

Fort Hunt Oral History
P.O. Box 1142
Interview with Arnold Kohn
by Brandon Bies and Vincent Santucci
February 13, 2008

BRANDON BIES: Today is February 13, 2008. This is an oral history interview as part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project with the National Park Service. We are here at the home of Mr. Arnold Kohn in Pacific Grove, California. Again, this is National Park Service, so this is Brandon Bies as well as Parkway Chief Ranger Vincent Santucci, and we're also joined by Colonel Steven Kleinman. With that, Mr. Kohn, would you mind just starting off with your basic information, such as when and where you were born?

ARNOLD KOHN: I was born in Boston, Massachusetts. I think I kept the same accent, for some reason. My father was a physician and was director of [01:00] laboratories for the city of Boston. When war started, he lost his position because they were making shots for the military, and since he was born in Germany, there was pressure on him to resign. He then, as I recall, took a medical mission on the JDC to Poland, to help rebuild hospitals and health facilities, and we joined him there. My mother and my brother joined him there a year or so later. So we stayed [02:00] in Poland and Germany for a couple of years. Later, my father went back to Europe, was successful in some of his work in France, and asked us to come back, sent us first-class tickets. Unfortunately, by the time we got to Paris, he was no longer successful, so we had a villa for about a year, and there was a car someplace, but there was no money for the chauffeur, the gardener, or anybody else, so he kind of roughed it. Then from there I think we went to Germany for a year, and I went back [03:00] to kindergarten. I had gone through kindergarten or first grade in Paris. As a matter of fact, I'd been in kindergarten in Poland, Germany, France, and England [laughs]. We came back to the United States in 1927, and I joined the Army after Pearl Harbor [03:31], immediately went down to the recruiting office, but they said

they were closed because it was Sunday and I should come back on Monday. I did, and a week or so later I was inducted to the Army, went down to Fort Bragg [03:55] as a cannoneer and truck driver [04:00].

BB: I apologize for interrupting, but just a couple of quick questions before that. First, I'm not sure if you already said, what year were you born in?

AK: 1917.

BB: Okay. And growing up, this experience spending time overseas as well as the United States, what languages did you speak at this time?

AK: I spoke kindergarten German, kindergarten French, and British. So that when I finally came back to the United States, people made fun of my accent, English accent. I actually had to almost relearn English. But I have retained -- as an asset, I have retained [05:00] a basic German sense of vowels as well as the French, so my accent, even though my vocabulary is very poor, my accent was pretty good. In Germany I could pass for, say, a Saxon or somebody coming from another place and the same in France.

BB: In the years prior to Pearl Harbor [05:32], were you in college at this time? Were you in college?

AK: Yes, I went to college at night. I graduated, of course, from the regular school system. I started, I think, in the fourth grade and missed all the basic elementary-school [06:00] training, which has been a handicap, but I graduated from high school. But then I decided to work and got a job at the Book of the Month Club, and went to college at night. Unless they paid overtime, then I skipped school.

VS: What were you studying?

AK: Civil engineering. I was going to major in architecture, but I never finished.

BB: So I interrupted earlier. You mentioned Pearl Harbor [06:42] came. Could you give your own impressions or recollections of Pearl Harbor [06:49] and whether or not America's entry into the war came as a surprise to you or not?

AK: I was working overtime, I believe, at the Book of the [07:00] Month Club, when we heard on the radio, and another fellow there and I decided to enlist immediately. Of course, the war in Europe had been going on, and I didn't realize that my mother put a stop to my being drafted. She called and said that she couldn't get along without us, so I got a deferment there. But I fooled her and went down to the recruiting office, as I said, the following Monday, and I think on the 16th of December I was inducted into the service.

BB: At that point you went to basic training?

AK: Basic training at Fort Bragg [08:00].

BB: That was in artillery?

AK: Artillery. After finishing basic training, I was at prep school of some sort that they had at Fort Bragg [08:13]. I went to Fort Sill [08:16], Oklahoma, got a commission, was assigned to 4th Armored Division [08:26] up in New York again, Pine Camp [08:33], I think it was called, and there, while I was at a staff meeting, the colonel there announced that they were calling for volunteers to go overseas immediately to England. So I jumped up, knocked over a Coke bottle, picked [09:00] it up, flustered, and volunteered.

[laughter]

BB: So, briefly, you said you were commissioned an officer at Fort Sill [09:10].

AK: Fort Sill [9:11].

BB: So you attended OCS [Officer Candidate School] [09:14]?

AK: OCS [09:14], yes.

BB: Was that just something that you applied for? Presumably, you were an enlisted man when you were in your initial basic training.

AK: Yes. As I said, I worked my way up to major and back down to staff sergeant, to master sergeant.

BB: So during your process of being commissioned, did you receive any -- up until this point when you were with the 4th Armored, did you receive any what you would qualify as intelligence training?

AK: No, none at all, but [10:00] when I got to England, unfortunately, I got in trouble again. We got there, I think, on a Saturday morning after a long trip by convoy, to Ireland, to Scotland, and down to the Midlands. I suggested to some of my friends that we visit London, and we signed out. It didn't occur to us to ask for a pass or anything. It was the weekend, so we thought that we had it free. We spent the weekend in London because I had been there before as a child. But when we got back, I found we had missed a levy [11:00] to go back to Ireland as a field auxiliary forward observer, and because the three or four of us were gone, none of us went. Then about a week later, they gave me garrison duty officer of the day, guard officer and all that kind of stuff, and spent a couple of days there in the Midlands, visiting around. The colonel came one day to headquarters, asked for officers who could speak foreign language, and quite a few spoke Italian, three quarters; there were some who spoke German, and maybe one or two spoke French, but I was the only one who professed to speak French and [12:00] German, which I did. I'd studied it in school, four years each, I guess. So he told me to get ready, and my friends in the barracks where we were, threw my stuff into a big sleeping bag and rolled it up,

and five minutes later I was on the way to Cheltenham, the headquarters. I got there. I didn't have anything but verbal orders, and stayed at this place where I was billeted. I think it was a girls' school, had been a girls' school. Somebody came and woke me up at 2:30, 3:00 in the morning, said there was a colonel from London [13:00] to see me. I remember his name because I met him again later, Colonel Coleman [13:08], who said he was the provost marshal in London and I was -- he was going to give me some instructions. He had me carry some chairs to the middle of this large ballroom, a great big place, but we had to sit in the middle, and he insisted on whispering. As soon as he started to talk, I grabbed for my pad and pen, as every officer should, and he said, "Don't write anything down." He said, "I want you to get the men, you'll be sent them, [14:00] starting tomorrow, and go to Liverpool and get on the S1. Don't ask any questions." And he took off. The next day -- it was Colonel Spence [14:20] was the officer from this headquarters who had picked me up.

STEVEN KLEINMAN: Was he American or British?

