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Summer 2009

Interview of Robert Schaefer

Robert Schaefer
La Salle University

Nobu McPherson
La Salle University

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Recommended Citation

Schaefer, Robert and McPherson, Nobu, "Interview of Robert Schaefer" (2009). *All Oral Histories*. 105.
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FIELD NOTES

Interviewee: Robert Schaefer
Interviewer: Nobu McPherson
Interview Date: July 3 & 31, 2009
Interview Location: La Salle University, Admission Office Conference Room, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Interview:

Robert Schaefer was born on September 17, 1932

The Interviewer:

I, Nobu McPherson (b. 1960) was born in a military hospital on Andrews Air Base outside of Washington, D. C., grew up in several very different environments ranging from a modestly upscale apartment building on the out skirt of famed Georgetown in D.C., rural upstate Pennsylvania, to a low-income inner-city housing project to suburbia. I served six year in the U.S. Army stationed in Missouri, Indiana, Texas, Georgia and Germany.

I earned a B.A. in History with honors from La Salle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 2007. I am currently a La Salle University Admission Counselor responsible for recruitment in the Philadelphia area public schools, the Pennsylvania region from Reading to Pittsburgh, as well as the multicultural liaison/recruiter. I am currently a graduate student at La Salle University seeking a degree in American History with a focus on African-American history in Philadelphia.

My mother is from Japan (from Kyushu island), and met my father an African-American from Cambridge, Maryland (a career soldier) while he was stationed in Japan during the Korean Conflict. My father is deceased, but my mother is currently enjoying retirement in Yardley, Pennsylvania a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Background:

I became interested in history at a very young age. As a child, I spent many days exploring the 1960 World Excepldia searching for statues or bust of ancient Greek or Roman gods. This interest in hindsight was probably due to the many Saturday matinee during that time that often aired such films such as "Jason and the Arocnots, Hercules, Samson and Delilah, and Spartacus" to name a few.

In time, other areas began to catch my eye, and before long my searches became broader, and I began to read anything that caught my attention. After years of chasing false dreams based on my sibling's success, as an older adult I made the decision to chase my own dream – that of a historian. This particular project of course was an assignment during my graduate studies. The choice of interviewing an individual who experienced the Korean Conflict was due to the obvious connection between my parents.

It was also chosen because of my curiosity in regards to why many Asian women chose to marry American Servicemen during a time great racial tension in America on top of the fact the American had just faced Asian adversaries in two wars that cost the lives of so many on both sides. Although interviewing Mr. Schaefer could not uncover or explain their perspective, it did provide me with a better understanding of the attitudes of a few soldiers towards their Asian allies at the time.

I

Description of the Interview:

On the morning of July 3, 2009, it only took me roughly fifteen minute to get to my office in the Admission Office, arriving around 9:30am. Mr. Schaefer was not far behind, and I saw his arrival from the Administrative building's balcony. After introducing ourselves, we process to the Admission's conference room. I thought the location would put Mr. Schaefer more at ease, considering his long history with the school. By the end of the interview, this decision proved to be a correct one because I could clearly see Mr. Schaefer's ease in which he shared such vivid memories of his experience was quite extraordinary. For example, when asked about his fellow Explorers that served during this time he rattled on each of their name without hesitation or doubt, a feat that I would be hard press to duplicate even if I were asked the same. I also noticed that Mr. Schaefer's answers became longer, and longer as time went on indicating his interest in tell his story. I felt we both felt at ease with one another, and as a result the quite enjoyable.

Follow-up:

A second interview was necessary because I failed to complete three areas outlined in the syllabus, the first was the duration of the interview. Instead of 2 hours, it was only 1.21 hours, therefore of course an additional 40 minutes was needed to complete the assignment. The second was the failure to have Mr. Schaefer complete the required legal forms in order to have the transcript and recording submitted to La Salle University's archive. Finally, I also failed to address Mr. Schaefer's life after his military service, and his life once he returned

to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and civilian life. To correct these oversights, I arranged for a second interview to that took place at the same location and time on July 24, 2009 to complete my assignment.

Note on recording:

For recording, I used my Olympus VN-5200PC. I did not use an additional microphone. After the interview was completed, I experienced difficulties burning the audio data to a CD. At the end, I had to seek the assistance from the La Salle University AV Department to complete the burn. Apparently, the CD I was attempting to burn it onto was full – it also contained the recording of my early practice interview. The AV specialist on duty burned the data on a new CD with allowed me to continue my efforts to transcribe the interview. However, once I had the interview on my CD, I again encountered difficulties transfer the audio data to NCH Express Scribe in order use the software to slow the playback for transcription. This new situation resulted in seeking help from my professor, Dr. Barbara Allen during class for assistance. In addition, during the second interview, I failed to complete turning the recorder on, and as a result the first fifteen minutes of the interview was not recorded. During this time we discussed how Mr. Schaefer met his wife, and is early years after serving in Korea. However, we were able to make-up the time with other question about life after Korea.

Editing the Transcript:

- Visually proof-read the document
- Made follow-up phone calls to Mr. Schaefer to verify spelling and content of the material when possible
- Compared La Salle University's Brother information to the "The Campus History Series" to verify spelling and dates for accuracy.