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Place of Interview: Cape Girardeau, Missouri
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
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Approved: *Curtis D Schulze*
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Oral History Collection

Curtis Schulze

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello Date: September 16, 1988

Place of Interview: Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Curtis Schulze for the University of North Texas Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on September 16, 1988, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. I'm interviewing Mr. Schulze in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was aboard the destroyer USS Downes during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Schulze, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you born--things of that nature. Just be brief and general.

Mr. Schulze: I was born on January 12, 1920, in Vandalia, Missouri, in the same house I live in now. I spent twenty-some-odd years in the Navy and retired and came home.

Dr. Marcello: Tell me a little bit about your education.

Schulze: I went through high school, and as much as I hate to say it, I was a pretty sharp kid. I went down and joined the Navy because in those days the job factor wasn't too good. I wanted to go to work in the mines, and I had it all lined up to get a job, a good paying job, but Dad wouldn't let me do it. So he says, "Find something else because you'll be there for the rest of your life if you go to work in the mines. So my brother said, "Join the Navy!" So I did, with the idea of being a gunner's mate.

Marcello: When did you join the Navy?

Schulze: On February 8, 1938.

Marcello: Was this almost immediately after graduation from high school?

Schulze: I got out in June of 1937 I went down and joined up, but in those days they didn't take them very quick. They put me at the head of the list because, as I say, I had a pretty good education. Dad was pretty sharp too, you know, and everything, and my brothers were, too, so they put me at the head of the list. I went to Saint Louis and went in the Navy.

Marcello: What kind of mines were there around Vandalia?

Schulze: Clay mines, where they make a lot of clay brick.

Marcello: Yes.

Schulze: For fire brick they used the clay mines back in those days. Nowadays they use diaspore, and they mine it on

the surface. They don't dig down and get it out of the ground like they used to. They used to have regular ol' mines, just like coal mines. They'd put the donkeys down there and run them around and get the clay out and make the brick out of that clay.

Marcello: How difficult or easy was it to get into the Navy in 1938 when you enlisted?

Schulze: Hard! It was hard to get in the Navy. As a matter of fact, there was about 150 guys who went down to Saint Louis from all over the state of Missouri, and if I remember right, there was thirty-two who got in the Navy out of that 150. Even then, after we went in the Navy and went to San Diego, they gave us another physical examination, and about ten of them got kicked out there and sent back home. So it wasn't too easy.

Marcello: Why did you decide to select the Navy as opposed to one of the other branches of the service?

Schulze: Well, I was sitting there thinking about the Army and reading the literature. My brother, Joe, came along and he was a year older than me, and he says, "Why don't you join the Navy and see the world!" I said, "That's a pretty good idea. I think I'll do it. So I did.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp.

Schulze: They gave us a choice of either going to Great Lakes or going to San Diego. It was in February (chuckle), so I went to San Diego.

Marcello: That makes a lot of sense.

Schulze: Yes.

Marcello: How long did boot camp last at that time?

Schulze: Three months. I was in Company 538, and it lasted three months. Then when I got out--graduated from boot camp-- I went to electric hydraulic school for four months. I graduated from electric hydraulic school. .as much as I hate to say so, I never went to a school in the Navy in my life that I didn't come out first (chuckle) in everything. Then they sent me home on boot leave after I had seven months in the Navy. So I came back, and I had ten days leave. Then I went back on the West Coast and went aboard the ship.

Marcello: How was it that you got selected to go to the electric hydraulic school?

Schulze: They gave us an aptitude test, and if you made a good mark or anything, well, they pulled you out of the ranks and put you in school.

Marcello: It was not easy to get into a Navy school at that time.

Schulze: No, it was kind of hard. A few people were coming in from the fleet to go to these schools, and then some of them were coming out of their boot camp and going to these schools. It wasn't no easy task.

Marcello: In coming out of electric hydraulic school, what kind of functions would you be fulfilling aboard a ship? What exactly would you be doing?

Schulze: It was just an overall picture of everything. You took a basic study of everything. Eventually, you were supposed to be maybe a third class petty officer in ordnance or electricity, but you were still only a seaman second, see, and you were drawing \$36 a month when you were seaman second. So when I went aboard ship, I was a seaman second, and because I'd made seaman second in the boot camp, I went from \$21 to \$36. Then I went aboard ship and took the exams for first class seaman, and I passed them and got \$54. As I say, there was a lot of guys aboard ship that had four or five hitches in the Navy and were still second class. And time in rate counted, too, see, and it was so hard to do. But I made such a good mark in A to M and the seamanship manual, so I made first class. There was a little bitching about it, but I decided that didn't bother me any.

