

Robert Schnaith Oral History Interview

April 12, 2014

Interviewed by Jerrod Howe

Howe: As with the last one, today is April 12th, Saturday. I'm here at Lake Barrington Woods and my name is Jerrod Howe. I'm from the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, and I'm here with Mr. Rob—you prefer to be called Bob—

Schnaith: Yeah.

Howe: Schnaith.

Schnaith: Right.

Howe: And we're here to do your Story of Service for Oral History, so...

Schnaith: Alright.

Howe: Thanks for...thanks for giving us your time today.

Schnaith: Is that on now?

Howe: We are, yeah. We're set to go.

Schnaith: Okay.

Howe: So, We're gonna start at the beginning—your beginning.

Schnaith: Alright.

Howe: When and where were you born?

Schnaith: I was born in Minnesota. Saint Paul, Minnesota. And I went to college in Minneapolis, Minnesota. That's where I started out in my career.

Howe: Okay, what year were you born?

Schnaith: I was born in 1923.

Howe: What did—what did your parents do for a living?

Schnaith: My father was a plumber and my mother was just a housewife.

Howe: Okay. And so this was during the time of...what we know as the Great Depression.

Schnaith: Yeah, but we didn't get involved in that too much.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: We were in pretty good shape there because my father's father—my grandfather—owned the plumbing business, so that...[laughs] ... that helped.

Howe: Okay. You guys were insulated a little bit.

Schnaith: Yeah.

Howe: Nice. Did you have any siblings?

Schnaith: Like who, you mean?

Howe: Brothers and sisters.

Schnaith: I had one sister. No brothers.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: And she passed away early from cancer.

Howe: Sorry about that. Were you living close to any extended family at the time?

Schnaith: Well, I had some aunts and uncles and cousins—those kind of people.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: All in the Saint Paul area?

Howe: Anyone else in your family—when you were growing up, had anyone else served in the military?

Schnaith: My dad was in the military in World War I. He was in the Army, and he was over in France for some time. That's about all I can remember—

Howe: Alright.

Schnaith: for relatives.

Howe: How do you—what do you remember of him going overseas while you were growing up?

Schnaith: Well, at that time, I was so young I didn't pay any attention to that, you know. I mean, he's doing what he had—but you don't pass much of that on to little kids.

Howe: Fair enough.

Schnaith: [Chuckles].

Howe: Okay, what was school like? Where did you go to high school?

Schnaith: Was a school right in town; it was called Harding High School. Named after a President, I guess. Harding? And it was a pretty good school.

Howe: Okay. What were your particular interests?

Schnaith: Well, I liked pretty much everything in school in the way of—well, let's see...science, I guess you could call it. I particularly liked chemistry. And that's how I ended up being a chemical engineer. My chemistry teacher in high school talked me into going that way, and I went to the University of Minnesota, and became a chemical engineer.

Howe: And your time at the university, that was after you'd come back from service?

Schnaith: No.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: Before.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: The war started when I was in the second year of college.

Howe: Alright.

Schnaith: And by the—and 'course I had to register for the draft. And when the draft didn't make me very excited, I decided to try something else, and luckily the Navy came along to the university, and they said, "If any of you fellas wanna join the Navy, we will pay for you and take care of you." And that convinced me. I wasn't gonna wait for the draft, so...

Howe: Sure.

Schnaith: And we had about fifty or sixty guys that signed up for that. We were put in the Navy uniforms, and—but we were on campus, and they fed us and took care of us for the whole semester. Then, the second semester—that was my third year in college. The fourth year in college was right after that—they kept us there. And I graduated while being in the Navy as a...

Howe: Wow.

Schnaith: As a chemical engineer. And then...

Howe: What year did you graduate?

Schnaith: It was [chuckles]. Wow...23...probably about 19...let's see. '23 was when I was born. I was 20. So, what is 23 and 20? '43? Yeah. Somewhere in that ballpark. Okay? And—you want me to continue?

Howe: Please. Yeah.