AK: American. These were all Americans. I started to get some men. I found out that some of them were linguists; one or two had to do with photography; a few of them -- there was one sergeant and a few of the others were typists, so I had a vague idea what it was about. The linguists were [15:00] French, German, and Italian. These fellows came, were told the night before to report, and they came without weapons, without -- some without clothing. One young fellow came from London. He was a tall fellow with a long neck, unfortunately, and all he had was a British helmet, so he really stood out. He was taller than most, with this little pan on top of his head. So I spent that day trying to round up gas masks, ammunition, guns, and so on. Then a day later, I received orders -- I might

still have them -- ordering me [16:00] to Liverpool. Unfortunately, no one told me what an S1 was, so when I got there, I asked around and apparently it was very secret, because for an hour I had no idea what I was supposed to do next. But then some Britisher felt sorry for me, I guess, a dumb second lieutenant and a bunch of hungry men, and they pointed out into the bay, I guess it was, or harbor, and said, "That's the S1." It was a ship. He told me that afternoon it was going to dock, so we loaded onto the ship. Since I had the men who had come [17:00], almost all of them were sergeants, specialists and so on, so they gave us some -- gave all the men quarters, cabins, but then the troops came on board under the command of the colonel. I used to remember his name; I've forgotten, and he ordered all my men out because we were noncombatants. Well, he knew more than I did. I had no idea what my unit was. No one had told me, and the orders didn't say anything. So I fussed with him, and later on I went back and complained, and he threatened to put me in the brig if I [18:00] didn't get out of his office. But I was taking care of my men, as every officer should. Well, we made the convoy. We were gathered up into a convoy, and first the military unit was Combat Command B [18:29] of the Center Task Force, and we went up to Scotland first and had a mock landing on one of the fjords. The idea was to act as if we were going to Norway. If you remember, I think in London they had the officers going around getting cold-weather gloves [19:00] and parkas, and they were told to obviously shop. Then we went up, I think, past Iceland, into the South Atlantic, I think made an approach to Dakar, and then finally at night we went through the Straits of Gibraltar, followed the Spanish coast, as I recall, feigning a landing in southern France, and then that night we went and I guess the group that went to Morocco had peeled off; another section had peeled off to go to Algiers, and we went

as the [20:00] -- we landed in the Bay of Mostaganem. The colonel had told me -- the only thing he had said specifically is, "Meet me at the railroad station in Saint Lou -- at Saint Lou." I asked him where that was, and he said he couldn't tell me. So we loaded up. I still had my field glasses, so I could see the beach, and I made a command decision to make the landing barefoot. So on the boat, had the men take off their shoes and tie them around their necks, take off their socks, roll up their trousers, and we [21:00] waded ashore. Then we sat down on a drift log and we watched the combat troops and the tanks charging in, the men with fixed bayonets charging up the dunes, the coastal dunes across the road, and the tanks spreading out. This was the one wing -- can't think what you call it at the moment -- to encircle Oran. So I was with the 1st Armored Division [21:43], which included -- this was a combat command. It had tanks from the 1st Armored Division [21:54]. It had the troops of two regiments of the 1st Division. It [22:00] had the first rangers who attacked a fort, Fort du Nord, which was at the point of the bay, which they had to climb the cliff. But instead of having to fight anybody, it turned out to be a rest center for retired foreign legionnaires, and they helped some of the troops finish climbing up. So the first rangers didn't have much to do.

VS: So there was really no resistance to speak of at this point?

AK: No. Well, the other wing landed at [unintelligible] and then there were some ships who went in directly [23:00], and I believe General -- what was his name? High-ranking general, a member of a family, I think one of the Roosevelts.

SK: You're talking about in Oran?

AK: Yes. He was killed by French fire. I think he was in a destroyer. I'm vague on that. There was a fight there, but in our sector, none. Then they had the first paratroopers

coming in. There were two air fields, one just south of Oran and one further back military. The first paratroopers, one battalion dropped in one of the airports [24:00]. The other battalion dropped further off. None of them got there until after the armistice, which was timed to be on November 11th. Everybody, by the way, wore the American flag, including the British. And I believe the -- while the flyers used the Spitfire, they were marked with the American star. On the ship, the last briefing was none of our planes would be below 2,000 feet. This was important later. Well, I spent that night on the beach with the men. Next morning, I went up to the -- there was a little shack and it said "Saint Lou" on it [25:00]. Great. Unfortunately, the colonel wasn't there. So I spent the day on the beach and figured that I need to make myself useful. Silly. So I found out that there was a prisoner-of-war [25:21] collection point for the 1st Division [25:24] up the road, and in the meantime, the sergeant had gone back to the ship and loaded our stuff. I was slightly embarrassed because my field locker had come along here on the invasion, and the men had their blue barracks bags, but the sergeant was very competent. He located a mule [26:00] and loaded most of the stuff on the back of the mule, with my foot locker up on top. And in good style, because I'd seen a lot of war movies, I split the men up into two sections, one the side of the road and the other on the other, and we went up the road in military style. I saw a sign that said "1st Division [26:28] Collection Point," POW [26:33] collection point, I think they called it. Went up the road. This was up on the knoll, and it was a walled-in farmhouse, farm yard, rather large. There was a first lieutenant with the 1st Division [26:56] patch. I said, "I'm from the II Corps [27:00]." That's what one of the orders said, that I had, II Corps. So I said I was from II Corps. He said, "Good. We've been waiting for you." And he whistled for

his men, and they left. So I looked inside, and sure enough, there were a bunch of odd-looking people. So the men went to work taking names on some of the paper we had with us. Three of them were retired legionnaires coming back from leave to go back to Fort du Nord. One was a school teacher who had been out hunting, and when he saw the invasion coming on, he [28:00] climbed a tree and was hauled down and sent to this place. Two were customs officials wearing some kind of uniform from Arzew, which was a little port nearby. Five were native troops. I think they called it a [unintelligible] algerienne [spelled phonetically], the natives. They wore their fatigue cap, which is a red fez. I don't think -- I don't believe there was a single really a soldier there. Well, I sent the men up, again going to the movies [29:00] for how to do it, put some of them on the wall. There was a tower, a water tower. The sergeant went down to the beach and found a machine gun. He was very good at finding stuff, one of these scroungers. He sat up on the tower, and the men were in an open shed at the rear of the enclosure. Well, I felt I should do something; I would take the front. The wall was about nine feet high. I got a table and that wasn't high enough, so I put the bench, a wooden bench, on top of the table, and borrowed a rifle from one of the men [30:00], who held my pistol. He could guard the prisoners. Climbed up and a plane was staring me in the face, flying low. We were up above the beach. Just as I stuck my head up, I could see flashes, and I ducked, and the top of the wall went up in smoke. Another plane came over, but I could just see it pass, and a third. The sergeant was firing the machine gun. We shot -- either he did or an AA outfit nearby -- shot down the last two planes and we could see them go over the hill and crash [31:00]. This was confirmed later when I got to Oran. I bumped into some pilots and one of them casually mentioned that he had been in the first wing, and two of

his buddies had crashed. But these were Spitfires, which were easily recognized, about the only plane I could recognize, but they had the American star, which we didn't -- I didn't see until they had passed.

VS: If I could just ask for some clarification. These were American planes firing on you, "friendly fire," if you will?

AK: Because of the fatigue hats of these native troops, these black-red [32:00], they thought this was a fortified position. They were in the center of this yard, cooking some of their food, and that's what I guess the planes --

(End of Tape 1A)

(Beginning of Tape 1B)

BB: This is just fine.

AK: You want war stories.

BB: Sure. You can keep on going. We're all set.

