

Phillip H. "Skip" Schmidt

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Answer: You were asking about animosity.

Question: Yeah, animosity.

Answer: Not towards an individual. But you also learned those things. Like I started to say -- I was, my training was in ordinance after V-5 I became an ordinance man. And I had a ball. I loved it. We got to fire probably almost every -- every one of the enemy's weapons when I was at Norman, Oklahoma

Answer: And I loved working with the guns and the bombs and the whole business. But you admired the work that, particularly the Germans, beautifully machined guns, equipment, armament. The American's machines -- Americans were better because we produced a hell of a lot more. You learned as time went by. The Japanese guns, the ones that we saw, were very good and efficient, but they weren't -- weren't of the caliber that ours were or the Germans were, yeah. Italians made some pretty good stuff. But again going back, because I was still connected with the air arm of the Navy. That was the other thing we got to see was most of the -- at least one of many of the different planes that were made by the Germans and the Japanese. And you really had to admire, particularly the Siebel was a hell of a nice little plane. It wasn't very heavy, protected with -- for the pilot, but it was just a beautifully built plane. The Germans' planes were excellent -- Messerschmitt and all that. But, yeah, I don't -- it was animosity, you know. It was those God-damn Krauts and those God-damn Japanese -- Japs as we used to call them. But -- but on a person to person basis, I don't think that there was an animosity. Now I'm not saying that if you were a prisoner of war in either Japan or Germany or somewhere, that would be a different situation. I never was, so I -- I never saw that.

Question: Why do you think that the US chose to inter Japanese citizens? I mean, if your name had been Hashibodo or something of that sort. But being Schmidt -- being a German?

Answer: I don't know how -- well, let me go back a little bit. My father and my mother told me how difficult it was during World War I being a German, of German descent in the United States at the time and all the rest of that stuff. How and why the United States decided to intern all the Japanese. I don't know how they came to that conclusion other than just hysteria

Answer: And I don't know, you know, how they really arrived at it and how they decided to do it and boy, it was really organized. But it just was a travesty. But I'll tell you this. The Japanese that I have known and know who were interned seem to have an attitude, you know, they lost so much. But the attitude of, well, we just have to pick up the marbles and go back to work. But no, I don't know how we came to that. It was really a bum move.

Question: When you came back from World War II, were there many Japanese-American citizens living in Olympia?

Answer: No, no, primarily because there wasn't before. Yeah, there were more in the Seattle area

Answer:

Question: Was there a dislike for Japanese product that you know of?

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Answer: Not after -- not after the Americans went over there and helped them get going again. (laughs) Yeah, yeah, I think there probably was, both American -- or Japanese or German, but that was just a passing thing, you know. You're going to buy something -- if you're looking for something cheap, or if you're looking for something quality, whoever has the quality or the cheapness you're looking for is probably where you're going to buy it. You're not, generally going to do it just on a nationality thing. Otherwise, we wouldn't have the imbalance we have in trade now. But, no, I -- I'm sure that there are some people said they wouldn't never buy something from -- made in Japan or something made in Germany, but maybe there's some that don't like the Italians very well.

Question: How does a Navy seaman -- what's a good way to -- what's some Yank ingenuity in cooling down beer?

Answer: What was that?

Question: What was some Yank ingenuity that was used to ice a beer when you needed a cold beer or something like that? What were some of the ways --

Answer: Oh, well, there was a simple way to do it if you didn't mind a little bit of taste of gasoline. You know, the -- when you're fueling up the plane, if you had a sock and a can of beer, and you just put a little bit of the -- the 130 or 180 octane whatever your fuel was. Put that in the sack and whirl that around your head a few times. You'd be surprised how quickly that cools that beer down. It also -- when you open it, it squirts a little more than usual. But yeah, well, there's just all kinds of things. In San Diego, of course, you just hang it over the edge into the water. We didn't have beer aboard the plane, but in the PBM we had two-burner electric stove and we had two -- two warming ovens that were in this stove, and we always used one of the ovens for a refrigerator because the butter would melt so we'd take a CO-2 extinguisher and put the butter in one of the deals and squirt that in there and then, that would stay, if we were flying, about 10 or 12 hours. That would stay in pretty good shape most of the time because the warming oven was insulated. So it worked the same way as a freezer. Oh, there was all kinds of ingenious things that the Swabees would come up with.

Question: Now you had -- didn't one of the gentleman in your -- in the Navy with you or in somewhere in your group want a burial by air or something?