Schnaith: Alright, the Navy, then, having had me graduate, they decided they wanted to get something out of me, so they sent me to officer's training school in New York. Ithaca, New York was the college there, and we—along with several other guys—were made to be officers there. And that took about 3 months or so. Now the war was going on at that time, of course, and 'course we didn't have anything to do with the actual war, but from the point of view of the Navy, they were training us for future use. And from—after I got to be an officer, then they sent me to North Carolina State University for diesel training. Now, they had somewhere in there this in their thoughts that I would be a diesel engineer somewhere in the Navy, and that's what happened. After four or five months there, the war ended, fortunately. I didn't have to see any of the real war, but when I graduated from diesel training, they sent me to New York to wait for further movement. Finally, they came along with the idea that the—not the idea, but...what they meant was: I would go to Saint—San Francisco... go out to the South Pacific in a ship that was, that—where I was assigned: PC-1175. And this is—PC stands for Patrol Craft. This was after the war, again, and what we did was take care of all the things that take—that need care after a war, you know. In the South Pacific, there were, oh, ten or twelve islands. My main island—where I was assigned—was Guam. Big island there. And a very popular island, but I got to Guam and they said my ship was not there. It was up at Iwo Jima, and so they—I got onto another ship that took me up there. Then I became the engineering officer for the ship. Now, the ship is about 60 sailors, and about 6 or 7 engineer—6 or 7...not engineers, but officers.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: That's what I'm try'n to think of. So, that—then left us there with the observation that we were to check on all the 12 islands between Hawaii and the Philippines; all those little islands in there. And we were to... When the Japanese were there, they crucified those islands. They really tore them up. And it was our job to try and get 'em straightened out again. So we spent about a year and a half just going back and forth among the islands there, and taking any problems that arose into our hands, and we fixed up the islands to the point where the people that lived there could enjoy 'em again. And that was our job in that regard, for about a year and a half.

Howe: What kind of things were you and your crew responsible for, in regards to, you say, "fixing up the islands"?

Schnaith: Well, we did several things. We provided transportation for any Navy people that were there, going back and forth, and we provided help to any of the people that lived there; as to machinery needs or grocery needs. That kind of things. We helped them get that. Now, we didn't supply 'em, but we helped them get those kind of things as needed. And in general, we just took care of people that needed care taking. And that was part of our job. The Navy took that assignment on for the benefit of the people that lived there.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: That took us about a year and a half, and then, following that, our ship was assigned to come back to the United States, and we made that trip all the way back with just our little ship there—well, it was a medium ship, anyway—and came into a port in Oregon. And I can't remember the name of the report, but they told us when we landed that everybody on the ship was going to be discharged from the Navy. And that sounded good to everybody, and so from there, everybody went home. And I went home and back to Minnesota again. And the thing they didn't tell me, though, that I was still in the Navy as an officer; I was on recall if necessary. And so, I was inactive at that point.

Howe: Right.

Schnaith: And they told me about 2 years later, I finally got off the inactive list. I was not recalled. And that was good, but then they discharged me completely at that point. At that time I...when I went home...what was I gonna do? I had a degree in college. I had an engineering degree down in North Carolina, but I didn't have a job. So, I went back to school again at

the University of Minnesota, and I took some post-graduate courses there. And while I was there, I interviewed a number of companies that were looking for engineers. And I finally found one that I liked very well. There was an oil refinery. Amoco Oil Company; at the time, it was called American Oil Company. And it sounded very good. The salary was good and everything, so... The only bad thing was it wasn't in Minnesota. It was down in Indiana. So, I decided, "Well, I'll go down there." And I did. I didn't have a car. So, I took a suitcase full of clothes, and went on a train down there, and became a part of the group that worked for the company. How did I manage that? Well, the company had a, kind of a place where single people could live and eat. And it was kind of a boarding house, you might say. So I lived there for a while. And in time, I got a car, and became acquainted with my, now, wife. And we met, unbelievably, on a blind date, which was arranged by her cousin who was dating a friend of mine in the company. They arranged a meeting for us to have a blind date, and—with them—and the four of us went out to a big place in Chicago; a big activity where they had music, dancing, entertainment and everything. And that went on for the whole evening. Then, somebody, about midnight, said, "We don't wanna go home. Let's go down to downtown Chicago and have breakfast." So, we did that. So, eventually we got back to Indiana, about 5 o'clock in the morning. This was our first date. [Chuckles]. So, I'm sure her folks were wondering, but they knew we were in safe hands since our—since her cousin was with us, so... And at that point, I decided I would call her to get more dates. And I did for about 3 weeks in a row. She was always busy. And finally, she said, "Well, I'm not busy on Friday. Saturday, I'm busy, but..." So we started to date at that point. That continued on for a couple years, and then we got married. Ended up with five kids, and here we are. We got old. I'm 91, almost. I'll be 91 next month, and it's been a long life.

