Dayton, it sounded like ...

SCHMIDT: It was not hard and I found that I had a lot of time. And we ... then tried to repair that home life. See what could be done. And I think that I already stated that eventually the bishop sent us to the hospital in Chicago that the Lutherans are sent to after you've been given some discussion with social people. And we followed that process. And she wanted to be free

so she's free and I'm happy that she's free and I'm happy to be free and now I'm—what do they call it? I'm hog-tied. Bound by this other lady, Deanie ...

PIEHLER: How long did you—was this your last congregation then?

SCHMIDT: No, we went down to Memphis right after the marriage. Oh, I don't know. It'd been a while. Deanie was a little uncomfortable because they'd seen her as—well she'd been the secretary of the congregation I guess and other things. She was very active in the congregation. But the—many of them couldn't quite see her as the wife of this pastor and so she was uncomfortable. It didn't bother me because—the one story I should tell you from the prison camp that sustained me all these years when there was discussion: a German carpenter had me assigned as his helper, he understood no English, I understood no German. I did not understand what the project was, and I didn't know what he was going to do in the project. He understood I was to help him. And it was a fairly miserable period of time. It was probably all afternoon, and I just hunkered down and did my best and I said to myself, "Someday that sun's going to go down and the guards are going to take us back to the camp and this will be all over." And so anytime I saw angry parishioners, I would look at them in the eye and let them talk. I knew that at eleven o'clock their wives expected them home, and that I could go home, and it would be all over. And I just saw them as the ex-German carpenters talking to me in a language I didn't understand. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Which in some ways, if I can observe, is probably a pretty healthy perspective.

SCHMIDT: Sure, what the heck. So we were there five years, and they were exciting years. Memphis was a great town.

PIEHLER: Where in Memphis was your congregation?

SCHMIDT: Memphis was in—it was in Frasier. Frasier was north of north Memphis, and it was north of two big companies. One was a tire company and one was, I think John Deere. And both were out of business, and the economy was depressed, and therefore the church never took off. In fact it's no longer in existence. But for five years I was there and enjoying [it] and made ... my first trip back to Europe right after the dissolution, well before we were married. ... But we started going places and doing things. We went down to our first national convention of ex-prisoners of war. And then we went up to Ironton for three years. Did whatever needed to be done there. And I can't say it was particularly successful, but there wasn't a lack of success. You know at least did what had to be done. And then I retired. And I've enjoyed retirement. I think about, in the eighteen years ... we've been married, I think we've gone overseas together at least—now this is not all the times I've gone overseas, but we've gone overseas together over a dozen times. And in addition to that we've gone together to Hawaii, and we've gone together to Alaska, an Alaskan cruise. So we have seen all of the states. I asked her when we were talking about possibility getting married maybe—well we weren't even at that stage, I said "Where've you been?" And she said, "Well ... Once I've been Connecticut, and once I went up to Niagara Falls, and I went to Florida once." And I said, "Well we can travel to some of the other states." And she's been to all of the states with me, except Maine ... Vermont, and New Hampshire.



PIEHLER: There's still time—so ...

SCHMIDT: Oh, yeah, yeah ...

PIEHLER: Do you still do any preaching or any ...

SCHMIDT: Yeah, we do, and I shouldn't tell you this, but if you preach you get paid, and you have to declare that, and I feel you have to declare it to the IRS. If you can keep your net earnings to under \$400 you don't—you pay income tax on it which is fifteen percent ...

PIEHLER: Yes, otherwise you pay the self-employment ...

SCHMIDT: But if you're under \$400 net, you don't pay Social Security taxes, which is fifteen percent added. So last year I felt sorry for them and I preached way too much, I think over a thousand dollars net—never do that again! I'm watching the net and making sure that it stays down and then I go to as many legitimate expense things so that I can cut it down. But I do preach. I would preach for nothing just because I enjoy it. It's fun.

DEANIE: He's a good preacher.

PIEHLER: Well, it strikes me that you really did like the ministry.

SCHMIDT: Oh, yeah sure. Where else can you go to anybody's home at any time and it's not suspicious? Doctors don't do it, lawyers don't do it anymore. And preachers are expected to do it, or at least they were when I went out. Now it's a different breed of cat that's going into the ministry today, they're more sitting at the desk and doing counseling or whatever, and they've got good plans, and I don't understand it and I think that's why God only gives you forty years of ministry, so you get replaced with ... the newer models. But ... I enjoyed what I did, and I was at Evanston for that big meeting where they ...

PIEHLER: United the Church?

SCHMIDT: That would be back in '52 or '3 or '4. And so I've enjoyed everything I've done about it, there's, you know, there's down sides, but you have to work, and that's even—I suppose even history professors have to do some work.

PIEHLER: ... You liked the ministry, but was there anything you didn't like about it, or caused some angst ...

SCHMIDT: I think the fact is you must give complete time. And ... the fact is that you really don't have enough time. I think part of my deficiency would have been as a result of the POW experience. Now I am rated ten percent for PTSD, or whatever that's called ...

