

Franz Schlottman

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Question: So you say there's a lot of waste?

Answer: Yeah, that kind of thing, it didn't go on a lot, but when I had to dump those trucks in the drink out there I hated that because they were brand new ones probably had 500 miles on them something like that.

Question: Wow.

Answer: But you know, one thing we did enjoy, whenever a big ship would come in from the states we'd go aboard and see if he could get any fresh vegetables, an onion or two or a few potatoes or something like that. We didn't get.. we had dried out potatoes. We were going to go sink Idaho completely when we got home because of the dried out potatoes we got from Idaho, anyway we'd go aboard and if they could spare something why fine. Most of the times they were pretty good. One of the Matson boats the cook.. went aboard we'd pushed into the dock and went aboard and got a hold of the steward and wanted to know if there was something he could spare. So pretty quick he come over to the side of the ship and hollered down send me up some guys to help me and I said what's the matter can't you take care of it yourself? No, I can't, so anyway, we got this, the steward had given him a bundle of well first he gave him a big turkey, then he gave him a box of oranges, and a sack of potatoes and heck if we got one potato apiece we figured we were doing pretty good, but he gave him a sack of potatoes and some onions, a batch of onions, a leg of mutton, and let's see something else, he said have you got sheets on your bunks, no we don't have sheets, why you'd better have sheets, you know how steamships put up bundles of sheets so he gave him a bundle of sheets, well you better have bedspreads to put on top of it, so he gave him bedspreads and boy did we have, we had the greatest bunch of stuff that time that you ever saw.

Question: So Christmas came early?

Answer: Christmas came early you bet.

Question: So did you live on your tug then?

Answer: Oh yes.

Question: Did you eat on your tug and everything?

Answer: We never went ashore. There was no reason to go ashore. And because usually there is a bunch of tugs and if guys want to play cards you went to other tugs and like that. It worked out pretty good that way. One time there was a steamer I don't know which nationality it was, it might have been American it might not have been. But anyway we went aboard and the steward got real ornery with him, started cussing him out, no good GI's and all that sort of thing, he said we just asked. And so that in them days they used to keep the fresh vegetables in a box on deck high up on the deck. So that night we was unloading, I forget, airplanes I think so 2 or 3 in the morning. I went to the guy in the crane and said how about swinging a pallet up alongside that bin up there so sure enough they swung the pallet and we unloaded all the onions, potatoes and fresh stuff they had out on deck. Took it down and we had an old sunken barge that you could crawl in and walk through the water and then you had a dry end. You only had about this much tide at any extreme tide, was only 3 foot deep, and so this one end was always dry but you had to crawl through the water to get there and that's where we hid our stuff. They came down looking for it the next day but they never found it, never found a thing. It wasn't all bad you know.

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Question: I assume there were a lot of little things like that that went on.

Answer: Oh yeah. One night when we were on shore they had an old barge there. The crew that ran the LCM's and the LCVP's of course they stayed on shore, living on shore. Anyway they had an old barge and they fixed it up real nice put a top over it. Bunks with mosquito nets all lined up on one side. And that particular night Jim Dunn who finally was my cook at the time.. the army finally got so they were issuing, first it was bottles of beer a month, three at a time, of course most of the guys.. if I drank three cans of beer I'd be looped. But at first I didn't drink mine then I found if I drank a can of beer I could eat them out of house and home, I don't know why but it gave me an appetite you wouldn't believe and I weighed 135 pounds so I could stand a little weight. Anyway this particular night the guys all got a shower, they didn't have anything to do and Jim Dunn had drunk his beer and I think he had a couple of mine. They only issued three at a time, some saved them up so they could get a jag on you know. Jim was in his sun tans and all freshly cleaned up and everything and ah it's hot around here he says, so he goes to the end of the barge and jumps in gets cooled off with his clothes and all. Just funny things like that you know.

Question: Do you remember any, cause you were there two years, do you remember Christmas?

Answer: Oh yeah. Yeah, Christmas, we made the best of it. I've got a little testament at home and it's got where I was the almost four years I was gone. It tells where I was at and what I was doing you know. I've got a record of that but we had Christmas of 42 was in Hampton Roads, and then '43 and '44 I was in New Guinea and then '45 was in Tacoma harbor on the ship coming home and we got off on the 26th. We left on the 26th of December and came home on the 26th of December three years later.

Question: Wow, what are the chances of that?

Answer: Very slim I would guess. Anyway, we stopped at San Pedro on the way back and of course the troop commander made us get off ship and march around town. It was raining. You stepped off a curb and you stepped into a foot of water at least and so we were soaking wet when we got back on ship. That stupid commander I could have killed him but anyway then he got the captain of the ship he lived in Tacoma so he got home for Christmas because he pulled into the harbor on Christmas Day. As soon as he tied up he got to take off. We unloaded on the 26th.