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: But in most regards, a good life. So that's my story. What else...what else do you need to know?

Howe: Well, that's a short story. [Laughs]. That's a lot of years. That's a lot of...

Schnaith: Yeah.

Howe: Lot of experiences.

Schnaith: Yeah. And it was interesting, in my regard, because it was the kind of things I like to do. I was an engineer, and that's the kind of work that I wanted to do all my life

Howe: Okay. Can you describe what it was like for you to live and work on board a ship?

Schnaith: That was interesting because I'd never been on ships much in my life, in my early life. And we had, as everybody knows, when you're on a ship, and you live there, that's your home. You live there. You sleep there. You eat there. You work there. I mean, it's a place that you have to call home. And, unfortunately, you only have a little place that you can live by yourself. And in our case, we had six—seventy people there on that ship. And everybody had a bunk and, you know, a place to stay, and that made it a little...well, let's say, quartered, [chuckles] you might say. We were—we didn't have much room to move around. And we had work to do, of course. And being the engineering officer, I had a pretty good crew. They'd been in there for a couple years on the ship, and I was pretty new, and so that worked out well, for me. But living on a ship is something very different than living at home. And every now and then, we would, of course, stop traveling, and then go into one of the islands and have a cook out or a, you know, a couple of beers or something like that. And that was all part of the game that we were playing at that time.

Howe: Sure. How long—on average, how long were you out to sea while you were stationed over there?

Schnaith: Year and a half.

Howe: You were out to sea the entire time?

Schnaith: Mm hm.

Howe: How often would you pull in?

Schnaith: Oh, we would move around the islands there every couple of days, and we'd pull in wherever they needed us. And then, for our own enjoyment, we'd pull in, oh, say, once a week, or once every couple of weeks, just for exercising the crew. You know, they can't just sit there all day, and all month, all week on the ship. They have to get off and get some ground under their feet, you might say. And some other things—other than looking down the pipeline.

Howe: Right.

Schnaith: And so, we... The ship had a number of—even though it was a patrol craft—it had a cannon on the front. And it had machine guns in the rear, and we also were able to do submarines—catching or service. We could sink submarines, but fortunately, at the—when we were out there, the Japanese had already gone through their submarines, so we didn't have to

do that. But we were capable of doing that, so our ship was well provided with machinery and mechanics that could do it. Fortunately, we didn't have—since the war was over—we didn't have to use any of that machinery against people, so...

Howe: Do you recall—not terribly specifically—but how soon after the war was over were you on station with that ship?

Schnaith: I think the war ended when I was in the Raleigh, North Carolina School. And about...oh, let's say, three months, four months later, I was recalled to New York, and then assigned to the ship in...I'd say about six months later.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: After the war was ended. So, by that time, they had cleaned up—like, Iwo Jima was a terrible place. And I was there, of course, after the battle and all that, but it was just ruined, that whole island. And the Japanese didn't take care of it. And they lived in caves there. And it was hard to believe that they could exist that way, but they fought very strongly against our crews that went in there; our Marines and people that were sent in there to try and take care of 'em. And they finally did. And, you might remember, people would remember maybe, the raising of the flag in Iwo Jima on the top of a small little mountain there, Mount Suribachi. And that was a very big thing in our country, to see that. It was a way of pr—of saying that we won the war, you know, against the Japanese. The Japanese were very tough. And, in fact, not very nice to the people in that area, in our view, you know. And so, that was part of our job: to try and help the people that needed help.