AK: Okay. Before I had the men set up to guard the prisoners, where they were, again it's just like the movies, a motorcycle came up this dirt road, because I was out kind of looking at things, and it came to one of these rolling stops, skidding stops, and said, "There's going to be an attack, a counterattack in three minutes, from land, sea, and air" [laughs]. And off he went. Real dramatic. And the ships did start firing. I don't know what they were firing at. I couldn't tell [01:00]. They were in the bay and we were high enough so we could see the whole bay spread out. Then many of the trucks, which had been going towards Oran, turned around and came back, and there were some others that were going towards the city, further out, Mostaganem. They also turned back, so it did look like there was a counterattack. That's when the planes came over. Two days later, the

colonel did show up, nodded his head, "Satisfactory," and from there it was the 11th, so all the prisoners were released. We set up in Arzew [02:00]. We marched the prisoners also to there, and there, on the 11th, we released all the prisoners and my work was finished for the time being.

BB: So, again, to summarize, your assignment during this period, were you the commanding officer of this detachment?

AK: Yes. It was a separate detachment, and I'd been in separate outfits most of my military career. They're quite different. In effect, I had no headquarters, no superior officer, except the headquarters, which was in Oran, the provost marshal's office. The first thing after that, after we got rid of all our prisoners, we stayed in Arzew and [03:00] all the French-speaking men were transferred out. I was given some clerk typists as replacements. I went to Oran and stayed in the city, and there they told me that we were military policemen, all the men. No training [laughs]. Just told. Mind you, you didn't have to be trained to be a military policeman, according to the provost marshal. We did military duty, and I sat at a desk for a couple of days when I was on duty with a big journal, and I [04:00] got a call that some kid had killed himself in a hospital on guard duty that night. Not knowing what on earth I was supposed to do about it, I went there and took notes, went back and put it in the journal. I figured that the hospital should know what to do with a dead body. Let's see. Then the Italian soldiers I had, some of them worked with what was called the Armistice Commission, composed of mostly Italians, so they were useful in interpreting. As I said, I didn't see any of the French-speaking men again. They also were interpreters. Then the next thing [05:00], the colonel, the same Colonel Coleman [05:03], called me and asked me if I knew anything

about a disciplinary barracks. I answered immediately, "Not a thing, sir." He handed me a little folder, just one page folded up, head of disciplinary barracks, and he said, "Go to this athletic field," sports field, I guess, "and set up the disciplinary barracks. Don't ask any questions," again. That night, I'd had some experience of how to set up the can of sand, you pour gasoline in, and that makes a light, and didn't have any wire, but just had to tell the men who came [06:00], about 100 men, American soldiers this time, and they had to stay within the circle of these lights. A couple of days after that, some major came and said he was taking over command of the disciplinaries, but I was left behind and belonged now to the base section. I was no longer with II Corps, which was a combat corps. After that, they built a prisoner-of-war [06:44] camp for enlisted men and officers at a little town further south, and that housed about two or 3,000 prisoners [07:00]. That was set up by the engineers and set up the guard post, the towers, and all the equipment. I got a hut, and I was told that I was to process prisoners of war [07:22]. No instructions, but I had stolen a copy of the field manual on the Geneva Convention [07:32], and I knew about that and handling of prisoners. Since some of the forms the provost marshal sent down were the FBI [07:48] -- what do you call it? The form with fingerprints and a place for a picture and certain information. That's what I figured [08:00] that we had to do. So I set up a place where when the prisoners came in, they got their fingerprints taken, they got ink and a roller, and took care of that. They would then go to one of the clerks. We got hold of typewriters, and the German speakers were the typists. Then they got the photograph, and then the medical officer checked them over and they were given a change of clothing. We took away their possessions. Then they got clothing and were sent to the camp. I think we processed, I'm guessing, about [09:00] 5,000 prisoners in

that one place. When it got too crowded, it was sent to the States.

VS: What nationality?

AK: German.

VS: All German? No Italian?

AK: No, we did get Italians. They were captured in Tunisia, yes, because I remember the Italians when we got them, the Italians went to work, the interpreters. About this time, a team came, strategic interrogators. They came to find out what was happening in Germany, what the situation was there [10:00], so they would take certain prisoners and talk to them and ask them. That didn't work very well.

VS: That did not work very well?

AK: No. The prisoners, they were taken to a separate place, and the prisoners just refused to talk. I suggested then that I take over their job, and I just told the men who were asking your name, rank, serial number, then they say, "Where are you from?" and the fellow usually would answer, "I'm from Frankfurt," or wherever. "How are things at home? When did you last hear?" By the way, the prisoners get a Red Cross [10:52] card notifying next of kin that they've been captured and where they are [11:00]. The soldiers were able to then ask, "When did you last hear from home? How are things?" We found out that there might have been a shortage of grain, flour, or sugar or whatever, which is what the interrogators had wanted. We had no trouble getting it.

VS: The way it was effective was more like a conversation?

AK: Yes.

VS: Just casual interest rather than rearing in?

AK: Yes. Exactly. It was routine. Those who sat up straight and said, "Name rank, and serial

number is all I have to give,” I told the kids, “Just go over there and sit [12:00], and we’ll get to you in a minute,” and they often came back and gave the information that we wanted, that was asked of them.

VS: Was their mindset-- Were they cooperative? Was it a sort of situation now for you the war is over and there’s relief? Or was there mistrust of the Americans and you were the enemy?

AK: It ran the gamut from resisting and real SS type, to “I don’t know what I’m doing here” kind of thing. One of the things that I personally was responsible for was getting receipts, and you can imagine all the receipt forms are flimsy paper and sometimes the stuff that [13:00] we took off, the contraband that we took off, I remember in some cases one was a bar of silver. Try to put that in a little flimsy envelope. [laughs] But I would give receipts for all the money, French money that they had or anything, money that they had. Years later at 1142 [13:25], some newspaperman got hold of the story. I think a German got one of my receipts back and got his money and was amazed and talked about it.

VS: As a matter of fact, we have a copy of that article.

AK: Yes. You got it from one of the guys?

BB: Yes, one of the other veterans. I think his name was Heinz Lychenheim [13:54]. I believe he had a copy of the article.

VS: Did you have a copy [14:00]? Would you like a copy?

AK: I do have it someplace. No telling where my stuff is.

BB: And so, again, just for a point of clarification, at this point, it sounds like you’re doing processing and, to a certain level, interrogation of these prisoners.

AK: Yes.

BB: Had you received any formal training on how to do this, or is this just “You speak the language. Take care of it?”

AK: Yes.

BB: I presume all of the men under your command all also spoke German?

AK: Just one group.

BB: Okay.

AK: I had photographers, kids who had no skill, they just did fingerprints, ushered the prisoners in, ushered [15:00] them out, inventoried the stuff. I would sign the receipts.

VS: For captured documents, did you have a way of routing those appropriately? Would there be particular items that would be more important than other items that you would gather intelligence from?

AK: I don't recall any. Among the Germans, I'm sure they destroyed everything. They could keep their personal papers, their letters, their pictures. We had top -- we confiscated all money, anything kind of anything that looked like a weapon, cameras.

BB: For example, if they had a diary or a journal, would you confiscate that or would they [16:00] retain that?

AK: No, they sometimes had -- it depended. If it looked completely personal, I didn't take it. If it wasn't, I probably put it with their possessions, if it was something that seemed to be important to them.

BB: Would you have men assigned to try to read through and translate documents to see if there was intelligence that could be gained from documents?

