

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

ROTH SCHLECK

Officer, 25th Infantry Division, Army, World War II

1994

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Schleck, Roth, (1915-). Oral History Interview, 1994.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 80 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 80 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Roth Schleck, a Wonewoc, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service in the Pacific Theatre as an officer with the 35th Infantry Regiment and his service afterwards in the Wisconsin National Guard. Schleck talks about being in the Reserve Officer's Training Corps while attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison and duties as a Reserve officer from 1938 on, including training Citizens Military Training Corps cadets at Fort Sheridan (Illinois). After getting orders in 1942, he mentions refresher training at Camp Robinson (Arkansas) and training drafted inductees. Shipped to Schofield Barracks in Oahu (Hawaii), he relates joining the 25th Infantry Division, 35th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion. Schleck describes manning the beaches and mentions special jungle training in the Koolau Mountains (Hawaii). He describes shipping to Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands), relieving the Marines, and clearing the Japanese off the island. Schleck details the difficulties encountered while taking the Gifu strong point and finding Japanese mess kits that contained human flesh. He talks about the intimidating reputation of Japanese soldiers, finding their diaries, and why so few of them were taken prisoner. He describes landing on Vella Lavella (Solomon Islands), being bombed, and being relieved by a New Zealand division. Schleck comments on the 100% malaria infection rate, the frequency of jungle rot, and an effective anti-mosquito campaign. Sent to New Zealand for rest and relaxation (R&R), he describes how his unit entertained themselves and mentions active training in New Caledonia. He discusses landing in the Lingayen Gulf (Philippines), clearing towns, the long battle for Balete [Dalton] Pass, the difficulty of being on the combat line for months, and the positive effects of having a doctor who did not acknowledge combat fatigue. Schleck speaks about training for the invasion of Japan and how hard it would have been, and he describes the celebrations after hearing about the Japanese surrender. He discusses the integration of replacement troops, General MacArthur's leadership, interservice rivalry, effectiveness of Filipino guerrilla forces, officer-enlisted relations, and limited fraternization with Japanese during occupation. Schleck talks about demobilizing at Camp McCoy (Wisconsin), readjusting to civilian life, returning to his pre-war bank job, using a G.I. Bill loan to buy a house, and joining the 426th Infantry Regiment of the Wisconsin National Guard as a major. He

mentions being a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and the American Veterans Committee, which he claims was taken over by communists.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1994.
Transcribed by Joanna D. Glen, WDVA staff, 2007.
Transcript edited by Jackie Mulhern, 2008.
Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2009.

Interview Transcript:

Mark: Today's date is December 14, 1994. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Roth Schleck, of Madison, a veteran of the Pacific Theater in World War II. Good morning, Mr. Schleck, how are you?

Schleck: Good morning, Mark.

Mark: Am I pronouncing your name correctly?

Schleck: Right.

Mark: Perhaps we could just start off by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born and your upbringing, your experiences before you entered the Army Reserve.

Schleck: OK. I was born on November 24, 1915 in Wonewoc, Wisconsin. My father was a railroad agent up there in Wonewoc and my mother was Elizabeth Roth from Madison. That's where I get my first name of Roth. Being a station agent, they moved from Wonewoc down to Galena, Illinois when I was probably one year old and then moved to Fennimore, Wisconsin when I must have been about three or four years old. I grew up through 4th grade in Fennimore and then we moved to Madison. Then I stayed in Madison until I graduated from the University in 1938.

Mark: You must have finished high school then about '32 or '33 then.

Schleck: '34.

Mark: The Depression was going on at that time, was the family hard hit, and hard hit to finance your education?

Schleck: We were lucky. My dad was fully employed during the Depression, although the Depression hit the rail road, but it didn't hit the railroad help very hard. But, we were lucky and living in Madison, that was one of the big costs that was resolved by going to the University, by being here and the fees were so small at that time that it wasn't any hardship on the family to provide the fees. The family provided the money, I didn't earn it.

Mark: What did you study at the University?

Schleck: I was a major in Accounting. I graduated in '38 and went with the First Wisconsin National Bank in Milwaukee right after graduation, as an accountant

and during my time at the University, I had been in ROTC so I was holding a Reserve commission as 2nd Lt. in the Infantry upon graduation.

Mark: What attracted you to the military service? Was it a financial thing? Was it desire to serve? Perhaps you can just tell why you decided to --

Schleck: I guess I had a bent toward the military. I don't know why and I would have liked to have gone to West Point or look into that but at that time the physical standards were so high that with my eyes, I was near-sighted, that it wouldn't have been possible to pass the physical exam. Apparently, I always had a bent toward the military. So the ROTC was a natural chain since I didn't get to West Point.

Mark: I see. So you were a Reserve Officer then from '38 on. What sort of duties did you have? Like today you have to do two weeks in the summer or something like that, what was expected of you as a Reserve officer?

Schleck: At that time our two weeks in the summer was the only extra duty that we could obtain. At that time everybody would have liked to have more activity like weekend drills and that, but that wasn't possible at that time.

Mark: So you spent this two weeks at Camp McCoy?

Schleck: At Fort Sheridan at that time, and then in 1940 they held the 2nd Army maneuvers up at Camp McCoy and that was a three week stint, which was very much better than what we'd had previous to that time. But we trained the, they had at that time, Citizens Military Training Corps, the CMTC and so when we would get down to Fort Sheridan, we would train the CMTC cadets.

Mark: Train them in military courtesy or?

Schleck: No. Regular infantry work, although it was primarily rifle practice and able to move about in the drill, things of that nature and some very limited field exercises. Very limited.

Mark: I suppose Fort Sheridan is not a big place.

Schleck: No. It was pretty restricted down there.

Mark: So do you recall when Hitler invaded Poland and World War II started? Do you have any particular recollections?

Schleck: Not particularly. Except people now of course don't even remember World War II and they certainly wouldn't remember before that, but it was inconceivable at

that time, that we would really get in the war. All of those happenings over in Europe were something we read about but really didn't concern us intimately.

Mark: So this wasn't a topic of discussion in your Reserve training in say, 1941, you didn't think you'd be fighting the Germans for instance.

Schleck: No, it wasn't considered imminent that we would ever get in.

Mark: I suspect you remember Pearl Harbor quite well. Perhaps you could tell me what you were doing, I know it's kind of cliché, but it's always interesting. Do you remember where you were and what you thought?