Question: Was that the end of your career?

Answer: Yeah. Well I spent a couple, three years in the reserves. Went to California 'bout, I don't remember now, observer in war games at Camp Pendleton, and I stayed in the reserves until after the Korean War was over and then I dropped it.

Question: So what did you do when you got out of the service, did you come back to Olympia?

Answer: Went back to my job at Olympia Oil and Wood. I started working for Olympia Oil and Wood when I was twelve years old. I'd go down after school, in fact I've got the record book, I got fifty cents a load for throwing wood in. They'd take it out and dump it somewhere and people would want a load in their garage or their basement and they gave me fifty cents a load to put the wood away. My first paycheck was six bucks. Twelve cords of wood or twelve loads of wood. And then I went on to work for them in and out of the saw mills in 1935 or '36 I started driving and then I drove until '51, when I quit, wasn't it Jean?

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Anyway when I quit and went on my own. I finally got to driving gas truck and anyway that is pretty much my army career.

Question: And it sounds like you kept an infinity for tugs and the water and went into getting the Sandman.

Answer: Oh yeah we were the last ones that worked the Sandman and have you seen it since they finished the hull. Oh man pretty. I hope they can finish her up now and get the rest of her done. The Indian is up at the county line being rebuilt. It should be ready pretty quick. When they get the engine in I think they are going to haul it out over east bay and build a cabin on it. I'm not sure. That is the last they were talking about. Anyway it is something. Be grand if they get it done.

Question: Was there a best part of being in the service, or was there a best part?

Answer: I think, the guys that we worked with, the fellow ship and stuff. I think that was as good as any. I can tell you another thing about being in the service, when we landed in Australia, when we got to Sydney I think 3 or 4 of us decided we was going to go to church one morning. So we go down there and look at all these big churches and huge big cathedrals and everything so we pick out one and we go in and found a seat and sit down and someone comes over and says you can't sit there, ok, so we move somewhere else, so and so sits there you can't sit there either, so we says where could we sit, so he takes us over there behind a post and we sit there through the service. And I don't remember what they talk about or anything else but next Sunday I said I know where we can go where we'll be welcome enough so we go to Salvation Army. So we found out where Salvation Army was and we sat in the back row and pretty quick the minister sees us sitting back there and he comes down there and says you boys come with me so he sits us in the front row. And then of course we got a free meal, I don't remember who we went with, but we went someplace and they gave us a free meal and I told you we'd be welcome there. That is something, when we left Hampton Road, the Salvation Army was down there with coffee and donuts and of course we were in a big hurry and they wouldn't let us pick up a cup of coffee or anything so we didn't get it. So the Salvation Army would get a place on the ship if they had a spot for them and they never really worried, the Americans, about taking them but when you get to Australia it is a different thing. Australia has a very special spot on deck, they are number one people over there. They take and put them on the ship where they want to go and take their gear with them and a different story altogether. But the Red Cross a different thing. They always had the best of everything.

Question: Huh, I didn't know that. What was the worst part of being in the service?

Answer: Being away from home I guess. I think that is probably the worst.

Question: How soon did you get married when you got back?

Answer: Quite a while. I got back in '45, well off the ship in December, and I was a couple of days at Fort Lewis and we didn't get married until '49. Four years, not quite four years. A lot of water ran under the bridge there too. That's another story, another big story. Well, I guess that is about...I could tell you all kinds of crazy things, but that is something else.

Question: It sounds like it was a good..

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Answer: It was a good experience really. I wouldn't want to do it again but I wouldn't take a million dollars for the memory.

Question: Did you lose any friends over there?

Answer: Just the two and of course lost several of them after we got back home. For some reason they didn't live long, but I don't know whether it had anything to do with the war or not of course they didn't look for excuses to not do things like they do now. If somebody gets a pain why they try to find out what happened. Of course they have more bad stuff than we had then. One thing that happened to us in Sydney was they brought mustard gas over, a small ship loaded with mustard gas and of course the darn containers were leaking, the bombs were leaking, and so the Australian longshoremen wouldn't unload it. We weren't on boats we were in camp in Sydney so they gave us protective clothing and we went and unloaded the bombs. Learned to run the steam winches on the little old tramp ships they had over there. And then one time after I got home I delivered oil for Texaco, I drove for Texaco, part of Olympia was on wood at that time, so I was taking six barrels of oil to one of the ships down there and I went over there just at noon time. Of course the longshoremen at noon time they stop so I had to wait until one o'clock before I could get any help on getting the barrels aboard ship so I could pump them into the reservoirs. So I gets up there on the winches swing the line over and I picks them up and puts them aboard and man did I get in trouble with the longshoremen. I'll never try that again.