AK: No, we didn't do that systematically. I would glance at the stuff if there was any

question. I would decide whether to put it as part of their -- what we put in their envelope or give it back to them or throw it out. The money was destroyed [17:00], except I heard later that at some of the other places, when they got more prisoners in, some of them didn't destroy the money. There was quite a bit of that going on, of course.

BB: So again [inaudible]?

AK: It was in '43.

VS: One more quick question. Would you segregated officers from enlisted men?

AK: Yes.

VS: Any other segregation?

AK: No, noncommissioned officers were left with all the other men. By the way, before we got the prisoners, I took a half a [18:00] dozen men with me and we went to a British camp up near -- north of Algeria, the city, and spent three, four days with them, seeing what they did. It wasn't any different from what I figured out that we would have to do.

VS: Were you sent? Were you sent to that location to observe?

AK: Pardon?

VS: Was that your idea to go observe this British operation or were you sent to do that?

AK: I was sent to it, yes. There must have been liaison between the British, because many of the prisoners they captured and they just passed them directly to us in some cases.

VS: Were you specifically charged [19:00] with, in addition to holding them as military policemen, also you were charged with interrogating and writing reports?

AK: No.

VS: Not at all?

AK: No. Actually, I had nothing to do with guarding them at that time. I was doing the job

for which we had been recruited. We were officially then a prisoner-of-war [19:27] processing detachment directly under the provost marshal, a detached service at this camp. Saint Lou was the name of the camp.

VS: Were there any permanent party interrogators attached with you?

AK: No.

VS: You mentioned one group of interrogators; strategic interrogators came in. Was that just one event?

AK: That's the only one.

VS: And you weren't really impressed with the way they did their job.

AK: No [20:00]. It was catch as catch can. It's a waste of time spending too much time with somebody who isn't going to give you information. Why you'd go on and on another thousand, so the idea was to find the people who were willing to talk, not to pressure anybody.

VS: Did you mention 5,000?

AK: I think so.

VS: So if this one doesn't talk, you have 4,999 men to talk to [laughs].

BB: When the camp was beginning to fill and you anticipated another influx of prisoners, how would you decide which prisoners would be the next to go? Would officers go first? Would those that were less cooperative, that were not willing to talk go, or [21:00] the ones who were willing to talk go?

AK: Those that were all finished processing were shipped out then, and they found that very upsetting. They had been convinced that most of our convoys were destroyed, so they felt that we were sending them to their death on American ships which would be

torpedoed. So this was what they said, that we were barbarians.

VS: Did you have attempts at escape or resistance?

AK: Some of the officers, the rumor was that some of them escaped, went to the nearest town and came back. I didn't much care. I had plenty [22:00]. That really was my attitude. As a matter of fact, I made a joke about it. Sometimes -- I may still get in trouble for it. Sometimes when we had a shipment and we had typed out -- the men had typed out the roster of, say, a couple hundred men who were going to be shipped to the docks at Oran, maybe one or two might be missing or sick or something, I -- well, I did it once. I told another guy, "Your name is Johannes Schmidt. Go." [laughs] I figured they'd straighten it out later.

BB: So as you were handling all these prisoners, was there ever a case where somebody who told you more than just name, rank, and serial number gave you maybe some valuable information [23:00] that you said, "Hey, wait a second. This guy has an important intelligence value. Let's send him somewhere else. Let's notify somebody else?" Or were they all processed the same, regardless of what sort of information they gave?

AK: Yes. Yes, as I got to know some of them, chatted and found out where they were from, and perhaps as a child I might have spent the summer there, we would chat about anything, and I wasn't interested in what they had done in the war or anything like that.

BB: So you weren't briefed, "Hey, if anyone says this or this, we want to know about it?"

AK: No, nothing like that. I had no training as [24:00] military police, no training in processing. I was a field artillery officer.

VS: It sounds like almost an administrative function as opposed to an intelligence function that you were down in information processing and moving them along a conveyor belt, as

opposed to trying to extract field intelligence.

AK: Yes. I only did the -- had the men do the questions that the team had asked, which fit in easily with what they were doing. Didn't take extra time, really. It was just a side issue.

VS: This is just a collective question. Do we know of any cases of American ships that were carrying German prisoners that were shot or sunk? Do we have any examples of that?

BB: Off the top of my head I can't think of any.

VS: I can certainly think of the reverse in the Pacific theater. There's a number of cases where Japanese ships carrying American prisoners were [25:00] torpedoed or sunk by American planes and Americans died. I don't know about the reverse, though.

BB: We've got about five minutes left on this tape and then we're going to have to switch tapes, but if you wanted to briefly get into -- if you want to conclude this part of your assignment, about how -- first, about how long were you doing this?

AK: Roughly a year.

BB: Really.

AK: Then the camps became labor camps, and we were getting no new prisoners. At least my camp wasn't. There may have been some other camps someplace that were. Then I think mostly Italians [26:00], and these were sent out every day to work at depots and whatever labor that was required. There are all kinds of stories about that, but that's something quite different. After that, to finish up, I was asked to -- there was no processing left anymore, and there were some other processing units, I guess, in the area someplace, so they could do whatever was left. I was asked to be the adjutant and interpreter in what our doctor had set up as a prisoner-of-war [26:51] hospital, manned by Germans and by Italians, which was unusual. So I was able to [27:00] do the interpreting for the

Germans.

BB: These Italian prisoners that you were getting, you said it sort of shifted from Germans to a lot of Italian prisoners. Were these Italians captured in North Africa, or were these Italians being captured in the Italian campaigns that were going on?

AK: No, just North Africa. The Italian campaign hadn't started yet. That was the Sicily that, I think, was months later.

VS: El Alamein? The conflict at El Alamein?

AK: I don't know of any prisoners from that, from there.

BB: Again, you spoke German. Did you speak any Italian?

AK: A word here and there [28:00]. No.

BB: Did you have men under you who spoke Italian?

AK: Yes, yes, interpreters. From where I sit, using an interpreter is almost a waste of time. Occasionally, I used a German interpreter. I didn't need it, but I would listen to him and what he did to my questions. [laughs] Ridiculous.

BB: Really?

AK: Yes. For one thing, you don't get any subtlety of meaning. If you are going to ask this question first and then followed by this, a little tricky, that's completely lost if you use an interpreter. I would think that what's going on in Iraq must be ridiculous.

VS: Lost in translation [29:00].

AK: Yes. Even in Guantanamo they were using interpreters.

[inaudible commentary]

BB: Just to finish up, you mentioned you were in this hospital, and here again you were serving, no longer gathering information, just acting as people who could communicate

with the language specialists and you were the adjutant?

AK: I was at -- yes. That was my main job, adjutant of this German-Italian hospital unit. Saint Barbe [29:48] was the place. We were getting [30:00], among some of the prisoners we got, they had that special German outfit that they later used in the Battle of the Bulge [30:12]. These were young Germans. Some had been in America. They spoke perfect English and were violently pro-Nazi [30:26]. Well, in the hospital there was a clique of strong Nazis [30:37], and they pretty much took over control. They were watching -- the doctors were all officers. They watched the doctors and so on. I got one of them and made him my telephone operator in the office, and it made it easy when we had an [31:00] inspection coming. I would then openly say that we were going to inspect the camp next week, and by God, any discrepancy that we got hit with, we were going to ship these guys out. And the camp was beautiful. [laughs] He was spying on us. Whatever we wanted them to know, I was able to just talk and be confident that he'd pass it on.