Schleck: My parents lived in Madison, still lived in Madison and I remember on that Sunday being at the home of the parents and hearing this come in over the radio and was really shocked and of course believed that the American Navy would immediately sally forth and annihilate the Japanese because Schofield Barracks in Oahu was the bastion of our Pacific defense and you couldn't believe that they wouldn't be immediately out there punishing the Japanese. Not until later did we know how extensive the damage was and lucky the carriers weren't there.

Mark: So I suspect after Pearl Harbor, for you being a Reserve Officer, things moved fairly quickly, 'cause you got to Guadalcanal. This was the end of '42 already. I was wondering if you could describe for me your entrance into active military service and the preparation underway to actually go ahead and fight the Japanese. How did things progress?

Schleck: Well, I, of course, expected, being a Reserve Officer, to be called up fairly soon, but --

Mark: You obviously were.

Schleck: No, I wasn't until February of '42 I actually got orders and got orders to go to report down to Camp Robinson, Arkansas for - a number, of course, of other officers were there and we went through sort of a refresher training ourselves down there, probably a couple of weeks as I recall now or more.

Mark: Was this any different than the sort of training you had been doing as a Reserve officer? Was it more strict? Was there more immediacy to it or was it not very

Schleck: No, it wasn't really much different. It was just basics and then we proceeded to train the inductees. This was a branch in material training organization.

Mark: Was this still at Camp/Fort Robinson?

Schleck: It was Camp. Camp Robinson at that time. So we instructed these new inductees in the basics of military training as it applied to all the branches and we were there doing that. In fact, we were told, along about in April that we were going to be there for some time and we could make our plans accordingly. It wasn't too long after that when we got orders. We were going to move out and go overseas and not as a unit but as individuals at that point in time. So, it was in May of 1942 that I left Camp Robinson, went out to Ft. Mason, California, boarded the President Polk in Ft. Mason and then proceeded over to Oahu and was assigned to the 2nd Battalion of the 35th and the 25th Infantry Division, which was one of the regular Army divisions that was situated there on Oahu. They had two. Before World War II, Schofield Barracks in Oahu, Hawaii was the only place that the Army had a full division and at that time a full division was known as a square division because it had four infantry regiments.

Mark: The old World War I.

Schleck: Division. Right. Then as the war approached, I think it was done in the early 40's or maybe late 50's they converted to what is known as a triangular division which meant three infantry regiments in every division and so they had made the 24th and the 25th Division out of that old square division in Schofield Barracks.

Mark: I want to back track a little bit if I may. You mentioned you were training enlisted men recently inducted. I assume they were all volunteers.

Schleck: No they weren't volunteers at that point. The draft was working at that point.

Mark: I was wondering if you had any particular impressions of the enlisted men at the time. Did you think they were going to make good soldiers? Were they rich background, poor background, just general impressions that you had of the - did you think that they were going to be able to fight for the United States in a satisfactory manner?

Schleck: Oh, I guess we didn't have any doubts in regard to that. They were fellows just like we were and everybody was expecting to fight and could hardly wait to get into it theoretically and all the inductees were enthusiastic and did their darnedest to improve their military proficiency and everybody pretty enthusiastic and in good health. All the inductees were in good health.

Mark: That's one of the things I was interested in. These were fairly healthy troops. At that time the draft was fairly selective as I understand.

Schleck: Yea. I suppose it was that early in the game. We were giving them real physicals. Our physical to go overseas was walking into a room. You came into the door into the room and walked out the door out of the room. That was the

physical. (chuckles) But that was just the officers. I'm sure the inductees were still screened pretty well, like you say.

Mark: Did you notice any sort of regional differences. Like one of the stories you hear is that some of the southern troops were particularly poor and the Army was the first time they ever owned a pair of shoes or something like that. I don't know if those stories are actually true. Did you notice any sort of thing like that?

Schleck: No, not particularly. Not that I recall. When we got over to the 25th Division, at that time, at least in the regiment there, there were a lot of folks from Pennsylvania and from the West Virginia and from really the coal mining area. We had a lot of fellows who had enlisted of course, two or three years before that because things were pretty grim at home and they were all very good soldiers.

Mark: So, in Hawaii is when the 24th and 25th were reorganized and prepared to be sent--

Schleck: Well they were, of course the time I joined them, they were all manning the beaches, the defenses of and had-- They hadn't been on the beaches prior to Pearl Harbor, but they had contingent plans to where they would be occupying the defensive positions but at the time that I joined them they were occupying. We would have two battalions down on the beach and one battalion back in Schofield and they were occupied in stringing wire and manning the built-in defenses down there and strengthening them, clearing fields of fire and doing-- it was still considered in fact, as you know Midway would be the first phase of Japanese that some of them were thinking of invading, still invading Oahu, thinking it was so weak so there was a certain tension in manning the shore line at that point in time.

Mark: Did you get much free time to go into Honolulu or anything like that or was it all pretty much--

Schleck: I was on Oahu six months and six days to go into Oahu, I mean into Honolulu. No, we didn't have much time off the duty post.

Mark: Pretty businesslike.

Schleck: It really was.

Mark: So when did you finally ship out to go to the South Pacific and where did you arrive at? I know you were at Guadalcanal, but did you have some layovers somewhere else?

Schleck: We shipped out in November and went down and we had had some jungle training in the Koolau Mountains there in Oahu before we left, but it was special training and then we sailed and it took us about a month sailing in the Pacific there. We were on three ships and we pulled into Noumea, New Caledonia, the harbor there which was just a vast array of ships in there and that was a jumping off spot really for Guadalcanal, well not just limited to Guadalcanal but that's where we left from Noumea, New Caledonia up to Guadalcanal.

Mark: Did you spend much time in New Caledonia?

Schleck: No. We never got off the ships. We never disembarked at all. The problem was, and they couldn't do anything about it, the problem was that the ships were not combat-loaded and they were loaded to make the best use of their space. I don't know exactly, I don't think we were destined for Guadalcanal at the time we left Oahu, but apparently orders in the interim got changed and we were directed up to Guadalcanal.

Mark: So at the time you arrived at Guadalcanal, much of the island had been secured already. So you didn't have to storm the beach.

Schleck: Well, that isn't quite true. We didn't have to storm the beaches but the Marines were still in their original perimeter around Henderson Field. I suppose it was about the three or four mile beach area that they held and were probably in about four miles maybe, but the rest of the island belonged to the Japs when we landed.

Mark: Was the 25th the first Army unit to go to Guadalcanal because it is my understanding that the Marines were the first on and then there were gradually replaced by the Army.

Schleck: They had fed up two regiments of the Americal Division. The 182nd Infantry I think it was that had been on the line with the Marines in some of the fighting there, but they were Marines when we landed were still in charge of this perimeter, so we really relieved them, along with the other two regiments that were still there.