Then I was on the deck, and I was trying to be a gunner's mate striker. The gun boss wanted to make a fire control striker out of me, and I didn't want to be a fire control striker. Then they made a torpedo striker out of me, or tried to, but I would always hold out for gunner's mate. When I was a seaman first, I went up for third class gunner's mate even when I was on the deck. You're supposed to be in the deck gang, see, but I went up farther while I was on the deck and made

third class. While I was third class, well, they still used me as a seaman. I was the coxswain or the captain of the gig when I had the duty, you know, every third day. So I did my share of that. One thing I never did do is that I never had to mess cook. They all the time bypassed that; they never made me mess cook.

Marcello: Let me back up a little bit here. So I gather, then, that once you got out of that electric hydraulic school, you went to the Downes at that point.

Schulze: Yes, I went to the Downes and put my sea bag and my hammock on my shoulder and walked up the gangplank. That damned thing was heavy, too (chuckle).

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the Downes. You mentioned that you went aboard with your sea bag and your hammock. Describe what your living quarters were like aboard that destroyer.

Schulze: In the living quarters on the destroyer, they had steel bunks. On the battleships they still used the hammocks, but on the "tin can" they had...you would take your hammock and your sea bag and empty them into your locker. Normally they were two or three bunks high, and the junior man got the low bunk, and the senior man got the high bunk. So I went back in the fantail compartment because that was where the gunner's mate strikers and the gunner's mates were. We stood wheel watches and the after steering watches.

Marcello: Now I gather that when you initially went aboard the Downes, you were put in the deck force from what you said.

Schulze: Yes. I went in the deck force. As I say, I went up for gunner's mate while I was in the deck force (chuckle).

Marcello: I'm assuming that you had no desire whatsoever to become a boatswain's mate.

Schulze: No,, no. It didn't bother me any. I would do some of their functions and everything because the gunner's gang took care of the after part of the ship. But it never did bother me about being a boatswain's mate or anything else.

Marcello: What was the food like aboard the Downes?

Schulze: It was all right. It wasn't too good, and it wasn't too bad. It was kind of mediocre, but they tried to do a good job. They had a standard menu. On a Wednesday morning and on a Saturday morning, they used to have beans and figs for breakfast, see, because you didn't have to dirty many dishes. On a Wednesday they had a lower deck inspection, and on Saturday they had inspection. So that would give the galley boys time to clean up, too. But they were pretty good. It didn't bother me because I always liked beans. As a matter of fact, some of the beans I've had in the Navy are the best beans I ever ate because they'd make a layer of beans and a layer of bacon and then a layer of beans,

and it tasted pretty damned good at 4:00 in the morning when you're going out to do something. You'd go up to the galley and get a plate of beans. A lot of times they had cornbread to go with it. But they had good chow. They had pork chops and steak once in a while--anything they could come up with. They were on a very, very tight schedule because they weren't getting much money to run the Navy on, see. They were on a real tight schedule.

You had a mess cook that went up and got one...say you had pork chops. This mess cook would go up to the galley, and he would get enough pork chops for each man --one per man on the mess. By the time everybody got through eating, why, if he thought they had any leftovers, he'd go up there and get a couple more if somebody wanted them. Normally, one of the first class petty officers might want more food or something like that. He'd been there a long time. We didn't have too much clout if we were just seamen or third class. But we got enough to eat.

Marcello: I'm gathering, then, from what you said that chow was served family-style aboard the Downes.

Schulze: Yes. In the Ordnance Department there were two tables that had about ten on each table. They had benches on each side. They put the chow on the table, and then they set it up. Nowadays they use trays. They did away

with the dishes, and they started using trays during the war. Everything is trays nowadays.

Marcello: I gather that when they served family-style, the ranking person at the table got first shot at the food.

Schulze: They weren't supposed to, but you know as well as I do that they did (chuckle).

Marcello: Is it also not true that if a mess cook did a good job, he would be tipped perhaps.