BB: We are out of this tape, so we --

(End of Tape 1B)

(Beginning of Tape 2A)

BB: Today is February 13, 2008. This is the second in a series of interviews with Mr. Arnold Kohn as part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project with the National Park Service. This is historian Brandon Bies, as well as Park Service Chief Ranger Vincent Santucci; we're also joined by Colonel Steven Kleinman. With that, Mr. Kohn, if you wouldn't mind picking up, I guess, chronologically where we left off. The last item we were talking about was the hospital that you had worked in. About how long were you in that facility

for?

AK: Six months to a year.

BB: Where exactly was that located?

AK: South of the city of Oran, near a town called Saint Barbe [00:57], in English [01:00] Saint Barbara, which is pretty close or not too far from Sidi Bel Abbes, which was the headquarters of the French Foreign Legion. After that, all the doctors were shipped out. I think they were all repatriated, yes, under this special arrangement for medical personnel. They were repatriated through the International Red Cross [01:47]. I briefly went to one of the labor camps as adjutant and then they closed down and I [02:00] went to a replacement center and was assigned, for some reason -- I don't think the artillery wanted me any longer; I'd been away too long. I was assigned to 74th Military Police Company [02:20]. I was now a regular police officer. Knew nothing at all about police work. As soon as I -- they were located in Algiers, as soon as I got there, they were ordered back to Oran, and then we were sent to Italy. So, on a troop ship we went to Italy [03:00], landed in Naples, and from there we went to Anzio, stayed at Anzio a couple nights. Then we were attached to what was called S Force, which was a special organization, whose mission was to move into Rome as soon as the Germans left and capture the strategic headquarters, banks, interrogation centers, prisons, and gather documents. With us were units of every one [04:00] of the intelligence agencies, FBI [04:04]. I've forgotten his name, the agent who captured [John] Dillinger. He was --

SK: Elliot Ness?

VS: No, Elliot Ness was after Capone with the lady in red [laughs].

AK: Yes. And we first -- when we went in, the German tanks, the rear guard were just

leaving, so some of our men in my company -- I wasn't commanding it; I was the exec of this MP company -- they overran some of the German tanks, did a U-turn, and went back and the Germans didn't [05:00] bother them. We camped on the Borghese Gardens, and much to my dismay, the artillery was located right where we were camped, and that isn't right for MPs. They aren't supposed to be that close to the combat. In any case, next they moved us to different hotels and then most of the men went to a place called Via Tassel [spelled phonetically], which was the Italian headquarters of their secret police. It was a place a little bit like the face of Fort Hunt [05:58] looked like, a little bit [06:00]. It was a regular apartment house, but what they had done is boarded up all the windows, just leaving an air opening, baffled, and in the basement there was supposed to be interrogation rooms and so on. These were cells. One day I was out front doing something or other, and a carriage drove up with a family all in black, and apparently one of their relatives had been murdered in this place called Via Tassel. The Army does things very carefully. I had worked with prisoners, and prisoners is prisoners is prisoners, so they made me the prison officer for the [07:00] Regina Coeli [07:01], the main prison in Rome. Again, I had no idea what I was supposed to do, but as usual, I took names, all the clerks did, and every now and then I'd go there to inspect it. We had a British platoon under a British officer who did the guarding. I was the official prison officer, and I escorted prisoners who had been condemned to be interned, and I would take those down to Naples to the center there. I don't remember exactly where that was. Some of the prisoners were rather interesting.

Then [08:00] this is a different provost marshal colonel, called me into the office and said, "I want you to take charge of the firing squad." I didn't say, "What's a firing

squad?" because I'd seen plenty of movies. But I didn't much like it, and as luck would have it, our company received orders to go to France. So I didn't command a firing squad. I don't really know how I would have gotten out of that, but I wasn't about to do that. We went to Marseilles [8:46], and then we did regular police duty. Then again because I spoke French pretty fluently, I [09:00] had another separate detachment in a nearby area where the depots were located, near the -- I don't know what you'd call it. Not quite a lake. An inland area, part of the delta system, I guess. A town there. And there I did regular patrol duty, rode a motorcycle around, closed down the cat houses and regular stuff. There was an air base nearby, and some of the pilots asked me if I could escort them to Marseilles [09:55] and show them some of the sites, some of the houses [10:00], which I did. As a matter of fact, I think I was the officer in charge of vice for the city of Marseilles [10:13], actually, before the off-limit district and so on. A group of congressmen came over, and the colonel called me to show them one of the houses. I wasn't popular, because I didn't allow them to go with any of the girls. One of the pilots offered me, and I misunderstood him. I think he said "home," that he could fly me home if I wished. I [11:00] thought he said "Rome" and I asked him about that, because I'd met a girl there, if my wife is listening. I wasn't married at the time. [laughs] And he said, "Sure." So I figured I had a whole weekend free, and the men would cover me, so he flew me to Naples and I caught a plane to Rome and visited there a few days. One morning I got hold of the Stars and Stripes and found I was a day late.

SK: It was printed in the Stars and Stripes?

AK: The date was.

SK: Oh, the date. Oh okay.

AK: And so I [12:00] didn't know what to do, no transportation or anything, so I went to the colonel, the provost marshal of Rome, and said, "I want you to give me a hand." He kind of stared at me and told me to go downstairs and a Jeep would take me to the airport. Unfortunately, there were no transport planes scheduled, but they said I should go to the operations side of the base, which I did, and some sergeant pointed to a plane that was getting ready, a combat plane of some kind. So I went out in the field and banged on the side of the plane, and somebody [13:00] opened the door, and I said, "Can you take me to Naples?" So I hitched a ride on this plane [laughs].

SK: Oh, really? Wow.

AK: And by luck, the guy who was going to take me back to Marseilles [13:17] had been delayed a day. And when I got there, found out that the Marseilles provost marshal had been looking for me, but I had a pretty good reputation, so when the men told him that I had been out patrolling, he accepted that. When I reported to him, he said he had a job for me, which was to go to Toulouse [13:52], set up a headquarters there, and patrol the area. This is about one-third of France [14:00], from the Pyrenees up to Limoges, from Bordeaux to the Rhone River, about a third of France. I could have six men, a Jeep, and a truck.

SK: To patrol that third of France? Pretty ambitious.

AK: Well, what we did is we took turns taking trips. A couple of times I had to go to Bordeaux on business, but I would by then go around and stop at -- once I stopped at Lourdes and went to some other cities, Carcassonne and the others, back and forth to Marseilles [14:45]. I stayed there until V-E Day [14:52].

BB: This whole time, you weren't [15:00] working with prisoners really in any way?

AK: Well, I was working with prisoners of a different kind in Rome.

BB: Different kind, right. Not German-speaking?

AK: No. Some stories about this, something else. Then we were ordered to go to India on our way to Japan, the company. We embarked on a ship, after processing and loading up our equipment and so on, and V-J hit as we were halfway through the Mediterranean. They turned the ship around and sent us to New York, so we were among the first ships to land after V-J Day [16:00]. Then after we got a month off, I couldn't make up my mind whether I wanted to stay in the service or not, but I decided I'd wait a couple of months. I went down to Louisiana. The MP company, by the way, was a Cajun regiment, and there were five companies. Each one was a separate company. They were supposed to go to France because they theoretically spoke French, but they didn't speak French-French; they spoke Cajun French. So the French couldn't understand them and they couldn't understand the French. That's why I got some of these jobs that had to do with liaison with the French [17:00].