Mark: What was your mission and what were your duties? What were you told you were supposed to do at Guadalcanal? Was it simply take up this perimeter or was there more to it than that?

Schleck: Well, we were supposed to clean off the island, which we proceeded to do in late December there. The Marines had turned the island over to this General Patch who was a Corps Commander at that time and then the 25th Division was ordered to clean this area and to get started on cleaning off the rest of the island. We had to clean off what was outside of the perimeter first in order to get space

in order to start working up to the north end of the island where the Japanese were making their landings and resupplying. They would land up on the north end and then infiltrate south. So our first mission was to clean off what was in front of the perimeter and then proceed to move up the island and so our job, the 2nd Battalion of the 35th took over the reduction of the Gifu strong point that had been surrounded. That was located on Mt. Austin and Mt. Austin overlooked Henderson Field which was the air field on the island and if the 132nd Infantry Regiment had surrounded this strong point and the 2nd Battalion relieved the regiment with the objective to reduce the strong point, then the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 25th Division went on either side of the Gifu strong point and proceeded against the Japanese that were beyond and we stayed there at Gifu and we were there I think about three weeks before we were able to reduce it. It was named the Gifu strong point because it was manned by people (soldiers) from the unit from Gifu, Japan and it was the - they had really organized the defenses of this particular spot that gave them a commanding view of Henderson Field and we, like the regiment before us, really weren't able to move into that pocket. Any time we moved, there was such an interlocking band of fire that we couldn't penetrate it. The Battalion Commander was relieved after about a week or ten days when we couldn't break through and a new commander appointed and it wasn't until we were able to borrow a tank. They claimed a tank couldn't be used in this terrain, but we were able to borrow a tank from the Marines and one of our personnel operated it and we were able to break this interlocking ring of machine gun placements and once broke the outer crust of the ring, why then our units were able to reduce it, pill box by pill box. After we broke it up a bit, then they apparently did organize a bonsai charge against one of our companies and there were about 50-60-70 Japs killed and that really also decimated the garrison and the strong point, so it enabled the subsequent mop up to be a lot easier to do. These people, the Japanese had a terrible time supplying their troops 'cause they couldn't move along the beaches, they had to move on trails through the jungle and the jungle is just a terrible place 'cause it's up and down and slippery slopes and so these people in the Gifu we found had been eating human flesh and some of the soldiers that had been killed earlier had been carved up and in their mess kits they had this human flesh. By that time, by the time we got the Gifu reduced, these other battalions had moved on further down the island and then other regiments out of the division took over going up the island, along with the 2nd Marines that were in there also, so they proceeded and I think by the end of January or early February, that they had declared the island secured from the Japanese. One of the interesting things, since I think you want items of this nature, I was with the battalion of course from Guadalcanal on through to the occupation of Japan in 1945 and as we went in to occupy Japan, the 2nd Battalion which had reduced the Gifu strong point, was given the authority to occupy the town of Gifu.

Mark: No accident, I think.

Schleck: Well if it was, there were no buildings still standing around in the town of Gifu. I never did see the town of Gifu. We were bivouacked in a different area and it just as well probably that we didn't. (Chuckles)

Mark: This was your first combat experience.

Schleck: That's correct.

Mark: Was it what you had expected? Was there any way to prepare to go into combat? Did you think you were well prepared, ill prepared or what?

Schleck: Oh, I don't think anybody felt their training was lacking. One of the problems that people probably don't remember is the high repute that the Japanese fighting man was held in at that time. They were almost looked upon as supermen since they had been campaigning for years at that time in China and Indochina and Manchuria and all around and had swept, as we know, the Pacific so you felt you were up against a superman. But as far as training, I don't think that we lacked training. There was obviously a great apprehension as you went into combat, first of all how you would do personally and second, how you would do against this real outstanding soldiering. Our equipment worked out well, although we went in with a lot of stuff which we didn't use, like mosquito netting and things like that. You crawled into a fox hole and you didn't want any mosquito netting. Of course, at that time, the day belonged to the Americans and the night belonged to the Japanese. Nobody moved at night.

Mark: Why was that?

Schleck: Well, just a lot of it I suppose is didn't experience any night work, but it was a simple way of handling things in that anything that moved at night was enemy. So you could really secure yourself in good shape.

Mark: I want to get back to this idea of your impressions of the Japanese. Before the war they had this reputation of being supermen, did this change after actual combat contact with them? Did it change over the course of the war?

Schleck: Well, certainly they were lowered to just a regular soldier after we - there weren't snipers in the trees and they weren't - initially these stories came out of the Philippines actually where they would allow troops to pass and then spring up behind them out of spider holes that were covered with grass and that and snipers in the trees and we didn't run into a lot of snipers, I don't recall shooting any out of the trees, so as time went on, they were fighting them on the ground just like any other enemy. The thing that distinguished the Pacific War against the European Theater was the fact that there were no prisoners.

Mark: They didn't surrender. Did you capture anybody by any chance?

Schleck: Well, we captured some and one of the things that was very helpful was they kept these voluminous diaries where they told everything so if you get a hold of their diaries and read Japanese you could find out an awful lot about what their conditions were and what they were thinking about. Not about what they plan for new maneuvers and that, but--

Mark: But if you want to get a handle on their morale, experience the combat troops that they are and that sort of thing, it was all for the reading.

Schleck: Yeah. You learned a lot about their life. One of the problems, you had to dig them out. You did maybe get some prisoners that were too weak, although as long as they could pull a trigger, they fought. One of the other problems too was getting them back. If you did happen to get a prisoner, getting them back to somebody that could interrogate them because unfortunately they got shot by people that were taking them back.

Mark: Did it happen a lot?

Schleck: Oh, I don't think a lot. They never had that many to begin with so it wasn't any mass thing. It didn't happen in all instances, but it did happen on occasion.

Mark: As I recall, we were talking about the Japanese--

Schleck: The fighting man.

Mark: As the war went on did you notice the quality or character of Japanese soldiers changed as Japan became more war weary or they had to dig toward the bottom of the barrel to get more troops? Did you notice any changes or did they seem pretty consistent throughout the war?

Schleck: No, I think it was consistent throughout the war because I think we were running into units that were composed primarily of the veterans yet. I don't know where they put the new conscripts and that, at least the bulk of the soldiers we were running into were old-timers. Both in the Philippines, that was where we ran into them later in the war.

Mark: So you spent how much longer on Guadalcanal?