Answer: Oh, that was at San Diego. We had -- we were patrolling the West Coast is what our job was, with the PBM's. We also did air -- a lot of air search and rescue. Where we'd go out, we'd fly for 12 or 14 hours just looking at the ocean, looking for somebody on patterns, things like that. And we were in a PBM and they have two waste hatches that open up. And one of the -- one of the squadrons planes had gone down. And all were lost. But one of the crew, I think it was the skipper of the plane, in his will, wanted to be -- have his ashes spread on the ocean. So somebody came up with the bright idea that they would go up in the PBM and they'd open the waste hatch and they would -- the priest or the minister would spread the ashes out of the waste hatch. And so our plane got the duty, and we went up and we got up and we're out off of San Diego a ways out in the ocean and opened the waste hatch and the guy gave the little talk and everything. And finally then opened up (laughs) the ashes and was dumping them out the window. Well, it's interesting in a plane, the wind swirls in and out, and the ashes were going outside but the ashes were coming inside and going all over. We had dust all over hell. (laughs) But it was a -- it wasn't funny at the time, but you know, after we landed and we were cleaning up and everything and a few days went by, it became funnier. It was -- it was not funny because the wife was there in the plane with us. And a couple other people, but in a way it's a little humorous.

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Question: Yeah.

Answer: But those things happened all the time.

I think the most humorous -- you know, you can go on with these dumb stories. But on a PBM, when you use depth charges, you would take the depth charge and you put -- there was a screw hole, a thread in it, and you put an eye ring in there and then you would hoist it up -- you had a little hoist -- take it up, it would go in the cell just behind the engines, and it would be going onto a shackle. And there was an old chief that was introducing some new kids to what goes on in the Navy -- new recruits. It wasn't our plane, it was one down the line on the tarmac. And they started this up, and we saw the depth charge was turning. And I said, being the ordinance man, I said, you know, I'm not so sure but I think that thing is unscrewing. So they were talking and going on and on up and the chief was talking about how they were going in and just before it got up to the cell, it dropped. And I swear that before it hit the ground, all of those kids who were watching that were at least 40 feet away. (laughs) It just went down, boom, crunch, and then flattened on one side. The fuse wasn't armed so probably nothing would have ever gone wrong, but it was quite a thrill for them. Okay. Quit reminding me of stories.

Question: Do you think there's a message from World War II for future generations?

Answer: Oh, I think so. I don't know but what -- what -- what perhaps that the country acted as one for all those years in a way, in a sense. Just -- it's -- and the responsibility that -- that all these guys had before and after the war that -- I don't know how to put it but maybe just the unification of sort of thinking. Because you did have, you know, one thing, we're going to finish off the Germans; we're going to finish off the Japanese. And we're not going to have any more wars, if I recall. We've had a few since then. And we made a few more mistakes. I'll say one thing. In World War II, basically our generals and admirals didn't make very many mistakes. They -- they took a hell of a lot of chances and they asked the guys -- and they asked, I think is more than forcing, they asked the guys to do their jobs, and most of the guys did their jobs to the best of their ability, even with all the boredom. Yeah.

Question: You were pretty young, but did you -- from when you were in high school and then after the war. I mean, could you see a difference in the country?

Answer: Hm-hmm. I could. Of course I was not really in business before the war; I worked. I worked every summer. Every time I was not going to school. But, yeah, I saw a number of differences. But I think maybe after the war, that people began to question things more. Question the governments about things that you never would have done during the war. But I don't know whether that has anything to do with anything.

Question: Did it leave you more patriotic after the war?

Answer: More what?

Question: More patriotic?

Answer: More patriotic? It's kind of hard to be more patriotic after the war than you were during the war. But patriotic -- more patriotic in a different sense. I was more concerned about what we were doing with our government. Part of that was just getting older, I think. More concerned about our local governments. And, yeah, I think maybe that the big change for me probably was how I thought about government and what government does and how it operates and how it handles things. And I say "it", it's really people or some people in government. And my basic attitude, philosophic attitude as far as politics has

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changed. And part of it came about because of just my experiences during the war. But a lot of it came about just because I got more involved in things than I had been before.

Question: Do you think that's some of where you got your interest in government was from your experience in the war?