Howe: Okay. How did you feel that you were received by these people?

Schnaith: Oh, I think they—most of 'em liked what we were doing because it was helping them, you know. And many of them had been abused by the Japanese, and so anything that we could do was well regarded.

Howe: Sure.

Schnaith: Yes. And they had a number of natives there that kind of lived there on their own, but we also had Americans there, living in various places. [Coughs]. Excuse me. And so, it was a mixture of a lot of people.

Howe: Mm Hm.

Schnaith: And they needed a lot of help. That's what we were there for.

Howe: What were some of the various islands that you visited?

Schnaith: Oh, I got a list here.

Howe: There you go.

Schnaith: [Chuckles]. You want me to read 'em?

Howe: Sure.

Schnaith: Well, there's Hawaii. Guam is the basic island that we were assigned to. Then, we had Iwo Jima, where we met ...And Truk, Ulithi, Eniwetok, Chichi-jima, Peleliu, Bonin, the Philippines. All those islands were where we cruised back and forth to help where they needed it. So, that kept us busy.

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: [Chuckles]. And that was my career in the Navy.

Howe: Did your patrol craft ever encounter other naval forces?

Schnaith: No. The war was ended there and—

Howe: Sure.

Schnaith: And we were safely away from that kind of stuff, you know. We—there were no Japanese up in the ocean anymore, at that point.

Howe: Did you encounter any friendly forces? On the seas?

Schnaith: Friendly what?

Howe: Other navies?

Schnaith: Other navies?

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: Not much. No. I don't think there was much in the way of other countries in that area. There may have been a couple of times we saw people from other—people from other...[coughs]...countries that were in the service, but I don't remember that much. It was very rare. [Throat clearing]. Excuse me.

Howe: There's a water here if you need it.

Schnaith: Yeah, that might taste good.

Howe: So...

Schnaith: There's no booze in here?

Howe: It's a sealed top.

Schnaith: [Chuckles].

Howe: So, no. I was not able to spike it.

Schnaith: [Chuckles]. Okay.

WIFE: Can't win 'em all. [Chuckles].

Schnaith: Want some?

WIFE: No thanks, I'm—

Schnaith: It's a fresh bottle.

WIFE: That's okay.

Schnaith: No lipstick on it yet.

WIFE: That's alright. [Chuckles].

Howe: What were some of the things that you were responsible for on the ship? You were, you're a trained diesel officer...

Schnaith: Yeah.

Howe: But as you said, the ship's only got so many people on it, and there's a lot of work to do, so...

Schnaith: Yeah, well, I had a crew assigned to me as an engineering officer. I had a group about 8 or 10 people that were good at it. You know, they were people—men that knew what engines and so forth were all about, and they—most of them had been on that ship for a while before I got there. I relieved the previous officer that went home, you know. He had been on there a while. And that ship was over there in—I don't know how long—several years, I guess. And so, the crew was, well...good; they were well assigned to the jobs, and in general, we were well performed. And, of course, we had a couple of guys that were in the kitchen, cooking and

everything like that, and some of the guys used to go fishing on the ocean, and so we had a good time in that regard. But most of the time, there was work to do, you know.

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: And many times that we'd go into shore, we had things that we had to do there...for people on shore, you know. And that was one of our objectives: to make people that needed help, we gave 'em help.

Howe: Sure. As an officer on board, did you have any other collateral duties, besides managing the engineering department?

Schnaith: Well, we had about—I'd say, six, seven officers—and we would have group meetings every now and then. The Captain would call a meeting and discuss different things. And we had that kind of thing pretty regularly, and we got to know each other. In fact, the Captain and one of the lieutenants became good friends of mine, and they lived in the states, and we visited each other after we got out of the Navy. And they lived in Cal—in the southern part of the state—southern part of the country. I lived in northern parts, so... But we did visit some, off and on. And the Captain on our ship ended up being a medical man, a doctor in the...oh, what's the name of that? Oh boy. I was there once myself. Had a heart surgery. Where was I?