Schulze: Oh, yes, we tipped him every month on payday. We had a little guy named "Snuffy" Smith, and he mess cooked for two years because he got about...there was about twenty guys on the ordnance mess, and we all chipped in about a dollar apiece. So every month he not only got his pay, but he got about \$20 extra. That was a lot of money back in those days. They also had everynight liberty, see. They weren't required to stay aboard every night; they had everynight liberty. Whenever they got their work done, why, then they'd go ashore.

Marcello: In general, during that period before the Pearl Harbor attack, would you say that the Downes was a happy ship? In other words, as you look back upon life aboard the Downes, what was the morale like?

Schulze: I would say it was real good. We were in HAWDET, and that means we were out at Pearl in the Hawaiian Detachment. we stayed out there, but we had liberty until 2:00 in the morning and sometimes all night. So

we had a pretty happy ship. We had a pretty good time.

Marcello: What makes for a happy ship? From what you said, you were in the Navy for twenty-plus years. You ought to have some sort of idea of what goes into making a happy ship.

Schulze: Well, if you want to make a happy ship, you've got to have a bunch of happy guys (chuckle). Normally, it's just playing and working together. I've come back off the beach, and they'd ask for volunteers to go paint the mast; and I'd go up and paint the mast with another guy or something like that. You'd go over the side and work, you know, paint over the side. Everybody was doing their share. One thing about a small ship, if you didn't do your share, you didn't stay aboard very long. Somebody would knock the hell out of you and forget about you. On a big ship they could get away with it, but on a small ship everybody knew everybody. If somebody cheated in a crap game or something like that or poker game, well, the word got around pretty quick. Hell, he'd show up with a black eye and every other goddamned thing. So he didn't stick too damned (chuckle) long.

Marcello: How important is the skipper in making a happy ship?

Schulze: Well, there's one man in charge of everything, and that's the skipper. If he's liked you've probably got a happy ship; and if he isn't liked, well, it's just the

opposite. I've always been pretty lucky about. .oh, a couple ships I've been on the skipper wasn't any good in my estimation, but normally they were pretty good people.

Marcello: Who was the skipper aboard the Downes?

Schulze: Thayer. "Diz" Mitchell was the gun boss. "Diz" Mitchell was a lieutenant, and he was gun boss. He'd married an admiral's daughter, so we couldn't do any wrong when it came to gunner's practice and everything because he'd just tell them he was married to the admiral's daughter and that was all there was to it.

Marcello: When was it that the Downes went out to Pearl Harbor more or less on a permanent basis?

Schulze: Well, we went to Australia in 1940, I believe it was, and then we came back and went to Mare Island for a halfway overhaul, get some new guns and stuff put on. Then we went back out there, and we went into the Hawaiian Detachment out there. But I think, really and truly, when we went out there was at the end of fleet maneuvers in 1939 or 1940. Somewhere back in there, we stayed out there. The battleships and everything came back and started operating off the coast, but we started operating out of Pearl.

Marcello: What was your reaction or feelings so far as being stationed in the Hawaiian Islands on a more or less permanent basis?

Schulze: It didn't bother me a bit. That was just all part of it. We'd go over to the "Tin Roof" and drink beer every night whenever we was in port--drink old green Primo beer and have (chuckle) a good time. So we didn't worry too much about it. We'd take the same exercises there as before--go out and fire torpedoes and things like that--when we would had been back in the States. The weather was normally always nice, so we didn't have to worry much about that.

Marcello: Now that we have you out to the Hawaiian Islands on a permanent basis, let's talk about a typical training exercise in which the Downes might participate in that period prior to December 7. For instance, was there a particular day of the week when you might expect to go out, or would that vary?

Schulze: Normally, you went out on a Monday and stayed out all week. You came in on a Friday or sometimes Saturday, according to what you did. You had destroyer division battle practice. You had torpedo runs, and you fired dummy torpedo or the regular torpedoes with exercise warheads on. Then you'd pick them up, get them out of the water, and take them back aboard ship. About every three or four weeks, you'd stay in three or four days or a week, maybe alongside the tender or tied up to the buoy or something like that.

Marcello: If somebody were observing the movements of the Downes,

could that person more or less pick up a discernible pattern as to when the Downes would be out and when it would be back?