BB: Sorry, just real briefly, I'm going to just move this microphone just right from here. It's no problem. Great. Sorry, go ahead.

AK: Yeah. So I closed down the MP company and received orders to report to Post Office Box 1142 [17:26], Alexandria, Virginia. Took the train up to Washington, took a bus from the train station to Alexandria. Went to the post office postmaster; seemed logical. He told me to go -- at first he didn't want to answer anything about 1142 [17:54]; it was still top secret. Then finally he said, "Get on the bus [18:00] to Mount Vernon and tell the bus driver to drop you off at 1142 [18:07]." The bus driver did that, and when I got off the bus, all I could see was a sign, "Private Road. No Admittance." A regular park

sign.

BB: So the bus driver knew where P.O. Box 1142 [18:24] was.

AK: Yes. [laughs] Some of these secrets aren't that secret.

SK: Do you have any information about that postmaster in Alexandria and his involvement?

BB: That's interesting, because if you go -- if you go today to the post office in Alexandria and you look at the post office boxes, there is a gap in post office box numbers today; it's inexplicable, and it may be explicable. It goes 1137, 1138 [19:00], 1139, 1150, 1151, 1152. The entire 1140 series of P.O. boxes in Alexandria is not there.

AK: Maybe I looked and that's why I went to the postmaster.

BB: That's today. That's not -- that's not to say 60 years ago there wasn't an 1142 [19:26].
So you literally went to the post office?

AK: To the postmaster.

BB: The postmaster in Alexandria.

AK: Yes. I couldn't think of anything else to do.

SK: At first he wasn't responsive? He was kind of evasive?

AK: [affirmative] He didn't want to talk about it. I guess I might have shown him my orders.

SK: That's interesting.

BB: So the postmaster seemed to know? Did he seem to know about what was going on with P.O. Box 1142 [19:59], or at least know where [20:00] it was?

AK: Most of the people around knew there was a military post. Very few people knew what the post was about. Even the interrogators, I'm not sure knew about the taping, about the recording.

SK: Oh, the monitoring.

AK: Yes. That was M Building [20:27], and that was really secret. Very few people knew anything about that place. I think I talked about how it was off on a path and there were stones, so that the people who went in -- and there were shrubs all over the place, including on top of this building; it was a Quonset hut; you couldn't see the entrance, you couldn't see there was anything there. They presumably, the guys who monitored [21:00], would look around, since the path was covered with shrubbery all over, and would go on these stones into the entrance. Very few people knew that that was going on.

VS: And that was the monitoring building?

AK: Yes.

VS: Do you recall if there was just one monitoring building?

AK: I couldn't say. To my knowledge, they had one, two, three, maybe five of these great big recorders on discs, on records, phonograph records, but they were about this large. I believe that they did a recording of the microphones [22:00] that were on the trees on the path, and very few people knew about those, again, including some interrogators.

BB: So could you just say that again, you know, for the record, as they say, about besides buildings that were microphoned, there were other items that had microphones in them.

AK: Yes. I'm sure the cabins were covered by microphones, but the very secret and very effective microphones were those around the path that the Germans walked in the trees and hidden. So what they talked about when they thought they were out in the open was being recorded. As you know, the German officers can give their parole [23:00]. American officers may not. But the Germans can, and I don't know for sure, but I'm guessing that those German officers had given their parole and they didn't have to be

guarded. They were probably just told where the limits were. But again, off in that area, it was the part of the post that was towards Mount Vernon. It was very wooded, and as far as I know, it had ravines and in some areas no paths, but you could wander through in the middle of the woods. That's why we had horses for the guard officers and the officer of the day, to patrol the rivers and to check the guards on the perimeter [24:00].

BB: This is fantastic, all this physical description. But if we could talk a little bit about the big picture of 1142 [24:13] first, you said you arrived, you took the bus, it said "Private Drive" and you went in. Had you, up to this time, been briefed at all on what was going on here?

AK: No idea. I had no idea it was even secret. My orders are there someplace. I guess you can make a copy of it. They say nothing at all. They're not even marked "secret" orders. So I was just reporting to some place with a funny name.

BB: When you arrived, did somebody sit you down and explain to you, or did you just learn while you [25:00] were there what this place was?

AK: When I got there, as I said, I was walking up this path which said secret -- not secret -- "Private Road. No Admittance," and I was very surprised and pleased to see a soldier with a bar across the road. So I knew it was a military base, at least. He called headquarters. I showed him my orders, and they sent a Jeep to pick me up. I reported to the adjutant, Captain Levy [25:46], I think was his name, and somewhere around there he said that I was going to relieve him [26:00]. And I got -- he assigned me to a hut that was on the side of the parade ground, where the flagpole is, and right there was a hut with four rooms and a larger room in the center, living room in the center, the storage room, and then a room which we used for a kitchen. I'm guessing that that had been throughout

the war the offices of the guard. I'm guessing again.

BB: If we showed you a map, do you think you'd be able to point that out?

AK: Yes.

BB: Would you mind if we did that right now?

AK: Not at all.

BB: Sure [27:00].

AK: As I said, it's on the end of the parade ground. Is that the list of names?

SK: It's tremendous. A lot of the names of men that we've interviewed, including Alfred Bomberg, we just interviewed yesterday, Lewis Nipkow, who we'll be interviewing on Sunday, on this list, and there's both MIS-X [27:31] and Y [27:32] on here, and there's women too, with their home towns and addresses.

AK: That'll be right; this one.

BB: Oh, you think that one right there?

AK: Yes. And the flagpole was here.

BB: The flagpole was right -- in fact, we did archeology and we located exactly where the flagpole was. The flagpole was right about in here [28:00]. So you think you were stationed in that building initially?

AK: Yes.

BB: So these were the two prisoner compounds here.

AK: Right.

BB: Does that ring a bell?

AK: Yes. And the cabins were all through here.

BB: Tremendous. So back here in this wooded area?

AK: Yes.

BB: I don't mean to put words in your mouth. Was it a wooded area that was back here?

AK: Oh, yes. And M Building [28:28] was somewhere [sic] here.

BB: Is there any chance, any chance at all, that it could have been that building right there?

AK: I don't think so.

E: The reason I ask is, that is listed as "monitoring building" for that one right there. But you remember it being a little bit over --

AK: Vaguely, yes. If it's a Quonset [29:00] hut, well, that wouldn't identify it.

BB: These are the large gun batteries.

AK: Yes.

BB: This here, here, and these two, the gun batteries.

AK: These I never saw.

BB: We believe the main entrance to the post was through here.

AK: Yes, it was.

BB: So this would have been the Potomac River over here.

SK: Is this the Creamery [29:27]?

AK: Yes.

BB: That's the Creamery [29:30] and then the Warehouse.

AK: One of these buildings, maybe this one, is where the Scientific Section [29:37] was located, but this, if the tennis courts were here, this was the Officers' Club.

BB: Really?

AK: The one end of it was. There was sort of a patio and chairs where you could sit outside and gaze [30:00]. Helen [30:03] was in, I think, this building later on.

SK: Brandon, you may not know this. His wife was --

BB: Yes, that's how they met. You said -- and I'd like to cover that a little bit later, how you selected her as your secretary, correct?

AK: Yes.

SK: Do you remember that building known as the Creamery [30:26]? Was it called that?