Howe: At a naval hospital?

Schnaith: No. It was a commu—a community thing. Okay, they had...God. [to his wife] You were there.

WIFE: Yeah. [Chuckles].

Schnaith: But I can't think...oh, what's the name of that—?

WIFE: I can't think of it either.

Schnaith: Oh boy...maybe I got it written here somewhere.

Howe: That's alright.

Schnaith: [Chuckles]. Well, it's on the tip of my tongue, but I can't think about it.

Howe: That's alright.

Schnaith: [Chuckles].

Howe: How do you feel you got along with the other officers on board?

Schnaith: We didn't have any trouble. In fact, as I said, two or three of them ended up being good friends of mine after we got out of the service.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: And, couple of 'em we never heard from again, but, you know, that's typical. There—people from all over the country, you know.

Howe: Right.

Schnaith: Everybody went home and didn't take much time to continue our relationship.

Howe: The Captain—you said that when the ship made port in Oregon, the Navy said everyone's free to go home. Did he also go home?

Schnaith: Yeah. The whole ship was put on inactive duty.

Howe: That's interesting.

Schnaith: Yeah, I never heard of that before, but...

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: We heard—after that, we heard that the ship was sold to some small company over—some small country overseas.

Howe: That's right.

Schnaith: Yeah, and they...

Howe: Scrap metal.

Schnaith: Yeah, we didn't follow up on any of that, but ...

Howe: Do you recall the ship's name? The hull number was 1175.

Schnaith: Name?

Howe: Does... Vandalia? Does that sound right?

Schnaith: You know, I don't remember a name that was associated with.

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: Maybe, but it wasn't used very frequently, as I recall.

Howe: Okay. Sure.

Schnaith: And I don't know where it was produced in this country, but it's a long time ago; can't remember everything. [Chuckles].

Howe: Yeah, I was looking through your questionnaire and your history, and it...I was lining up the dates from the ship. So, the ship's history says it was decommissioned in August of 1946 and, you know, your service continues until '49, but that's because you were...

Schnaith: Yeah, inactive.

Howe: On the inactive reserve.

Schnaith: Yeah.

Howe: Okay. So...

Schnaith: And I was never recalled, so—for anything—so that was good, in my view, but I didn't want to go back if I didn't have to, you know. I had a regular job, and...

Howe: Certainly.

Schnaith: wanted to stay there. And—but it was an interesting experience. I'm glad I joined the Navy because I didn't want to get drafted into the Army or something like that, so...worked out well. And the Navy was very good about... I don't know who decided that they would take a bunch of guys like us in college, and continue to pay for our education and feed us, you know, everything. It was great. My last two years in college didn't cost me anything.

Howe: Wow.

Schnaith: Nowadays it'd costs a lot.

WIFE: [Chuckles]. Yeah.

Howe: Did they tell you what your service obligation was? They were paying for two years, so you owe them, how many years?

Schnaith: No, we never discussed that as such.

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: Because the war was still on and, you know, they aren't gonna commit themselves to saying, "Oh, you can get out in two years."

Howe: Sure.

Schnaith: Or in one year. No. The war ended, and then they started to look at where people are gonna be, you know. But I didn't really get counseled in any regard that way—other than to be assigned to the ship in the South Pacific.

Howe: Sure.

Schnaith: And after that, I was discharged, so I didn't have to wonder what was the next project, you know?

Howe: Right. How do you feel your military career prepared you for your civilian job?

Schnaith: The military is very good in that respect—in some respects, not all respects, you know. There's some people that didn't like the military in any regard because, well, lot of 'em are drafted, and they didn't wanna be drafted, but since your country is in war, in most cases, people were ready to serve wherever they could, you know. And that, I think, was pretty general. And I don't know, we didn't talk about things like that very often, but—while we were in service—but I'm sure that there was some thinking on both sides of the question, by a lot of people, and that's the way life is. Nothing's perfect.

Howe: Right. Right. So you got out and you worked for Amoco, and then Standard Oil, and then BP.

Schnaith: Yeah, BP bought Amoco and bought our whole company, and they didn't discharge anybody, they just kept us working there as though we worked for Amoco.