Schulze: Oh, it was easy. It was easy because they normally went out on Monday morning, see--the whole fleet. Go out on a Monday morning and come back on a Friday afternoon, something like that. So there was no doubt about it.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, could you or any of your shipmates detect any change in the training routine of the Downes?

Schulze: No. There wasn't any as far as we could see.

Marcello: It was business as usual right up to the attack.

Schulze: The only thing we noticed was that we went back to the States a couple or three weeks before the war started, and they had made the Japs quit hauling scrap iron and oil and everything else out of Long Beach. We did notice that because we saw the last Jap ships leaving. And we read the papers and everything.

Marcello: But your training routine stayed pretty much the same?

Schulze: About the same, yes.

Marcello: When you came in off one of these training exercises, how did the liberty routine work aboard the Downes?

Schulze: Being we were in HAWDET [Hawaiian Detachment], we had 2:00 liberty. The ships that were in the fleet only had midnight liberty. I think once in a while they would

give them overnight liberty for the first class or second class or chiefs or something like that. Normally, we had midnight or 2:00 in the morning liberty. There were boats going back to the ship about that time, and we'd catch a boat back to the ship, and that's all there was to it.

Marcello: How often would you get liberty when you were in port?

Schulze: Every third day. Normally, we had three watches. They might go to port-and-starboard watches on the big ships, but on the small ships we didn't. You kept a crew aboard that was big enough to take care of everything--get underway and fire the guns and do everything. They were supposedly doing things while they were getting the rest of crews aboard.

Marcello: So one out of every three days you could get liberty?

Schulze: Yes.

Marcello: When you had liberty, what would you normally do ashore?

Schulze: Oh, we'd go over to Waikiki Beach and swim sometimes or drink beer and chase the girls and have a good time.

Marcello: Of what significance are Hotel and Canal Streets?

Schulze: They don't mean a damned thing to me because I never did patronize them. After the war started, as far as I know, they were whorehouses, and the Army guys, especially, and a lot of the Navy guys lined up for blocks at a time. But I never would go into it. Hell, I've never been to a whorehouse (chuckle) in my life.

I've never had to pay for it (chuckle).

Marcello: I gather that Hotel and Canal Streets also had the tattoo parlors and curio shops and all that sort of stuff.

Schulze: Yes. The Black Cat Cafe was there, and it was right across from the YMCA. Beings we were in the HAWDET, we could wear civilian clothes. We had to wear them if we were over in the beach, so we would normally keep them at the YMCA in a locker. Then we'd go up there and change clothes and go out on the town.

Marcello: Okay, I think this more or less brings us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and obviously we want to go into a great deal of detail on this. Describe what was happening to the Downes during that week before the attack took place.

Schulze: Okay, the Downes had entered port, and she had some plates on the bottom that had to be taken off and renewed. So we went into the dry dock, and they removed those plates the first week we were there. And they wanted to put an alteration on the breech blocks for the guns, so they asked if they could take the breech blocks out of the guns and have them ready first thing Monday morning. So we took them out and put them in the gun shelter and had them all ready to carry up there the first thing Monday morning. See, the gun shop was only about three or four blocks up in the Navy Yard. Then we

took the .50-calibers down and stowed them away, put the ammunition down below, and as I remember we didn't have any 5-inch ammunition topside.

Marcello: When was it that the Downes went into the dry dock?

Schulze: About two or three days before the war broke out.

Marcello: And what other ship or ships were in that dry dock with you?

Schulze: The Pennsylvania was behind us and the Cassin was alongside of us.

Marcello: Did this dry dock have a particular designation or identification?

Schulze: Number One Dry Dock.

Marcello: While you're in that dry dock--this was an obvious question, but I'll it ask anyhow--in what kind of fighting condition was the Downes?

Schulze: Well, you're about out of things, really. You could fire the .50-calibers if you got them up, but they were water-cooled; or you can fire them, you know, if they're air-cooled. But if you fired the 5-inch guns while setting on the keel blocks, well, you was asking for trouble.

Marcello: But they weren't operable anyhow, were they?

Schulze: No, they had the breechblocks taken out, see, and they had the shears taken out of them and everything. We were about ready to take them over to the Yard.

Marcello: Where are you drawing your power and things of that

nature?

Schulze: You hook up to the beach and draw all the power and get the water and everything else from the beach--all alongside the dry dock.

Marcello: So you in essence really had no boilers lit either. You were a "cold iron.