Question: I can imagine. I ran into the same thing. I walked on board with my camera down there and I had three unions coming after me. Oh yeah. They were madder than hornets. I didn't have permission. I was up on some platform and the stevedorian belong to that and the longshoremen were mad over here and these people were mad over there and I just wanted to get my pictures. Well, thank you very much.

Answer: Well, I sure appreciate your giving me a call and I hope I did you some good.

Question: Yeah, cause again it is another piece of the puzzle. Because the history books give us the names and dates and places and that is great for history but who the people were and it wasn't all that Hollywood has made it out to be and yes there is a very tragic side a very serious side but yet within that was some pretty amazing things that happened to people.

Answer: We volunteered to get this buddy that we worked together so much. The Australians had lost two gun boats up the coast and the Japs were at Mogmog And this was further up but they wanted somebody to salvage the gun boats. They were coming back for repairs to Leyte And so this one fellow he figured he knew and they got into a storm and one of them had a bad engine so they figured they knew there was a cove and they could get behind the headland well it turned out they got in the wrong place and they got blowed to shore and so that was the end of that trip for them. They got back somehow, got back to base, and they came down one day and they wanted volunteers to go see if we could salvage those two gunboats. They was fifty footers, some wheres in there. They were used in the rivers for gunboats, they actually were trollers and re-rigged for gunboats. And so Jim and I went up there and took a 72 footer with us so we'd have some power, big power, so the first time we hooked onto one of them why the 72 footer went sideways and there was a channel like this to where the boats were and they'd gone ashore on the coral reef and came around like this and the waves breaking over here.. Well, when he was pulling on it somehow or another he either got in the bite of his line or something and he went ashore. Well, he couldn't get his line loose off the coral that had hooked around so he cut his line loose and I sent him home because no good without a tow line. So, Jim and I finally got the one of them

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off the one that didn't have a hole in it and the other one we started pumping on it. We'd taken pumps and all the gear we'd need to do the job and we had pumps on it pumping it out and the first thing we'd get out is the dirty bilge oil and all that stuff and finally we got clean water in there and the swell was lifting it up and setting it down and gentle swells in there cause it wasn't stormy anymore so after awhile we see little fish swimming around in there. Oh Oh, it can't be coming from anywhere but outside so then we started tearing ceiling out. We tore the ceiling out and we found a brain coral, have you ever seen a brain coral?

Question: No.

Answer: Well it looks like a brain, just like a brain and they are usually oval and they'll be from so big, this one was about this big, and they sit down, if it had set on the brain coral it'd be ok, but it sat on there and every time the wave would lift it water would rush in and then when it set down it'd plug it off again. So what we did we took a mattress and tore up some of the sheeting of ceiling of the inside of the boat and braced the mattress over the top of the coral with planks and stuff and braced it down and then we could pump it out and by keeping the pumps going and keeping it on more or less of an even keel we pulled it off. So then we went back and there's pictures in the album where we took it on the beach in this little cove laid it so we could pump water into it and tip it down the beach and almost expose the hole in the boat and then I had a piece of tin on the tug that I'd salvaged for no good reason because except that it was there. A piece of galvanized tin, 3 feet wide and probably 8 feet long, we cut a square of that off and it just covered the hole in the boat with six inches to spare. We took two GI blankets folded them up and then nailed this tin over the top of it and brought them home. I got a pretty nice letter from the Australian government for that.

Question: That is that Yankee ingenuity.

Answer: That's right. That happened quite often over there. You'd be surprised how much stuff the guys made.

Question: It's amazing when they get in that mode of solving the problem versus well we can't do that, we don't have the proper equipment.

Answer: Well, the way I looked at it, the difficult we do immediately and the impossible might take a little longer. That's the way we looked at things. I don't think we set out to do anything that we didn't finish.

Question: Do you keep in touch with any of the guys?

Answer: About 3-4 of them I still, three that I get a card from every now and again but for a long time there I was in touch with about a half a dozen but a lot of them are gone now.

Question: The one man you mentioned his last name was Dunn but, any relation to Jimmy Dunn?

Answer: No he was a sheep herder from Idaho. No relation to Charley, in fact when they came aboard with that leg of lamb I was going to pitch it in the drink because of the taste and smell of it, but Jim says, no way, don't you throw that away. He knew how to cook it, and by golly it was good, it was real good. I think he cooked it forever, but I don't remember exactly but it was good stuff.

Question: Huh. Quite the time.

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Answer: Yeah.