Schleck: Well, the island got cleared off around early February there of '43 so then we took up beach positions since we still thought they might try to retake the island and there were always threats of the Japanese battleships coming in and things like that and, of course, as you know they had these tremendous sea battles right off Guadalcanal. So around in middle of the year '43 that we got alerted for going up further in the Solomon's the battle for New Georgia had been waging

for some time and it must have been September or October when we went up and landed, the 35th Infantry landed on Vella Lavella which was the island that was closest to Bougainville that was heavily held by the Japanese as one of their major bases and what this did was cut off some of the traffic that was flowing down to reinforce New Georgia. They were able to construct an air field on Vella Lavella which served at least for fighters. It served a great stead in bombing in Bougainville.

Mark: This is one engagement I'm not familiar with. Vella Lavella, so I'm ignorant of the details here. Was the combat on this island, was it harsher, was it different, or was it pretty much what you had experienced on Guadalcanal?

Schleck: We were lucky on Vella Lavella. We landed and we got bombed and got bombed from then on, but as far as ground defenses, there weren't any and the story was that we were on the south end of the island and they were on the north end of the island. Outside of the opposed landings, through the air power we didn't encounter Japanese, even though we were the most exposed Americans at that time. There was nobody between us and the Japanese of Bougainville and of course we immediately assumed defensive positions where we were at and started patrolling and trying to find out what was there on the island.

Mark: What did you find?

Schleck: Well, we never did find any pockets of Japanese. Our landing cut off the barge traffic from Kolombangara which was south of us, in between us and New Georgia and the Navy did run into barge convoys up north but, we were lucky and we were relieved, must have been in November of '43 there by a division from the New Zealand, that was their home guard division. They sent up and then they proceeded up the island to the north to clean off what was up north there. But it never developed into any major battle. We went back to Guadalcanal and one of the items in the Guadalcanal campaign, of course, was the environment itself. Every unit was about 100% infected with malaria and--

Mark: I can only assume that this effected combat effectiveness.

Schleck: That's right. A lot of people had jungle rot that couldn't be cleared up.

Mark: What's jungle rot?

Schleck: It's a - skin just festers and runs and doesn't get cleared up in that tropical environment. My friend who was a buddy there, we roomed together on Oahu in Schofield Barracks and he got it on his legs and I'd go down and see him there in Guadalcanal and he'd be sitting with his legs in a pail full of some blue stuff, I don't know what it was supposed to do, some treatment of some kind, but his legs never did get cleared up and he got shipped out, as did many people

with these running sores into a tempered climate and they cleared up then. The malaria, unless everybody got the chills and got over it so that it didn't evacuate too many people unless they really got so sick they couldn't be put back on duty again, but we used as a suppressant, the Atabrine tablet, at that time it was supposed to protect you against malaria. But, it suppressed it anyway. The reason I happened to think of it is because the early units were almost 100% infected with malaria. When we came back from Vella Lavella and the Army had started a anti-mosquito campaign and they'd sent teams out with some kind of oil that they would spread on whatever standing water they could find and my golly, by the time we got back from Vella Lavella in November of '43, there were no mosquitoes. It was really tremendous what a program like that can do. So we just bivouacked there on the beach for a couple of weeks until we got transportation down to New Zealand. We must have got down there in early December of '43 - '42

Mark: Just one question before you go on, did the Japanese also experience these problems with jungle rot and malaria or did they have more adequate medical care?

Schleck: Oh, I don't think that they had more adequate medical care. I don't really know whether they did or not. Their problem was nutrition, primarily. They couldn't get enough food to their troops.

Mark: I didn't mean to interrupt.

Schleck: I guess they did suffer from malaria quite a bit, but their medical support was very rudimentary. They were on their own. They did evacuate wounded of course, and sick, on a haphazard basis.

Mark: So you went to New Zealand then after Vella Lavella?

Schleck: That's correct.

Mark: Rest and relaxation?

Schleck: That's right.

Mark: How much time did you get?

Schleck: We shipped out of there in early February of '43. We got down there in December and shipped out in February and that of course, was very wonderful. You had milk and steaks and beer and all those things we hadn't had. Ice cream.

Mark: What did combat troops on some R&R do for fun? Did you go to Wellington or Auckland or somewhere?

Schleck: We were south of Auckland. Everybody was on their own pretty well. We trained for half-day theoretically. There wasn't a heck of a lot of training going on, but then everybody took off in all directions and found whatever comfort and enjoyment they had. There weren't many, as I recall, organized activities, like volleyball or stuff like that, everybody pretty well cleaned out of camp except those that had to stay and man the regular duties.

Mark: Were there discipline problems or problems with the civilians? Sometimes GIs have reputation of being kind of wild, especially the younger guys. Did you have any problems with that kind of thing?

Schleck: Oh, I don't think any more than the regular problem. Everybody - they didn't want to get into trouble. You had some problems as you would with a crew like that who had been cooped up for a year, but they didn't get reported. I don't recall hardly any court marshals while we were there. Everybody was a lot less strict than they would have been in a kind of a normal situation. It was such a relief.

Mark: I suppose we could just move on the Philippines and then I'll have some more questions about the social life of the GI in combat situations. So you left--

Schleck: We moved in February of '43 up to New Caledonia, out from Noumea, we were probably 100 miles west of Noumea and set up camp right in the bare ground and the whole division did and then we proceeded to do active training, plenty of terrain around there to do our training on and at that time it was believed that we would have to go into Rabaul which was the big Japanese base up in New Briton. Over time, it so happened that MacArthur coming in from the southwest Pacific there, was able to kind of neutralize Rabaul so it wasn't necessary to go in there on the ground and clean it out. The Air Force made it untenable. So we didn't have to move out. We still kept up our training and we received replacements of course, and got all filled up. Then in November or December of '43 then we took off and embarked for the Philippines, stopping at Mannis Island and on the way up and then into Lingayen Gulf and the Philippines on January 10, 1945. Did I miss a year in there? Yes, I did. We were '43 in the Solomon's and '44 in New Caledonia and then landed in Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines on January 10, 1945. That was one day after D+1 the units that were heading for Manila, headed south, we headed over toward the mountains on the left of the plane in the Philippines and we cleaned off the towns and Japanese that were located down the plains south of the mountains and then there was a road leading up the mountains known as Highway 5 that lead to Balete Pass and beyond Balete Pass which was the pass through the mountains, then the terrain opened up for the northern part of Luzon and our objective was

to clean off Highway 5, the Japanese in that territory and get to Balet Pass, and get that opened up. So that's what we proceeded to work on and, as I said, we landed January 10th. It wasn't until about the first part of June that we got to Balet Pass, probably ten or fifteen miles. It took us those months to get up there, then we proceeded to

Mark: Pretty _____

Schleck: Yea. You measured everything by yards! We tried going up an old Spanish trail that was west of Balet Pass and then got stopped there and they tried to bulldoze a trail parallel to Highway 5 and got stopped there and finally we went back to Highway 5 and just about yard by yard up to Balet Pass and over Balet Pass to Santa Fe which was the town beyond and came back on the old Spanish trail and cleaned it out and met people that were coming from the south on the old Spanish trail and cleaned out all the Japanese that had been in that area.