PIEHLER: Post Traumatic Stress [Disorder] ...

SCHMIDT: Which means I'm slightly crazy. I think psychotic I think it's called. I think possibly it—you kind of firm up in ways that make you not as amenable. And I think I was probably not as good a husband as I should have been, but I was who I was, and I survived the prison camp, and I can survive anything.

PIEHLER: When were you diagnosed? Do you remember?

SCHMIDT: Oh, this was within the last year. Uh, I complained! I said—we had this young kid that was talking to me and I said, "What does he know!" He was twenty-years old, but he's a psychiatrist so he was probably about thirty-years old and—well, look at you, you're probably in your forties.

PIEHLER: I just turned forty ...

SCHMIDT: Wow, you're just a kid, and she's just a chick! (Laughter) So you know—but we talk with these young people about our problems and ... they say, "Well, that's natural." Natural! I mean, natural? Come on, now! And so they said that I'm ten-percent crazy, so that's fine. But I'm still the same person, same lovable agreeable person.

PIEHLER: Did you ever, along those lines, did you ever—after you got out of the POW camp, did you have in fact any bad dreams or nightmares or ...

SCHMIDT: Not really. You have memories of what happened ...

PIEHLER: But you never woke up in the middle of the night and ...

SCHMIDT: Oh, no, night sweats and flailing around, no. I sleep well. That's it.

EVANS: I can't think of anything.

DEANIE: I think you should tell them about taking Sarah over there.

SCHMIDT: Oh, one thing we did do with our little granddaughter Sarah; she was—just this last year ... it was an excuse to go back to Bitche, and she was born there, and so we took her to where she was born, her hospital, and to ... where mother worked, to where she lived as a little baby. And then we went down into France to where I worked for a short period of time, and we showed them some of the battlefields, and showed them particularly where I was captured. And these turrets have little five inch square holes, and she put her little hands in there and took a flash picture of the—and you could see the platform on which I stood, and the ladder on which I climbed up, and I hadn't seen that, and of course I can't get into that because that door is welded shut, or it's closed so we can't get in. So I know where I stood, and that was nice. And she knew where I had been because she had to go upstairs—well, when I say upstairs I mean she had to walk up brush that you wouldn't believe, and Deanie did not go up, she stayed at the ground floor, but we walked through there, and we clipped our way up, and got up to see where the turret was, and see what we could see, and where it was so ...

DEANIE: Well, it's pitch black down in there, but that camera just was at the right angle. It lit up that whole area and you can really see it.

SCHMIDT: You could see where I was standing when I was shooting, and then we took her to ... my favorite little restaurant. This gentleman was fourteen years of age when the war ended. He knew every bunker, he knew every place in the battle. And so we're sitting in the restaurant, and of course it gets dark later, but it's like eight o'clock and this fella is eating and drinking pretty good, and so he takes me, Becky and Sarah to the battlefield, and you cannot get in to Simserhof, it's closed now for remodeling. But he knows where some of the Simserhof forts are, because it's not just a fort, it's a system of forts. And he parked his car, and we walked through this area where the tank obstacles were, where the barbed wire entanglements were, where the little spikes were, so she could see just what a battlefield was like. And then we kept walking until we saw this fantastic concrete face, with the bullet—with the areas where the guns were, the emplacements, and, of course, always a deep thing in front of it so that if shells would come and bounce, they would go down and explode harmlessly. So she got a chance to see that, and it was getting dark, and we didn't know whether we would be able to find our way back to the car. Because this fella, he's the innkeeper. But we had been there with my buddy and his son a year or two before and had spent time in his hotel as guests. They didn't have room for us so we had to stay at the Holiday Inn nearby, but—so he really likes us, so I sent him some souvenirs and some things that he otherwise wouldn't have. He has a license plate holder I think of the 100<sup>th</sup> Division, and one of those shields, so he was not highly respected. When we went over before with Deanie, we brought the clock, a six foot high [or] seven foot high grandfather clock that this man had made the case for it, and we went over there and just gave him the clock. This man; his ancestor born in 1602 had been born in Bitche, France, so he was a descendant of somebody there. But when we said that we were staying at Hotel De La Gare, it was like, "Oh!" They didn't hold him in high regard, but you see he has the 100<sup>th</sup> Division symbols over his bar, and in fact when we wrote him an e-mail, we e-mailed it to the Mayors office to him, he's working with the mayor. So ...

PIEHLER: There are two theological questions I wanted to ask your thoughts of, one is how did you feel at the time about the coming ordination of women in Lutheran church?