Howe: Sure.

Schnaith: And BP was a good company. We enjoyed them. British Petroleum. But they had an unfortunate accident with the oil spill into the water, and that really set them back. The stock—which I had a number of stock shares—stock dropped from \$60 dollars a share down to \$40. So, it was pretty expensive in terms of my money.

Howe: Right.

Schnaith: It's come back some, but it's still not—only fifty, about \$50 dollars a share, still not back to where it used to be. Lot of people were taking advantage of that oil spill in the Gulf there. People that said, “Oh we had a lot of damages from that oil spill.” Some of ‘em did, but I think a lot of them faked it, you know? They got away with it because what was the company going to do? Tell ‘em to go screw themselves? You know?

Howe: Right.

Schnaith: No. They couldn't do that, so they had to pay them off, and it took a lot of the profits away from the company.

Howe: Hm.

Schnaith: But I think they're doing well now.

Howe: Yeah. Were you able to travel at all, due to the nature of your work?

Schnaith: No, I didn't travel much. I went to – oh, every now and then they'd have a meeting of ...different companies in certain areas and ...it would be generally a two-three day meeting. Nothing real exciting or anything, but, uh...It was a way of communicating between companies and people that are doing the same kind of work you're doing and so forth, yeah. That was done every now and then.

Howe: Gotcha. And during this time, was there ever any thought that you might want to affiliate or join the reserves?

Schnaith: The navy reserves?

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: No. I figured that when I was discharged, finally, that was enough for me. And it was because we didn't have any dangerous times after that for quite a long time. [Coughs]. Excuse me. I didn't want to have the Navy as a perpetual job for the rest of my life. No.

Howe: Gotcha. And any of your children, have they served?

Schnaith: No. We had four boys, and then a girl, but they didn't; they avoided all of that, and didn't join the service for any reason. And so, they just didn't get into it.

Howe: Got it. Are there any veteran service organizations that you're involved with—any other groups like the VFW?

Schnaith: Yeah, I get letters and requests from a number of places. The VFW is one. I spend a good amount of money with the Paralyzed Veterans Association. I felt sorry those guys because they are nice guys. They went overseas, they were shot or in some way paralyzed. They come back and live the rest of their life with paralysis, you know? That's a terrible thing, so I was generous enough to give them some money now and then, and some of the other organizations, too. Nothing much you can do, except give 'em money, you know.

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: But that still goes on, and many of the VFW letters I get say that the VFW's in trouble. They don't have enough money and so forth, you know. The government is not taking care of our veterans like they should.

Howe: Hm.

Schnaith: I believe, and I read in the paper that many of the veteran people have been reduced in what they're getting from the government.

Howe: Hm.

Schnaith: And that's not a good sign. And, if you wanna talk about government... I think that's not part of this thing here, but... [Laughs].

Howe: Well, we're here to talk about anything you want to talk about.

Schnaith: I don't like the way the government is acting now. And there are so many things that are going on now that inquire about service people. Like, what's going on with all these other countries that are creating problems. And whether our countr—our president is able to contain that kind of stuff, is in question. And I don't think he's doing a great job in that regard, but it's hard to predict what things might happen, so...

Howe: Hm.

Schnaith: Can't condemn people before it happens, I guess.

Howe: True. It's very true. I was curious, is there anything that you thought I would ask, or anything that you would like to add?

Schnaith: Well, I think we've covered pretty much everything that I would think would be useful in your organization. I'm sure if you had some specific questions, you'd have 'em out by now.

Howe: Certainly, yeah.
[Knock at the door.] [Door opens.]

Howe: Certainly covered quite a bit.

Schnaith: Yeah.

Howe: What I wanted to say was, I do feel like we covered quite a bit of territory and on behalf of the library—Pritzker Military Museum & Library—and myself, I wanted to thank you for your service and for your time today.

Schnaith: I'd like to ask you about the...where you work. The—what do you call it? The—what do you call your company?

Howe: The Pritzker Military Museum & Library.

Schnaith: Yeah. Museum and Library. Okay.