Mark: So this is basically six months on the line.

Schleck: Yes. After a while they instituted a policy where a battalion would pull back in two weeks into a division rest area which was about a mile or two miles behind the lines there.

Mark: Was that helpful?

Schleck: It was helpful, yea. Except people got killed then too. It was a rest area, there was no organized activities, there was no town. That's one of the phenomena of the Pacific also, you never were in the towns. Sure there was Manila and that, but we weren't near it. In the Solomon's, of course, there were no towns. So you were right next to nature all the time.

Mark: Were there problems with combat fatigue, being on the front line for almost six months. A lot of time soldiers break down in combat. Was there a problem with that in your experience?

Schleck: Well, it's very unpleasant. Everybody gets tired of it and our Doc was known as "Roadblock Darling" because malingerers, there wasn't such a thing. You couldn't have such a thing as battle fatigue. We didn't have any replacements and you couldn't lose anybody. It just wasn't accepted. There were some units, I remember particularly in the New Georgia campaign they had a big rash of combat fatigue cycle and the doctors were very lenient in passing them and demoralized the whole unit. That's when they had to send the 25th Division up there to bulwark them in New Georgia. But it never constituted a problem in the 25th Division because it just wasn't supposed to be. Everybody was tired. Two weeks off the line was really a great help.

Mark: Between June and the Japanese surrender, what was the 25th Division doing?

Schleck: We went back down out of the mountains again. By that time and other units went north of Luzon up beyond Santa Fe and the south was pretty well cleaned off then and I'm sure there was mopping up going around, but we pulled back into ultimately Camp Crow which was where the Bataan Death March ended. Then we started, we got replacements again and started training for the invasion of Japan and we were there training until August. At that time the Japanese surrender, the battalion commanders were down at Subic Bay receiving the orders for the invasion of Japan. We were to go in on Kyushu at D+1 and we had our sectors and were going over those orders at that time when the news of the surrender occurred.

Mark: Now at this time you had risen to Lt. Col.?

Schleck: Yes.

Mark: That's quite a rise from 2nd Lt. to Lt. Col.

Schleck: Lucky.

Mark: Lucky? Was it because of superior leadership skills? Was it attrition or just happened to be in the right place at the right time? Was it really attributed to luck?

Schleck: You can't say - I am not a hero, but I never missed a day of combat and I studied what the jobs were, what I had to do and what others had to do and so I - I think I evolved because I was the best they had to pick on.

Mark: Somehow the manual was lost so for months I couldn't figure out how to work this (tape recorder). I want to ask you more about the planned invasion of Japan. As a battalion commander then you were privy to what the plans were already by August '45.

Schleck: Oh, yes.

Mark: What was the scheduled date of that? Or was there a--

Schleck: Oh yes. There were dates. I don't remember all these details except I remember where we were going to land. We had to cross a railroad embankment and then an air field and then go up this mountain that was terraced with rice paddies, it would have been murder!

Mark: Were you briefed on what to expect from the Japanese civilians? What it was like to have to go into Japan, did you expect light civilian resistance or?

Schleck: That wasn't a big point at that stage in the game. I think they found that out subsequently, the way the Japanese were going to mobilize every single person, but I think we were just thinking in terms of military units at that time, because that was enough! They were very skillful in utilization of caves in the mountains there to fire the guns from and then haul them back. They were extremely hard to hit and they were great people on excavating large amounts of earth in order to make their defensive positions and that. We knew it was going to be brutal there was no question about that. That was a known fact.

Mark: So when you heard the news of the atomic bombs and the subsequent surrender, how'd you feel? Did you feel like some vets say, that their life had been spared? Did you view it in those terms? I'm interested in your personal impression.

Schleck: We were, as I said, at Subic Bay when news of the surrender arrived, even though the atomic bomb had been dropped, we didn't know much about that except that it was supposed to be a horrible instrument, but then we did get news of the surrender. The thing that struck me was that that night, I mean there was no celebration where we were, we officers were it was very quiet. Everybody was just so relieved that we didn't have to make that landing and were so thankful of that. I guess it didn't sink in yet. When I got back to the battalion, then we had a great celebration and they had had a celebration there when they had gotten the news. Then we had another one when I got back. It was just a tremendous relief. We had survived. We really, at that time, those people who had been with the unit from, some of them had been in the unit prior to Pearl Harbor, I guess they had gotten rotated by that time, but there were a lot who had been with the unit from Guadalcanal on, or from Schofield Barracks on, and at that point in time we thought that you couldn't possibly survive another blood bath there. So, it was certainly appealing, that you had made it, you had lived through it.

Mark: I got some questions about various aspects of combat that don't quite fit into the narrative of battles. The question of replacements. You mentioned several times that you got replacements. As you study the Vietnam War one of the problems that they had was the constant rotation of troops and some of the new guys didn't always fit in. You guys were on the line all the time but you did get replacements, fresh troops. I'm interested in how they integrated with the veterans who were already there. Was there tension? Did they take them under their wing and show them what to do or, as an officer, did you get any sort of idea at all, what was happening and also if new officers came in, Lieutenants are among the most--

Schleck: Expendable?

Mark: OK.

Schleck: Actually, we got our replacements at times when, except on the Philippines, when there wasn't combat and so had time to train them and integrate them and the old soldiers really intimidated them with their stories about what had gone on before.

Mark: Do you think they do that on purpose or?

Schleck: They did it for their own satisfaction. They loved to blow up what they had been through and it was true too. I don't think, other than to make themselves look good, I don't think they were doing it for any psychological purpose to beat down the guy. I think any replacements were pretty well welcomed into the ranks. There was not much old and new involved. These fellows still get together, I still hear their stories.

Mark: After fifty years?

Schleck: Yes. But I hear the stories about the new guys coming in. There was real comradeship, really.

Mark: If you would, I'd be interested in your perspective on the role of leadership in combat. Did the enlisted men look up to their superiors, NCO's, Lieutenants and up the line? Is good leadership important in motivating these men to go and fight? Can you think of some examples you saw of poor leadership?