SCHMIDT: Well, I have to admit that first of all, my father was strongly prejudiced against it. When his niece, my cousin, took him to church one time, they had a lady preacher, the United Church of Christ, whatever, he would not shake hands with her. But I had come to respect women. Paula Maeder, now Conner, a Lutheran pastor in Columbus taught me quite a bit. And I remember preaching a Good Friday seven words of Christ, where you'd do one of the words. And I didn't prepare for it particularly, because I've done that one, you know, July first or whenever. I picked it out of the barrel. I came over there and there she was sitting with another woman who was a pastor of another church. And I—as I did that sermon I recognized how sexist it was. "He, He, He was ..." you know. And—so she was good for me. Can they do it? You know, I guess they can. I think they have some advantages over a man. What good hill-billy wants to have a man sweet-talking his wife at three o'clock in the afternoon when he's at work? Whereas a woman I think would have a better entry into that. Their voices aren't as good as mine. But most of the men's voices aren't either. And there's a lot of men who should work on that a little bit. And—but it's just as far as doing the work they can do the work and

they have great minds and fine sermons and whatever. If they'd learn to speak clearly—but then I have to say that I also have a ten percent tinnitus in each ear. I do have hearing aids but I just didn't put them on today. For the last few years.

PIEHLER: And what have you thought of recent efforts of unity between—in some ways theologically between the Episcopalian and Lutheran churches?

SCHMIDT: Well, I don't have a high regard for the Episcopalians on this thing, just because of the Episcopalian [acquaintance, named] Sprong from New Jersey who married her daughter and a priest.... But the Episcopalian church didn't really help them adjust. They are having some problems in New Jersey with the parish. And the [congregation] always have problems, and you have to remember that there's a bunch of German carpenters coming at you and that's okay. And sometimes there are very helpful [for] problems like in Chicago: I didn't know you were supposed to put a seal on a Baptismal document. And the lady told me that, and then I found the seal and started doing it. Sometimes you have to listen to your congregation and work with them. They're going to be there when you're gone. But Sprong's attitude toward ordination of homosexuals, which I don't think is a proper thing. It shouldn't be a proper thing for heterosexuals not married to be cohabiting in the parsonage. But that—it's the same thing. Then they went up into New York, same problems. In other words, Sprong got rid of them. Said, "Hey I got this guy and you know, maybe he could be in a different setting and he'd do better." Well he happens to be a little bit lazy and somewhat depressed or whatever so he's no good there either. So he's out of a job and his—her daughter is up there in New York in Andes, New York. Can you imagine a more desolate area? And she's trying to make a living to support him who's on ... some kind of disability or something. So this is my coloration of the Episcopalian.

I—theologically I don't agree with their idea of ordination. My particular reason—for example, I've been ordained. I do not serve communion at our house or anywhere else that I go because that's a congregational ministry. The pastor is a pastor because of a call of a local congregation, not because somebody laid his hand on him, wherever, because he has a call. But the Episcopalians think it's because of this thing that would be called ordination. And all of our churches, all of our Lutheran churches ten years ago, if you had a special communion service, you had to have a local congregation give authorization. It was always a congregation's doing. Never from the diocese or whatever. It always had to be a congregation. That's where the power is. It's not in a bishop and this idea of ordination. If they want to go with that myth—because who knows, really, who knows. They can do that. But don't mess up what is essential to the ministry. Essential to the ministry is that you are a pastor to a congregation. And that's where it's at. And I have a feeling I'm that.

PIEHLER: No, I can tell ...

SCHMIDT: I don't mind if that person who is a pastor is a woman. Actually if you know when Philip went up he did the—you know Philip the Ethiopian eunuch and he went back, four of his daughters were prophetesses. And that was a ... level of ordination within the church. There's always been women in the church doing things. And I think the Catholics might be right in excluding them as priests because of what they have. They're not right by the way in having the priest excluded from marrying. They ought to look at the Episco—at the Orthodox. The

Orthodox allow them to marry if they just want to be a priest. But if they aspire to become a high puda then they'd better not get married. Well that's fine. But they're losing a lot of good men and are forcing a lot of men and women into a lie. For example, when the priest came over to Ironton he brought his housekeeper with him. Lovely couple really. They should have been married. They should have had—their relationship that was there before Hildebrand screwed it up.

PIEHLER: 'Cause in many ways they were ... husband and wife?

SCHMIDT: Who knows? Who knows what goes on? But the point is it's ... too bad that they put that kind of pressure. We went to ... the Holy Land—I went to the Holy Land in 1961 with a group from the University of Wisconsin. There were three priests on that trip. Two of them straight lined and very fine and the third one brought along his housekeeper. Well, I mean she was there every place he was. And, you know, I mean it might be that she was just there for the tour and—but ... the two priests, were very much ashamed. I mean they really were ashamed. And why should they have been ashamed if this man and this woman were together? That's ... something that's fine. The person that should be ashamed is the Pope. He oughta—when the next guy comes along and there will be a next guy coming along pretty soon he'd better ... make a little change there. That's not ... what you were asking but I told you.

PIEHLER: No, no, no I know—I guess I should let you go to Johnson City for your reunion. But I—is there anything else?

SCHMIDT: Thank you.

PIEHLER: No, we really appreciate your time. In fact my assistant was walking around outside and I thought I'd introduce you because he's a Methodist minister and he has three small congregations. So let me find Johnny.

SCHMIDT: Small rural congregation, that's fine.

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