Schulze: Yes, we were at "cold iron, and they got juice and power from the docks.

Marcello: Okay, talk about that Saturday, December 6, 1941. What did you do that day? Do you recall?

Schulze: Well, as I remember, I went ashore with a guy by the name of William White. We called him "Willie" White. He came from Ashland, Missouri. He was a good friend of mine. I saw him about two years ago. He came over to see me. He's got a brother that lives in Columbia, and he came over to see me. He hasn't changed very much. He's living up in Portland, Oregon now. "Willie" and I went over and came back about 2:00 in the morning and got a good night's sleep.

Marcello: What did you do in town that night?

Schulze: I think we had a few beers out on the beach--normal (chuckle).

Marcello: Were you still in pretty good shape, however, when you came back aboard ship?

Schulze: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Marcello: Okay, so what was going on back aboard ship that night

when you returned?

Schulze: Nothing. They were just standing their watches. Nobody was bothering anything. The gangway watch was standing their watch, and everybody was coming back aboard and going down below and going to bed.

Marcello: Incidentally, was the Cassin more or less in the same condition as your ship?

Schulze: The Cassin was about the same class, but she was along our starboard side. She was hurt, but not near as bad as the Downes.

Marcello: But, I mean, was she in the same kind of condition as you--being torn down?

Schulze: No, she didn't have all the bottom plates taken off and all that stuff.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that Sunday morning of December 7, and obviously we want to go into that morning in as much detail as you can remember. Describe for me what happened as that...well, take me through that day from the time you wake up until all hell broke loose.

Schulze: Well, I got up at the regular time when the reveille went and went up to the galley and ate breakfast.

Marcello: What time was this? What time did reveille sound?

Schulze: Oh, about 7:00.

Marcello: Okay.

Schulze: It was on a Sunday, so it was a little later on Sunday.

I went up to the galley and ate breakfast, and I went back to the number three gun shelter. I had the magazine readings in the storeroom. I had taken the duty, I think, for somebody, as I remember right, so I was going...and normally, if I was aboard I'd take the...everyday you had to take the magazine readings and turn them in to the skipper. So this particular day I was going to...I had...I always kept a set of keys down in my locker. I wasn't supposed to, but I always did. I had the keys in my pocket, and I was going up to the number three gun shelter. When they blew the first call to colors, which was at five minutes until eight, like all good sailors, I stepped in the gun shelter so I wouldn't have to salute colors, see.

I just happened to be looking over toward Ford Island, and I saw the first one roll out of the clouds; and I saw the second one, and I saw the third one. He had the "meatball" on him, and I think my exact words were, "Well, those no good sons-of-bitches, something to that effect.

The first thing I did was run around and unlock all the magazines and the ready rooms and the ammunition lockers and the rifle lockers and the pistol lockers. Then I went down and opened up the after storeroom that belonged to the gunner's mates down in the compartment. That's where we had the .50-caliber machine guns--down

there--so we broke them all open and put them in their cradles and brought some ammunition up and got some guys firing them. They were worried about the water, and I said, "To hell with the damned water! Don't worry about it! Just start firing the Goddamned things!"

Marcello: Where normally was your battle station aboard the Downes?

Schulze: At that particular time, I was the gun captain back on the number five gun. Walter Herzog, who was a third class gunner's mate, went to work on number three. Even the "snipes" were working and helping carry up ammunition and everything, which is very, very hard to realize when the "snipes" (chuckle) are helping on anything topside (chuckle). But they were carrying up ammunition and belting ammunition and everything else. We were showing them how to do it. Then Walter got to working on number three, so I went up and helped him, and we got the number three gun in action.

Marcello: Now these are your 5-inch guns?

Schulze: Yes. We got the number three gun into action. We sent some guys to the magazine, and they were running some ammunition up on the hoist. We fired a couple of rounds, and then I ran up forward to gun two because I knew Mike Odietus was up there trying to get gun two fixed. At that time he was a first class gunner's mate, I think. I was second class, but he was first class.

He had quite a bit more time in the Navy than I did. He was a hell of a good friend of mine and pretty good gunner's mate.