Schleck: Well, as I mentioned with this one regiment, where they had this high incident of battle fatigue, or people going psycho, I think was a result of poor leadership. Certainly another regiment was subjected to about the same thing and they didn't have that at all. No question about leadership being the prime ingredient. We saw it time and time again. Some units were good because of their leaders and others just didn't perform from the lack of real leadership. Not talking just about officers, small units, commanded by the Sergeant is really the building block for the fight and we were fortunate enough in the beginning to have these old timers that had been in the service and these regulars performed as regulars and did a good job and we had many new inductees who became Sergeants and did an excellent job also. I think the tradition of that carries a long ways forward and we in the battalion, for example, the commanding officer, you have a commanding officer and an executive officer and the pattern had been set in our battalion where one of those officers was up with lead unit. The lead unit was fighting. They weren't sitting back in the CP they were right up there and if the Executive Officer was up there he was in charge and made the decisions and its items like that that are important so they know they aren't there by themselves. Also, the battalion leaders knew what was going on.

Mark: The subject of leadership comes up with the controversial figure of Douglas MacArthur. He generates controversy and I was wondering, you served under MacArthur, he was in charge of the U.S. Army in the Pacific, what did you think of General MacArthur's leadership? Did you think he was brilliant?, arrogant?

Schleck: We were under the Navy originally when we were over in Guadalcanal and then we came under MacArthur when we got to the Philippines. I never saw MacArthur, but as far as my belief that he was fearless, that he was an outstanding leader, that he saved many, many lives by his campaign of island hopping and that we were lucky to have had him as a commander. Now I think he was arrogant, undoubtedly, no question about it and quite a showman, but I think that was just a great plus over there in the Orient where face means so much. I think it endeared certainly the Filipinos to him. I don't think there is any question of their endearment to MacArthur and when he took over the occupation of Japan it served to make that occupation a very successful, long lasting and effective.

Mark: Now this

Schleck: Now you know the Marines had this Dugout Doug thing which I think was completely dishonest and unfair because if there was one thing MacArthur was, it was maybe foolhardy in exposing himself, he believed that he couldn't be shot.

Mark: This brings up the subject of interservice rivalry. I wrote that down before you said Marines and Dugout Doug. Was the interservice rivalry, especially like in a place like Guadalcanal, was this a problem in terms of operations?

Schleck: I wouldn't say it was a problem in regard to operation, but certainly the feeling, we disliked the Marines very much. We disliked all the Marines because they had all their photographers and they had a great public relations operations going and that's all you heard about. You'd have thought that nobody was doing anything except the Marines and that generated a good deal of resentment.

Mark: But it never went beyond -

Schleck: No. At the higher level I know it existed on some of those islands where you had a joint Marine and Army command and then Pauline Mansmith wanted to relieve the Army commander but it was nothing like that with us and we didn't come in contact with them that much. Now the 2nd Marines was on Guadalcanal while we were but they really were operating with the 161st Infantry and not with us, so we never saw that much of them.

Mark: Did you have much contact with Allies? You mentioned in New Zealand there was--

Schleck: That was the only point that we really came in contact with the other forces.

Mark: So there really wasn't that much contact in your experience with the Allies. In that brief experience, there's a phrase, I can't remember exactly how it's phrased, but there's one thing worse in a war than having an enemy and that's having allies. Did you have any, in this brief experience, did you have any sort of problems with--

Schleck: No problems really. We were so thankful that they were there! There were certain scenes that we - idiosyncrasies that we got kind of a kick out of - the way they would stop for tea at ten and at four. Of course, their answer was that it was a long war and they had to take it as it comes. We went even with them when we'd get a message from them. It would be enclosed in an envelope and there'd be another envelope inside that. It was a lot more formal than sending their messages in what ours were but they didn't provide any problems. Humorous or enjoyable—the idiosyncrasies.

Mark: I've got two more things I want to bring up and then we'll have some questions about the post war period. The first topic here I have written down is contact with native peoples in Southeast Asia, quite a bit of time on Guadalcanal and on the Philippines. Did you have much contact with the people who were living in these areas? As a guy from Wisconsin in the Midwest - what were your impressions about going to the South Seas? I mean everyone's fairly familiar with South Pacific and those sorts of things, and so if you could just comment on the people that you had contact with in the South Pacific.

Schleck: We had and most of the unit I'm sure had very little contact with any natives. We didn't see that many. They were back in the bush someplace. We did get over to Salvo Island one time and there saw natives in their normal village life and we didn't mingle with them at all. We just observed them as a curiosity and that was only one day. There are some fellows who have a natural bent for - able to communicate a natural interest, a fellow by the name of Dowley from out in New Jersey was one of those from our outfit and he was able to make contact with one of the villages and would get to the village but that was one guy and quite an exception. We did see at the end, after the island had been cleaned off why some of them were coming out of the bush and we did see them but we didn't have anything in the way of contact with them. In the Philippines we had contact with those people a lot more. There you had occupied towns.

Mark: There were Filipino forces fighting too. You probably didn't have much contact with them?

Schleck: Well, we armed some so-called guerrillas. I think in some places that they really did some real good, dangerous work. There were some people you read about

from what they went through during those war years, back in the mountains, keeping alive the resistance part, but these guerrillas we armed really were nothing but guys that were kind of coming along for the lark, actually. We had a crew that was supposedly defending our CP at one time and the Japanese came in and these guys all piled back into the fox holes. We were in at the headquarters and only by getting a rifle company down that we were able to survive. So they weren't much help. They were around. They were worth something I guess. But, that's just my personal opinion. I know that some of these guerrilla units really did a fighting job.

Mark: One last note I had here involves officer and enlisted relations. Perhaps the British units for example are using a strict line between officer and enlisted. It is much more hierarchical. Some Americans, enlisted men and officers there was a much greater degree of fraternization. Perhaps you could comment on the officer-enlisted relations.

Schleck: There is a line and I think that there was a good deal of communication between the officer and the senior enlisted people. Your platoon sergeant and your sergeants and you knew the people by name and you certainly had a high regard for these sergeants primarily. It wasn't, you weren't so familiar with the privates and the replacements until they rose in rank a little bit. You didn't - I was just trying to recall in my mind any incidences of - say in New Caledonia where we were isolated by ourselves with no combat going on. The units put on for the most part, their own entertainment and things like that and everybody enjoyed it and I think, officers probably had a section that they sat in separate from the men. I don't even know if that's true but I presume that it was. Fellows that were court marshaled became good friends. He didn't court marshal him out of any animosity. It was because they did something wrong.