Answer: Well, I would say so, because I question in my own mind how some of the things ran in the Navy, but I question some things -- how some of the things running that were not in the Navy but were involved in the war effort. How they came and went. Yeah, I don't know; I think maybe that had some effect. But what I saw in '39 when I was in Germany -- that had some effect. I know I didn't want to have anything to do with anybody who was going to dictate to me what I was supposed to think and do. And that's gotten stronger as time has gone by. (laughs)

Question: When you were on leave or at home, was the war discussion with you and your Dad - was that a dinner discussion or not?

Answer: Well, he was too damn busy in that period of time and I was gone. I was gone in school and when I was home back in the summer, then I would be working. I worked. It was kind of an un -- an undocumented law in our family that you get a job right away when school's out. In fact my father would, after about three days, my father would always ask, have you got a job yet? And I knew if I didn't get a job, he was going to put me to work and I didn't get paid nothing. So I worked. But, yeah, we discussed -- we discussed a lot of things. But not -- my father and his sons, my three brothers and myself, I don't think that we spent much time in discussing that sort of thing. You discussed business. You discussed how you were going to get the house cleaned or the boat fixed up or the screens off the windows and washed and put away, and he was gone. He was on the road. See, he'd be gone two or three weeks at a time. Because his job was in overseeing and selling. So he was gone when I was growing up an awful lot.

Question: So you didn't hear his views on Hitler?

Answer: Oh, yeah, yeah, I heard a lot of that because every time we'd have company my dad would give them -- this was before the war started -- give them the full treatment of what we saw over there. And many people couldn't understand how he could be saying that about -- he was born here. He was born in Montana, but, you know, some of them felt a little strange, I think, that he was talking down Germany so badly.

Question: Being a German. I mean being an American but with a German heritage.

Answer: Yeah. And you know, naturally we were talking about the Japanese. Well, immediately everybody thought a Japanese was all spies. Like we did at Menlo. That -- that janitor definitely was a spy. And we knew he had a transmitting radio underneath his bed. Just because he was a Japanese janitor. (laughs)

Question: One thing I forgot because you reminded me, and I'm not sure if I have the story right, but didn't your mom, in your house, didn't she do a wartime effort? It seemed like that room downstairs, didn't she entertain soldiers or not?

Answer: Oh, she did a lot of things. She did an awful lot of things during the war. Of course most of it I wasn't there so I wasn't really involved in. Like I told you, once I went into the service, I would be home for, you know, maybe six days at a time, maybe ten days at a time. By the time you get through with all the traveling moving back and forth, you didn't

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have too much time. So I saw very little, yes. My mother and the Navy -- what as it -- the Navy -- not a Navy Club, but a Navy organization, met in the basement all through the war.

Question: I don't know why I remember that. Yeah.

Answer: Well, my father, if you recall, had -- had this wonderful new yacht he had just finished in early '39 and he turned that over to the government, and the Coast Guard had it all through the war. And they had -- machine gun mount on the fore deck. And they used it for all kinds of things including entertaining high muckety-mucks who would come up from Washington, D.C. for some reason, like the -- like the head of the Navy Department or something. That's -- that would be the queen ship that they would cruise Puget Sound with. Yeah, and he got it back after the war. But, he just turned the whole thing over to the government.

Question: And that was not by request -- it was just --

Answer: No, no, no, he offered it. He says, it's a new boat, it's in good shape. This is what you want, I don't want anything for it. You take it, you use it, just keep good care of it and give it back to me in as good a condition as possible at the end of the war. That was -- that was just the kind of thing he did.

Question: They mounted guns on it and patrolled -- Olympia?

Answer: Patrolled parts of Puget Sound, yeah. No, it wasn't down here, it was stationed in Seattle, yeah. But it cruised all over because it was a great boat to take people out and show them, you know, people come, you could go in, you could see Bremerton from the water. You could see -- well, they didn't have Bangor then, but all the rest of the stuff. And so, but it was -- it was a Coast Guard boat. It was painted gray. It was a beautiful white boat but it was painted that wonderful gray that all Navy ships and Coast Guard ships were painted. Yeah.

Question: Was that common? I mean, did they have a number of vessels like that?

Answer: Quite a few people donated vessels, but I believe that was the biggest one. It was 53'2 at the water line; it was a big boat.

Question: Compared to a destroyer or an escort, not very big.

Answer: Hmm?

Question: Compared to a destroyer or an escort, though, not very big.

Answer: No, no. But it was -- it was a boat. We used to say that a boat is a vessel you can lift onto a ship. (laughs) So when you say boat, it's a boat. Yeah.