Howe: Mm. Hm.

Schnaith: I never been there, so I don't know what it's all about, but...

Howe: Okay.

Schnaith: They have information like this from a lot of different people? And then, people come, and people that are interested that weren't in the service, they come and look at some of that stuff?

Howe: So the, the Pritzker family, as best as I am able to explain—

Schnaith: Oh, that's a family. Okay. I didn't know that.

Howe: They—they're a pretty influential family in Chicago.

Schnaith: Uh huh.

Howe: Um... Colonel Pritzker is one of the family members, and has donated artifacts from the colonel's own library, and from that, they've been able to build up to, I believe, now more than 70,000 books and artifacts.

WIFE: Oh my goodness. Yeah.

Schnaith: Now, when was this started?

WIFE: Oh. Wow.

Howe: I think it was within the last 6 years.

Schnaith: Just 6 years.

WIFE: Gosh. Wow.

Howe: Yeah, so it's relatively new.

WIFE: That's great.

Howe: I mean, if someone goes back on the record, and wants to correct me...I think the most, it may be ten years old, at the very most.

Schnaith: The reason I ask, up to now, I've never heard of it really. And of course, we didn't live around here, so we didn't know much about it. And—but that's a noble thing to have somebody do. And it takes a lot of money, I know, to—

WIFE: Oh, yeah.

Schnaith: To get a group like that together.

Howe: Well, as I understand it, your community is going to be coming to Chicago next week. They're going to be taking a trip down there. Are you going to join them in that?

Schnaith: Well, I'd like to, but I have a problem that I can't—my legs are bad now and I can't get around very easily, and at this point kind of thinking I'm not gonna make the trip.

Howe: Understood.

Schnaith: And the other reason is my little wife here, she would get lonely.

Howe: [laughs].

Schnaith: [Laughs].

WIFE: [Chuckles]. Yeah, I would.

Howe: I'm sure she could come along as well.

Schnaith: You know, we've lived here over two years, and we have been together every day of that two years. We don't try to go off on different channels.

WIFE: [Chuckles].

Howe: Sure. I'm sure she could come if she'd be so inclined.

Schnaith: Oh.

WIFE: Oh yeah.

Schnaith: Well, yeah, but, our problem is transportation.

Howe: Sure.

Schnaith: And we, yeah, they have some buses here, but they're very small, and they don't carry very many people. I don't know. We'll think about it.

Howe: Sure.

Schnaith: Right now, it doesn't look like—

Howe: Well, if I have to, I'll come over there and twist your arm next.

WIFE: [Laughs].

Howe: But no, the Pritzker family has been very supportive, and Colonel Pritzker is very supportive of veterans. Part of the reason—

Schnaith: This is the thing that I don't like, a lot of people aren't.

Howe: Well...

Schnaith: And that's why the veterans' organizations are suffering. Well, they're looking for more money because people aren't giving them what they think they could—what they should.

Howe: Right.

WIFE: Yeah.

Schnaith: And it's partly my fault, too. I give 'em some money, but I'm not gonna give 'em all my money.

Howe: Right.

Schnaith: That's certainly true.

Howe: Well, so one of the things about being a veteran, I hear things change over time. And perspectives change. So, the reason that I'm able to work at the Pritzker Library is because of a not-for-profit organization called The Mission Continues.

Schnaith: Yeah, now you're in the Navy.

Howe: I'm out of the Navy.

Schnaith: Or you were in the Navy.

Howe: Right. I served.

Schnaith: You were in service during the war, or no?

Howe: I served from '99 until 2008. And so, I was deployed...twice.

Schnaith: Oh, that's longer than I did.

WIFE: Oh.

Howe: I was deployed twice, in 2004 and 2006. And then I served in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for about a year. So, when we come back home, veterans today are, for a lot of different reasons, still interested in that service, still interested in giving back to community.

Schnaith: Well, hey, when you look at it from our point of view, that was part of our life.

WIFE: Right.

Schnaith: And it's something that we want to preserve as much as possible, and help other people—

Howe: Absolutely.