Mark: What sort of things would warrant a court marshal?

Schleck: Oh yes. Maybe talking back to an officer or maybe they got a hold of some liquor or maybe they didn't show up someplace where they should have showed up. There wasn't much AWOL because there was no place to go, but when we did leave New Zealand, we did have a little problem with people were missing for a while until they all got rounded up and sent up to New Caledonia. That was too good to leave.

Mark: So I suppose I can move on to the post war. You were involved in the occupation of Japan.

Schleck: Just very briefly. We just took the units over there. I was probably there a month maybe. The object was, we didn't really know, at that point in time what we were going to run into in Japan. We couldn't believe after digging these people out of caves for years, that there wouldn't be incidences and we went to

shore with that in mind, but there weren't any, which was great. That was why the old commanders took the troops in, just in case they were needed.

Mark: In Japan your duties included what?

Schleck: Well, primarily just being there. We weren't training out in the area at all. I don't know what we did to keep the troops employed at that point in time as I think back. Actually, at that point, I had turned most of the duties over to the following commander so I wasn't too interested in what was occurring. We were entertained a number of officers by farmers of the area, which was kind of interesting.

Mark: Native theater or something?

Schleck: We were in a room about half and half and they had some sake I guess and they cooked this food in these jars over charcoal fire and the thing that was surprising about it was we had always heard about the Japanese being so unemotional and frozen faced and in this party, for the first time we saw these Japanese as jovial. They tried to outdo each other. They were laughing and singing. They would have these musical instruments with one or two strings on and they would sing. It didn't mean anything to us but they were having such a great time we could hardly believe it. Of course, their rations were very small, so what they had fed us was certainly a hardship for them. There weren't that many of us, probably twelve or thirteen.

Mark: What did you think about beaten Japan? Was there any kind of lingering animosity toward the enemy or did that sort of fall by the wayside as the surrender happened and the war ended?

Schleck: We didn't have any great affinity for the men, but we certainly enjoyed seeing these Japanese women in their kimonos and that. That was a pretty sight.

Mark: That's what a lot of the guys say. In Germany, they weren't supposed to fraternize with the Germans and they are culturally much closer to the Americans, you were there just a brief time so perhaps you can comment only limitedly on this but was there much fraternization with the Japanese people?

Schleck: Certainly when we were there and early going in, there was no prohibition against meeting with the Japanese, now because of the language barrier and that, and because of their straightened circumstances, I don't think there was much interplay. The American, having the food and that, below my level that there was a lot going on.

Mark: Well, a lot of these guys brought home wives so something-- You returned home to the US in December of '45.

Schleck: Correct. Got home in time for Christmas.

Mark: You had been there since Guadalcanal and of course, they had a rotation system by that time. I expect your number just came up right away?

Schleck: Yes.

Mark: Perhaps you could describe your voyage across the Pacific back home and your arrival back in Madison.

Schleck: We embarked on an Army transport, the *USS Eberly* and came across and landed at Los Angeles. We had a very rough voyage. We had our jackets hanging on a rack in the stateroom and those jackets were standing straight out at one time. But, obviously we made it and then we boarded a train that took us up to Camp McCoy and got demobilized up there in Camp McCoy.

Mark: Now in your case you weren't discharged from the service, you stayed in the Reserves? Did you have to--

Schleck: Well, you got discharged from service but you had the opportunity right then to sign for the Reserves and I did.

Mark: Did someone come to Camp McCoy to pick you up or how did you get back to Madison?

Schleck: I don't recall. Must have been a train or something. I don't remember anybody coming to pick me up.

Mark: In the first few years after the war, I have a couple of questions about those years. Did you experience any sort of readjustment problems, readjusting back to civilian society? For example, a lot of vets say they came back with malaria problems that effected them years after the war. Problems the Vietnam veterans had being portrayed as, psychological problems that some veterans have. Did you experience any kind of problems reintegrating yourself back into society?

Schleck: I got a recurrence of malaria and went on for a year with a 10% disability and I never had any more recurrence after that. I certainly scoffed at anybody that needed an adjustment period back to civilian life. But, after a year or two and I look back at myself in those first six months following World War II, I was pretty wild. (Chuckles)

Mark: What do you mean wild? I don't mean to pry.

Schleck: Wild in the sense you just didn't care or nothing could affect you. You were a free spirit. I think I drank quite a bit and you just flew around like a lost chicken.

Mark: This reminds me of two things. I spoke to my uncle who was in the Marines in the Pacific during World War II. After the war he went hitch-hiking around the country. Is that something that you could perhaps--

Schleck: Yes. You were restless, certainly. I had accumulated leave so I was paid by the Army until March of 1946 and I don't recall when I went back to the bank. Obviously, I was reemployed by the bank and I had to question my mind after the war whether I wanted that Lt. Col. to stay in the service or not, 'cause that was a good leg up on any kind of a military career and then reporting back to the bank they told me that I would start at the salary I left the bank four years before and that was considerably below what a Lt. Col.'s pay was.

Mark: I suspect behind many of your colleagues in the profession who didn't go to war as well.

[End of tape 1]

Schleck: But the bank said, "Everybody comes aboard at the salary that they left and then we will make sure that we will bring you up." That gave me the opportunity to really sift and winnow. So, depending on my belief in their doing that, what my choice was and of course, I chose to go back to the bank and the thing that really determined me was the fact that I couldn't face getting up that early in the morning years of my life as you would have to do in the Army. God, they're out at the crack of dawn and that seemed so horrible I couldn't do it.

Mark: What interests me, after commanding troops in the field as a Colonel, you went and sat behind a desk. Did you think what the heck am I doing here? Did you feel fulfilled or?

Schleck: It was quite a problem because even when I went back to get into the swim of things it was kind of makeshift things they gave me to do and that and I certainly was kind of a lost soul for a while, largely because of what you say. It was just not that meaningful.

Mark: Were there many of your colleagues who were in the same situation? I suspect a lot of people your age were in your situation. Did they go in the service as well? Because you're a little older than most of the vets I speak to. You were established in a profession already. Did a lot of other people your generation also go on to war or did they stay back and build up their profession?

Schleck: Well, I would say that from the bank that there was a good contingent of people my age, not many older now that you mention it, that went, that were called in, that were drafted. There weren't too many Reserve officers, maybe a couple that were there and they were older than I was actually.

Mark: So there were other people in your shoes?

Schleck: Yeah. When I joined the bank there was another chap with my same accounting class that came with me and then the accounting class following me there were three fellows from there and two of them, this other buddy of mine, he went off to war also and two out of the three that followed me were in the service also.