I was helping him, and I said to myself, "When Mike goes, I'll follow him off, because the number two gun was right up forward of the bridge. So he was working on that gun, and about that time the Japs dropped a string of bombs and hit just aft of the bridge and also a little in between the ships. Mike said, "Let's get the hell out of here!" I said, "Okay. So we left the ship, and John Riley, who was the chief boatswain's mate, went off with us. John Riley went off the ship with us. Some of the guys were crawling off the ship any way they could get off--jumping and everything else. They were starting to burn pretty bad and everything else. John was complaining about his back and his side hurting and everything, so I took my handkerchief and gave it to him and started to daub his back and his side. I looked at him and I said, "Mike, look here. Poor ol' John had thirty-eight holes in him from shrapnel. Mike didn't have a wound, and I didn't have any either. So we went up and stopped a car and had them take John up to sickbay, which is where he stayed for a little while. Then he got out two or three months later, and they gave him a sea-going tug to take fresh fruit out to those big ships. One thing about it,

everytime we'd come in port after we went aboard another ship, well, ol' John would see us, and he'd throw a couple of cases up there to the deck force or tell us to come on and eat with him. You know, they ate good chow. They have the best steaks and everything else because they got all that fresh fruit and everything, see.

Marcello: Let me back up here a second. Obviously, the planes that are coming over that dry dock are really after the Pennsylvania. Is that correct?

Schulze: Yes.

Marcello: And they're the planes that you're actually firing at. You do get some of your guns in operation. Did you put the breechblocks back in? And about how long does that procedure take?

Schulze: I'd say it took us a half an hour, by the time we got all the .50's up, those two 5-inch.

Marcello: By that time had they done a pretty good job on the Pennsylvania, that is, as much as they were going to do?

Schulze: They hit the "Pennsy" with one shell on a casemate. I think she lost three guys or something like that. They were dropping bombs at her, and they were hitting in between us and the Cassin, see. Just as soon as it started, why, the Cassin abandoned ship. They had a squadron commander aboard, but he hollered, "Abandon ship, and they left and we stayed aboard. We were trying to get something done.

Then they were afraid the planes would hit the end of the dry dock and knock the casemate out and let the water come in, so they went down there and flooded it. They went down and had the guys sitting down there, yardbirds, I think, and they had them flood it. At first when they did that, all the oil and everything came to the top, and everything started burning, and it burnt pretty good for a while. Then that night our torpedoes and depth charges started exploding.

Marcello: Well, let's back up a minute because I don't want to finish talking about that day yet. You mentioned that some of the bombs intended for the Pennsylvania dropped between the Cassin and the Downes. What damage did those cause--the ones that dropped between you?

Schulze: They keeled the ship over.

Marcello: And you were in dry dock at that time.

Schulze: Yes.

Marcello: Okay. And those are the bombs that actually keeled the ship over. Were those the same ones that you mentioned a moment ago that hit behind the bridge?

Schulze: No, they were some other bombs that hit behind the bridge. Almost immediately they hit between the ships, too.

Marcello: Describe for me what the noise is like and what the concussions are like when those bombs hit the Downes.

Schulze: Well, it's pretty (chuckle) noisy.

Marcello: I mean, is it ear-shattering?

Schulze: Yes, it's kind of hard on your ears, and once in a while they break an eardrum. Even firing the guns will do that. I've had one eardrum busted twice and the other one busted once from gunfire. They bleed a little bit. Then we'd always try to put cotton in our ears to stop the noise from vibrating around, but a lot of times you didn't have time.

Marcello: Did that string of bombs that hit behind the bridge knock you over or anything of that nature?

Schulze: No. I watched Mike, and I said...I didn't say anything, but I watched him, and he said, "Let's get the hell out of here!" When he left the gangway was still up there. They had a crane sitting over on the dock. We went off on the gangway, and we had to crawl underneath that crane to get the hell out of there. About the time we got off, well, they did get hit some more then. We lost eleven guys that day. The yardbirds were pretty nice about it. The twelve guys that stayed behind and helped salvage the ship, if they found a dead body, the yardbirds wouldn't let us get around it. They'd get it out take care of it and keep us out there. But there was about twelve of us that stayed behind for about...let's see, that was the seventh, and we stayed behind until the twentieth, I think. We salvaged the ship--took all the ammunition off and all the spare

parts--and we tried to cut holes in the ship and drain all the fuel out and everything else so they could cut it up and get the ship out of there. Being that I had the magazines, why, I was one of them they kept, so for about twenty days we dove in that damned oil and had a pretty good time (chuckle).