AK: No, I can't say I do. I'm not sure which of these -- I know one of these at that end was the Officers' Club, or at least it was; we made it after they started to close the post down. The Scientific Section [30:58], which later became [31:00] Paperclip [31:01], was, I think, in this building, but I can't quite remember. This building I just don't remember.

SK: Right. What programs do you remember in operation when you got to the fort?

AK: They had just about closed down the interrogation, but they were still doing some. X [31:37] was closing down.

SK: X [31:39] was?

AK: Yes. We were getting attachés returning home. My memory is pretty vague. I just remember [32:00] meeting the officers. And we were -- again, I'm guessing. I think some of the people who were coming -- and this happened later in another place -- were perhaps under --

(End of Tape 2A)

(Beginning of Tape 2B)

AK: I don't know why it is people always assume that I know things that I don't, but I was told to interview this colonel, and as far as I can remember now, I had no idea what I was supposed to find out, so I chatted with him and took notes of what he said. He was a lieutenant colonel in the Army. Then I think they gave me some translation of a German

manual, and my vocabulary just didn't cover anything like that, so I couldn't really do the job. I spent most of my time looking up words, not understanding what I was writing.

But, no, I got no training there.

SK: So you said that the interrogation [01:00] at MIS-Y [1:01] was pretty much winding down and so was X [01:03]. Were you aware of any other programs under the Military Intelligence Service?

AK: The [Wernher] von Braun [01:13] group were coming through. I'm not sure they ever came directly to Hunt [01:20]. They came in, as I recall, because you showed me the orders that I signed from Fort Strong [01:30], I believe, down to Georgia.

BB: Were you stationed ever at Fort Strong [01:40]?

AK: No.

BB: But you were aware of it at the time?

AK: Yes, our convoy from New York went into Boston and then into Hamilton. Not Hamilton. Halifax, to form [02:00] the convoy on our way to England, so I had heard of the fort there.

SK: Question. Paperclip [02:12]. Was Paperclip [02:14] independent of Y [02:16] or was it tied directly to Y [02:18]?

AK: As I remember, Paperclip [02:22] as such didn't exist yet. The Scientific Section [02:30], which was an offshoot, I was the officer in charge. That is, I signed the official papers. There was a -- Ringwald [02:46] was the name of the civilian who really did all the work.

BB: Was his first name Gus?

AK: Yes. He was a fluent German [03:00] speaker. I think he was German.

BB: And you said he was a civilian, though?

AK: When I was sent to take over the Scientific Section [03:11], was the officer in charge, as I said, he was a civilian.

BB: Did you get the impression that he had been in the military?

AK: I think so. He might have been a captain.

SK: He's listed as captain.

BB: Yes, he was an officer at 1142 [03:26] for several years, but it sounds like he was continuing in his capacity as a civilian.

AK: Yes. Probably his specialty could have been science. Then we started to get the scientists from Germany. They were being put under contract there and sent, and several times I picked them up in [04:00] Staten Island, where they landed, and bused them to Fort Hunt [04:07] in a regular open bus. When they got there, this is where Helen [04:16] comes in. She did the typing of the Fragenbogen. That's the questionnaire. It's the screening document. They had to get their entire history and what they did, who they belonged to, their outfit, and so on. Helen [04:42] was the first to do the work, and after that, several other young women came to work there in the section.

SK: Forgive me again. You were a German speaker?

AK: Yes.

SK: Do you remember much of your German?

AK: Do I remember the German?

SK: Do you remember your German today?

AK: Yes. It's going fast.

SK: [speaks German]

AK: [speaks German]

SK: [speaks German]

AK: [speaks German]

SK: [speaks German]

AK: [speaks German]

SK: The reason I'm interested is I'm quite certain that that evolved into something that in the intelligence community is now called the knowledgeability brief, where you go into great detail about somebody. Before you even start to interrogate or interview, you get everything you possibly can so you can send out to the analyst and say, "We have this guy who knows this and has lived here." So I think you were on the beginning of something that still lasts today. Interesting. Fragenbogen. Sorry.

BB: That's quite all right. So this might be a good time. Would you mind telling [06:00] the story of exactly how you first met your wife? If I recall correctly, did you go to the Pentagon [06:08]? You were told to choose a secretary?

AK: Yes. I probably got a telephone call. The Intelligence Division was also closing down with the end of the war, and civilian personnel were almost always reassigned. Personnel were left to see if they could find another job for them someplace. I was told to report to CPM, that section, and given a stack of 201 files, civilian, and go through it and pick a secretary [07:00] typist. Helen [07:04] had the best typing score of those papers that I looked at. I hadn't seen her; there was no picture or anything. So I picked her by name. As I remember, nothing happened for a while, and then we had the retirement ball for General Vandenberg [07:31]. He had been director of intelligence and he was taking over the Air Force.

SK: Vandenberg [07:39]?

AK: Yes.

SK: Oh, yes, yes. Right. Hoyt Vandenberg [07:43].

AK: So we were invited, the officers at 1142 [07:49] and CPM officers were invited to this ball, and Helen [07:58] took one look at me and said she [08:00] wanted to dance with a handsome guy. [laughs] So I danced with her. Somewhere [sic] along the line, when she came down to work, recognized her, and a little later, a few weeks later -- by the way, Colonel [Zenas R.] Bliss [08:25] had retired and a Colonel Monte F. Cone [08:33], C-O-N-E, was the post commander. This is just the post now, nothing to do with intelligence.

BB: So he was not under MI, under military intelligence.

AK: No. I think his background was that he was a lawyer. I vaguely remember.

BB: Were you ever there when Zenas Bliss [08:58] was there as the commander [09:00]?

AK: When?

BB: When Zenas Bliss [9:01] was the commander, were you there for some of that period?

AK: I think so. Probably a week or so.

BB: Okay. And then he left shortly thereafter.

AK: The executive officer, I remember his name because he was a stickler for exactly when the gun was fired, and if it was a minute late, he'd raise hell with the duty officer. He lived just outside the fence. There were about three buildings there, and he occupied one of them. Matter of fact, most of the Army officer interrogators and the Navy lived off post.

BB: So you remember there being naval personnel there still while you were there?

AK: Yes, and I think there were some British [10:00].

BB: Really.

AK: Yes.

BB: And most of them lived off post though?

AK: I think almost all of them.

BB: But you didn't? You lived on post?

AK: Yes. I and all the officers that were assigned to the post instead of to the intelligence activities. Then when the attachés came, they lived on post, along that row of houses there on the side of the parade ground. I think at that time the adjutant is in charge of the parade, and I think I had the last parade on post. I'm not sure. Key [11:06] became the adjutant, and he pulled a dirty trick on me. After this passing in review ceremony, the adjutant reads the orders of the day, and by custom it's just -- what -- a couple of sentences, whatever, and you're standing right by the commanding officer. All the troops are way on the other side of the parade ground, so you have to talk loud enough for them to hear. Well, I had training on that, so I could do it. I could pitch up my voice. Got that in the artillery. I guess you have to yell to the guns. [laughs] But what this son of a gun did was give me almost a page and a half of orders of the day.

[laughter]

[12:00] And I'm not all that well coordinated, never was. The only way I could tell right foot from left is I keep saying I write with my right hand, so as the foot. So I had to go all the way across the parade ground and then order them to turn and move out and march them all around.

SK: Yeah, because the adjutants step over there, right?