Mark: So, after feeling kind of like a lost soul, how long did it take you before you felt comfortable? Or, did you ever for that matter?

Schleck: I would say it took six to eight months to really get settled into the groove, into the new life. The three months that I had leave, that didn't change much. It was three months following when I got back to the bank that really made a difference.

Mark: I forgot to ask, were you married at the time? Or did you get married after the war?

Schleck: Both. I was married prior to the war and had a son and then we were separated really when I left and then during the war, I got a dear john letter and got divorced during the war. My mother had my son, took care of my son and then when I came back from the war, I got married in 1947 to my present wife.

Mark: I've got two more areas I want to cover. The first involves veterans and benefits. Now working for the state veterans agency, this is something that we are interested in. Now you were a little unusual in that you were a little older and already established in a profession. A lot of the younger guys will talk about using the GI Bill for college. Did you use any sort of GI Bill benefits?

Schleck: Yea. I think when we bought our house we got a GI loan there.

Mark: Do you recall what year that was?

Schleck: Well, that would be 47 I think. The fall of '47.

Mark: And that was federal? "Cause there were some state loan programs too.

Schleck: Yes. It was a regular bank loan with a reduced rate - 4% interest rate. At that time.

Mark: You mentioned the problem you had with malaria and the VA Medical system except for this one year. Did you have contact with them afterwards?

Schleck: No. I never had any experience with the Veterans Administration.

Mark: I'm interested in your Reserve service as well. After the war what was it like to be a Reserve officer and then eventually a National Guard.

Schleck: I wasn't in the Reserves too long. I was Battalion Commander in some Reserve unit but you know the Reserves then and I think even now, they were kind of the orphans of the services. The regulars were 'top dog' of course, and the National Guard had the adjutant generals to look after them and the Reserves were the step-children of the Army. So, they approached me from the National Guard, this fellow was forming a regiment. The National Guard had to get all reconstituted too. He wanted me to come in as S3 and take a rank of Major which was quite a thing to tussle with because its hard to climb up, but he was a pretty good salesman and I, of course, felt that in no time at all I'd be back to being a Lt. Col. again, so I did accept this job of Operations Officer for this regiment as a Major.

Mark: Which one was it?

Schleck: It was the 426th Infantry. They had before World War II the 32nd Division was composed of the 125th, 126th, 127th and 128th Infantry. Michigan had the 125th and the 126th and Wisconsin the 127th and 128th and when they reconstituted the 32nd again after World War II as a triangular division they needed a third regiment and they created this 426th Infantry Regiment and that's what he was staffing. So, I joined them and I was with the National Guard up until one year before I retired.

Mark: Which was when?

Schleck: Well, I retired in '68 after 30 years and I resigned from chief of staff of the 32nd Division at the time I transferred from the National Guard back into the Reserves for a year.

Mark: How is the Guard different than the Reserves? Was it more exciting or active??

Schleck: It was more active. The Reserves around here had a training division that I think trained like we did before the World War II with the CMTC. During the post-war period they had a different route to train. They had to train themselves too. But the 32nd Division National Guard was organized as a regular combat division and as you know it was called up in 61 and '62.

Mark: You were involved in that then.

Schleck: Oh, yes. Commanded a Battle Group at that time. We went out to Ft. Lewis as you know.

Mark: If you could briefly describe the mobilization process. Did you get a phone call in the middle of the night saying "Pack your bags, we're going" or did you have advance notice? How did that work?

Schleck: There was advanced notice of what day you had to depart. I'm going to have to leave here in another five minutes or so. There was a period of time before we left and of course, there was an awful lot of work to be done in packing up and getting your vehicles loaded and stuff like that. It's kind of impressive to see this mobilization procedure.

Mark: Two brief questions on that. Was the division combat ready?

Schleck: We were designated as Strac Division which theoretically meant that we were ready. But, I really don't think we were. It's amazing, we had a lot of people who had served in World War II. It's terrible how much you forget in that period of time. Of course, I was on a much higher level than I was in World War II and that's what people don't realize that this training of moving large bodies of troops around or engaging them or creating the communication between the different branches of service is what these training periods are for. It's one thing to move a company or even a battalion around someplace, but to move a division and to have that division fight as a team with the coordinated activity of the artillery and the infantry and the engineers and the Signal Corps and what else, it takes a lot of know how and as good as I think we were, and we certainly were very competent people, I think back on that period too, I learned a lot. I made mistakes that I don't think I'd make again, but that just shows how green I really was at that point.

Mark: The second thing I wanted to ask about the Berlin crisis was did you think you were going to have to really fight? Or, did you think it was just an exercise or a political move on the President's part or whatever, or did you really think you might be going into armed combat again?

Schleck: We didn't think we were going to fight because we were sent up to the northwest there, which they had to have a division there. The 4th Division left and we went in so they would always want to have a division situated there. But, in the time that we were there, it began to be more and more involved with Vietnam down there and even in '61 and '62 I can very easily remember the troop information sessions I used to give and talking about what was happening down in Vietnam and we thought we might possibly be alerted to go down there.

Mark: This might be after your time a little, but in the National Guard in your role as a commander did you have any feelings with some of the feelings on the campus here?

Schleck: No, that came after me. I often think about what that would have been like. Unbelievable having the National Guard on the campus here.

Mark: '69 and '70, you had retired by then.

Mark: Real quick now, veterans groups. Did you ever join like the Legion and the VFW?

Schleck: I belong to all of them I guess. Not to all of them, I belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion because I think they are good solid organizations and I believe in it. I belong to the Retired Officers Association too. That's all branches.

Mark: When did you join these groups and for what reason?

Schleck: I joined them pretty close to after World War II because I felt the veterans groups were a solid force in the country. Actually, I was a member of a veterans group called America First, I think it was where the slogan was "Citizens First, Veterans Second" because I didn't believe in the veterans trying to bleed the country.

Mark: American Veterans Committee?

Schleck: AVC - maybe it was the American Veterans and that was taken over by the Communists.

Mark: That's the allegation, do you think that's true?

Schleck: It was true - no question about it.

Mark: You were here on the campus in Madison then?

Schleck: I was here in Wisconsin. I was in Milwaukee at the time. The one who got me involved in the AVC was Hoss Wilkie who was a member of the Supreme Court here when he died and he and I were in school together. I believed in what the proposition was, citizens first, veterans second. He got out of it too. There is no question about that being taken over by the Communists, by the people who were connected with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade over in Spain that moved in around here in Wisconsin at least.

Mark: I see you have to go and I thank you for your time very, very much.

[End of Interview]