Marcello: I've seen some of the pictures in the aftermath of the attack--that was obviously was after the dry docks had been flooded--and that looks like a hell of mess in there.

Schulze: Well, that happened that same day, and that burnt for quite a while. Then they finally got it out, but the water was still in there. Then they took the water out again and tried to get her sitting up on the keel blocks. But she didn't for quite a while. We tried to salvage some of the gun parts and everything else, and the storeroom parts. We went down in the storeroom and got all the .50-caliber machine gun parts and things like that because they were short of them on the beach. We carried all the ammunition out and took it over to the beach.

Marcello: The ship itself was gone, though. Is that correct?

Schulze: Yes. They always said that the only thing left was the steering gear, but eventually they salvaged the ship and took it back to the States and made another ship out of it. It never was very good. It wasn't true or anything

else, but they did make a ship out of it. She fought in the war before the war was over. I think they did it more for looks than anything else.

Marcello: Once you got off the ship, that is, after you abandoned ship, then what were you doing during the rest of the attack?

Schulze: We went up to the head of the dry dock and stayed up there until about noon, and then we went up to the receiving station and ate dinner. Then we came back to the ship, and then we went up to the receiving station and spent the night. Then the following day was when they told us to go down there and report back to the ship. They kept a couple of officers behind, and they made us clean up the ship. Oh, maybe there were about ten or something like that.

Marcello: What was the state of all your personal gear?

Schulze: They were down in the locker, down in the compartment. I had some metals and stuff that I had collected down in Australia down in my locker, and they didn't get burnt up. So I did get them out. They were all oil-soaked and everything, but I think I've still got them at home.

Marcello: How about your clothing and things of that nature?

Schulze: It wasn't any good because it was stacked in the locker, and it was all oil-soaked. But we did wear them when we had to dive into the oil bilges and everything. We'd take those clothes out because just the edge of them

would be full of oil, and the rest of them would be all right because they were stacked in there so tight. So we'd wear them a day and then throw them away while we was diving in that oil and everything.

Marcello: That evening, what were some of the rumors you heard floating around?

Schulze: Well, we were up at the receiving station, and we all had BARs [Browning Automatic Rifles] and guns and everything else. I think the rumors floating around was that the Japs were landing some planes, and everybody and their brother was shooting up in the air at the planes. But they were our own planes. They weren't Japs; they were our own planes.

Marcello: Did you actually see that?

Schulze: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what you saw. Describe what the sky looked like.

Schulze: Well, it just looked like the Fourth of July with everybody shooting up there. They had tracers and everything else. Mostly, it was small arms fire. The Marines were on the base over there and shooting up in the air, and there were a lot of guys up at the receiving station shooting up in the air. Finally, the word got out that they were our own planes, so they quit shooting. Then the rest of them came in. I think they did shoot down two of them, I think.

Marcello: I'm assuming you could probably hear sporadic gunfire all night.

Schulze: More or less, from sentries and everybody else.

Marcello: What kind of rumors did you hear?

Schulze: Rumors that the Japs were going to take over the Yard and everything else. Guys that were on duty as watchmen would shoot at somebody if they'd see somebody and everything. There were all kinds of rumors out. "Don't drink the water because it is poisoned. But it wasn't.

Marcello: I guess probably it wasn't too safe to go outside and wander around that night.

Schulze: Not very safe!

Marcello: You mentioned that during the days following the attack, you actually went back and began salvaging things off the Downes.

Schulze: Yes, salvaging the ship.

Marcello: When you had a chance to look at Battleship Row and that area over there, describe for me what you saw and what your reactions were the first time you saw it.

Schulze: Well, we went down and helped the...I think the Helena and the Oglala were tied up down at Ten-Ten Dock, which was right behind the dry dock where we were. We went down there the next day, and they both had got a hit. We went down there and helped them move ammunition around so they could get the Helena away. Battleship Row was just a big mess, but you couldn't see what the hell was

burning because of the oil and everything. You didn't worry about that. You took care of everything (chuckle) in your own back yard. The Oglala was right behind us, and she capsized and got sunk. She was a minelayer. The Shaw got hit in Number One Dry Dock, and she lost half her bow.