Schnaith: that need help.

Howe: Well, and I think that one of the great things about what Pritzker—the Pritzker Military Museum & Library and The Mission Continues—is doing, is that they're giving veterans an opportunity to do exactly that. We're helping to preserve stories, but we're also working in the community and working with other veterans ...

Schnaith: Oh. You do that? I didn't know that.

Howe: We do that as well, yeah.

WIFE: That's great.

Howe: The library.

Schnaith: Veterans that need help.

Howe: All sorts of different things.

Schnaith: Anything?

Howe: Yeah. The library has a Veteran's Information Center.

Schnaith: Oh, okay.

Howe: With, I believe the number is up to twenty thousand—if not more—different sorts of references and aids.

Schnaith: Books to read, and stuff like that?

Howe: Help with veteran's benefits, counseling services. One of the big things that we try and help with is the employment service.

Schnaith: Oh, yeah. Okay.

Howe: So we...

Schnaith: That could be important for some people.

Howe: Yeah, I think it's one of the biggest challenges, particularly in this economy.

WIFE: Oh, my gosh.

Howe: That's hail.

Schnaith: What in the hell are they doin'?

Howe: That's hail.

Schnaith: You think that's hail?

WIFE: Wow.

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: Boy, a big hail, making noise like that.

WIFE: Wow.

Howe: That's pretty loud. One of the biggest challenges facing veterans coming home is jobs, because of the economy.

WIFE: Yeah.

Schnaith: Yeah.

Howe: So that's another thing that the library is doing. And what Mission Continues does is: by putting veterans into service in their community, they're hoping that it gives them an opportunity to get that energy again, and find connections. It's not a guaranteed job, but at least it's a start. So, you know, we have to continue.

Schnaith: Yeah.

WIFE: Yeah.

Schnaith: Well, that's good.

Howe: That's my pitch. I just wanted to share that with you as well.

Schnaith: Well, it's good to have people like you who do that kind of work. A lot of people wouldn't wanna do.

Howe: Well, I consider myself very lucky to have the opportunity, but I also feel like this is one of the best benefits of my job, is being able to come and get these stories.

Schnaith: Yeah, and the bad thing about being here is that we're all older people, and many of us don't have the same views of life any more, like you guys do.

Howe: Well, I'm sure that I will have plenty of time to become stubborn in my day. That's what I have to look forward to.

Schnaith: That's what everybody says when they're young.

Howe: Fair enough. Well, sir. I appreciate you.

Schnaith: Okay.

Howe: I appreciate your time. Let me get your assistant here...

Schnaith: Oh. I gotta tell you.

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: I wrote this.

Howe: Now, is this read at Memorial Day?

Schnaith: Yeah. By our local people, yeah, but I, you know, I like to write things, and I just thought things like this is a...kind of nice to have.

Howe: Well, you wanna read it for us?

Schnaith: You didn't read it?

Howe: Well, we're still on record. I'll let you read it.

Schnaith: Oh, okay. Veteran's day. Veteran's day is a day of reflection. To remember our veterans who defended this nation. So, now is a time to pray for those above, who by their efforts, saved this land that we love. Amen. It was a prayer I wrote, in that regard.

Howe: That's—

Schnaith: And I write a lot of things of that type. I don't have any other examples, but...oh. I wanted to show you, too.

Schnaith: This is a Navy shirt that I brought home.

WIFE: [Laughs].

Schnaith: Way back.

Howe: Was this...

Schnaith: A work shirt. A work shirt.

Howe: You wore that on the ship?

Schnaith: Yeah. For working, you know. You don't wanna wear your uniform.

Howe: Wow.

WIFE: [Laughs].

Schnaith: It's the only one I have, but...and I like to wear these kind of things, too.

Howe: Yeah.

Schnaith: I'm big on...oh what's the word....

Howe: Patriotism?

Schnaith: Yeah, that's a good word.

WIFE: [Laughs].

Howe: Well, I give you my respect.

Schnaith: Okay. I think you've given us enough time here, so we'll get out of the way. You've got two guys waiting out there.

Howe: I'm going to turn this off.