Marcello: I've seen those pictures of the Shaw exploding, and it's still is a miracle to me how that thing ever made it back to the West Coast. I think they put a temporary bow on it.

Schulze: They made a temporary bow on there and made it watertight and then went back. This "Willie" White I was telling you about went over there on her and came back with her. Then she got hit again after they fixed her up. She got hit again, but I think in the meantime he got on another ship.

Marcello: What was your attitude toward the Japanese in the aftermath of the attack? What kind of feelings did you have?

Schulze: I sure as hell didn't love them, to tell you truth. I believed then and also now that we ought to kick them out of the damned country and keep them out. I don't see giving them all that money and everything. I don't see giving Iran all the damned money either. Roosevelt put them in those camps, you know, to protect them because the Japs were bragging that they were going to

do this and run everything on the West Coast, you know. And they didn't. They did actually hit the West Coast a couple of times, and Johnston Island was hit two or three times. So it didn't bother me a bit if they sent every one of them to the "Deep Six."

Marcello: After all your work was done relative to salvaging the Downes and so on, then where were you assigned?

Schulze: We stayed on there until about December 20, and then we went aboard the Mahan, the 364.

Marcello: Another destroyer?

Schulze: Yes. The Downes was a Mahan class ship. They were from the same class. Then I stayed on there practically the whole war, until June of 1944. We made practically all the landings in SOPAC [South Pacific]. They'd send out a squadron of "cans" to relieve us, and in the first operation we'd have, there'd be a couple of them sunk or hit. Then they'd leave us up there and send the new bunch to Australia or someplace to get a leave.

Marcello: What were some of the campaigns that the Mahan participated in? Just for the record, let's get some of those.

Schulze: The Marshall and Gilbert Islands were the first attacks on the Japs, I believe. We sunk a couple of ships down there in the Marshall and Gilberts. Then we went to Christmas Island. We operated off Christmas for quite a while and unloaded some ships. Then we went to New

Guinea and landed at Milne Bay and then Manus. We made the landing at Manus. Every Fourth of July or some damned holiday, we'd make a landing. I mean, we made them, too. That ol' MacArthur was a good general, but he left a lot to be desired in my estimation.

Marcello: So you were down there as a part of that fleet that was sometimes referred to as "MacArthur's Navy."

Schulze: Yes, the Seventh Fleet, I think it was, back in those days. We operated there for a month at a time, and sometimes we were under air attack every damned day and every damned night. But it didn't bother us too much because we were used to it. We'd escort LSTs up the coast to _____ or someplace like that. We were bypassing Rabaul because that was a big Jap stronghold down there.

Marcello: So, like you say, you hit just about everyone of those campaigns down in the southern Pacific.

Schulze: We hit most of them for a long time, and we finally got back in the States in 1944. We were out there all the time, except for the one time we got our bow knocked off. Twenty-nine feet of our bow was knocked off, and we went back to Pearl to have a new bow on it. They had one already made and had it sitting in dry dock. We pulled in there, and they just welded it on, and away we went again.

Marcello: And you mentioned that you left the Mahan in 1944.

Schulze: June of 1944. And the Mahan got sunk on December 7, 1944.

Marcello: What ship did you pick up after the Mahan?

Schulze: I went riding ships for ComDivPac in ordnance assistance. I rode so damned many "tin cans" I couldn't tell you what they were, because I'd ride them about two or three days and then get off on another one. I was helping them out and fix their guns and everything like that.

Marcello: And you mentioned that you made the Navy a career then.

Schulze: Yes.

Marcello: How long did you stay in altogether?

Schulze: I did twenty years.

Marcello: And what rank did you come out as?

Schulze: I had a JG (lieutenant junior grade). I took JG before the war was over, because I figured if I got killed it would help Mother and Dad a little bit. I fully didn't expect to get through the war. After the war was over, I gave it back to them and reverted back to chief because that's the best rate or rank in the Navy, see. Then when I retired, I automatically went up to the highest rank or rate held, which is JG again. It helps on your pay more than anything else.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Schulze, I think that's a pretty good place to end this interview. At long last, we were able to get together, and I certainly do appreciate you taking the

time to talk with me. Also, I appreciate you inviting me up here to do all the rest of these interviews that I've done here in Cape Girardeau. You've said a lot of interesting things, and I'm sure that historians are going to find them to be most valuable when they use them to study Pearl Harbor.