AK: Huh?

SK: Didn't you have to, from that point, where you were reading orders, you had to march in

adjutant step cadence, the faster -- that's hard. It's a different -- you have to [demonstrates]. Much faster than the troops. It's kind of funny to watch.

AK: Because I was in charge, I ordered that the parade music be something like "one, two [13:00], one, two, one, two, left right [laughs]."

BB: So for your dispersed period -- let me start over again. When you first arrived at 1142 [13:14], did you have these adjutant duties or were you immediately put into the Scientific Section [13:19]?

AK: I was adjutant. Then they made me the intelligence officer for the post.

BB: Could you explain that? What exactly was the post intelligence officer?

AK: I'm not sure I remember. I think inspect the post for security, check the guards, get any information that came down from headquarters to do with security or intelligence [14:00], but not the interrogation. I had nothing to do with that. This was strictly post. As I said, these are two separate things. Most of the men assigned to the post did not know what was going on. I vaguely remember signs there, something about "only official personnel." There was a regular sign to that effect. In any case, they weren't allowed beyond a certain line, which cut off these A and B.

BB: So areas A and B, there was -- do you remember, was it a fence or just signs posted?

AK: I don't remember. There was some line [15:00] that defined the two areas. It must have been a small fence, probably about a single strand of barbed wire or something like that.

BB: You mentioned earlier about the stables and the horses for the officer of the day to check on the guards. Were you ever officer of the day, and did you have to ride a horse?

AK: Yes.

BB: Had you experienced riding horses?

AK: [laughs] Yes, as a young man. Also when I was in France, one of the liaison officers, the French officer took me to ride. I'm not a good rider, but he took me to his tailor and I got riding trousers, riding pants --

VS: We've heard from [16:00] --

AK: -- in pink.

VS: We've heard from various veterans very different descriptions of the perimeter fence and the role of the MPs along that fence. Do you have any recollection of what that outer fence was like and how the MPs patrolled or did the patrol?

AK: There'd be guards rather than MPs. I don't think they were called MPs. They were just soldiers who did guard duty.

VS: Did they walk the fence or did they stay stationary at the gates? Was there a little building at the gate, a little guard --

AK: Yes, there was a guard hut at the gate and [17:00] a bar across the road. Along the perimeter I think there were just posts, because otherwise I wouldn't have been able to find them if they were walking. So I don't think we had walking guards when I was there, anyhow.

VS: Did the guards use horses at all for patrolling the fence?

AK: No.

VS: Did they use guard dogs at all in the camp?

AK: No. And the horses were for the officers, the officer of the day and the guard officer.

VS: All your time there, being late in the war, you didn't really have any incidents with prisoners that you needed to have guards or MPs respond to?

AK: We had guards; they were on guard duty. Until we closed the post, there were all [18:00]

these guards all over.

SK: Were there any attempted escapes or any security problems that you had to respond to?

AK: Only what I heard, and again it's vague. I believe it was one of the submarine captains who, almost as if he wanted to commit suicide, tried to climb the fence in A building, and was shot and killed.

BB: And that was -- was that when you were there or was that before you were there?

AK: I think before I got there, but towards the end. I'm not sure. I just heard it.

BB: Yes, there was an incident that was exactly like that. Werner Henke [18:54] was a submarine U-boat commander. So I'm just trying to establish if there were any [19:00] other incidents besides that, but it sounds like that was the only one that you heard about?

AK: Yes. The only death, as far as I know.

SK: We talked a little bit about the camp. Are you going to go into that more or can we proceed a little bit on that?

BB: If we want to talk a little bit now about details of the actual camp, sure.

SK: Do you remember, did they use spotlights at night?

AK: Around A, I think there were lights that lit up the place, the yard. If you're thinking of those spotlights, I don't think so.

SK: Was there any sirens or anything available at the camp?

AK: Not that I know of.

SK: Were there [20:00] any ways to sort of broadcast communications across the camp, either playing music or --

AK: Yes. Yes, I was talking about the music for the parade. That was all around the parade ground, at least, and in the areas where the men were, for reveille, for all the bugle calls.

So, yes, there was a loudspeaker system.

BB: Do you remember -- could you describe what the differences were between A and B?

AK: B was closed before I got there.

BB: It was closed?

AK: Completely abandoned.

BB: Really?

AK: Yes. There wasn't anybody in the building at all.

BB: Do you remember which of the ones was -- if they had been constructed at the same time or if one [21:00] was newer than the other?

AK: I think B was the newer one. It was built more like a regular prison, with wings and a central control.

BB: But by the time you got there, they had already taken it out of service?

AK: Yes.

SK: Did you have the opportunity to go inside?

AK: Yes.

SK: You did. I guess as much detail as you possibly can, what you recall.

AK: Only that it resembled, for that matter, resembled the way the Regina Coeli [21:38] was set up, and that's the only real prison I've ever seen. That's with a wing and cells on either side, whereas A building looked like a motel [22:00], a large motel. I don't remember the rooms looking like they do in your photograph. I seem to recall regular beds, almost like a motel room, rather small. The windows had wire embedded in the glass and were opaque and would only open just so far. You couldn't see out from the windows. You got plenty of light, but you couldn't see through the windows.

BB: The wires in the glass, that was just to prevent them from breaking, being broken?

AK: Yes, sturdy glass. You couldn't break it, break your way out. And if you did, you'd just be in the yard [23:00].

SK: I apologize, because I have to take a conference call. There's just a couple of questions, moving ahead a little bit. Do you mind? Were you at Fort Hunt [23:08] when they closed down these programs, when it was formally closed down?

AK: Yes. That was my last duty there.

SK: You have a history of closing things down.

[laughter]

He's the closer.

AK: Yes, [unintelligible].

SK: So my understanding, from looking at the archives, that General Strong [23:26] had made a decision that this material was so sensitive, we needed to destroy it, and pretty much -- so that information was not available to anybody in the future. Do you recall anything like that or how the word came down?

AK: I never got debriefed.

SK: Okay. Were you involved with the razing of the buildings?

AK: No.

SK: Destroying the paperwork or anything like that?

AK: No, I was involved with helping the adjutant [24:00] -- we no longer had any scientists there; I think they had stopped that for the time being -- with helping the post close the place down, and most of the material there was sold off, given to the -- shipped out. The M Building [24:33], I think, shortly after I saw it, was cleaned out completely. I'm sure

that the recordings were disposed of.

SK: Was there any facility that was underground that you know of?

AK: Only the bunkers.

SK: The ones that were originally there?

AK: Yes [25:00]. There's a story that it was used, and I'm not sure about how true that is.

SK: For interrogation?

AK: Yes, the story of Ivanowsky [25:12]. That was the name of the Russian officer.

SK: The so-called Russian.

BB: But you don't recall? You just heard that? You never experienced that?

AK: No. I think Ivanowsky [25:28] told me about it, and I'm not sure I believed him.

BB: Okay.

SK: Was there a dump on post that was routinely used to get rid of non-sensitive paperwork and things like that?

AK: I should know, but I don't. I don't recall.

BB: I will tell you archeologically we actually have found a dump.

SK: That's right. That's what I was thinking. That's amazing.

VS: So X was [26:00] already shut down by the time you arrived?

AK: No, I think X [26:06] was closing down. I believe there was some people from X [26:12] still on post.

VS: You don't recall or have any knowledge of them disposing of records?

AK: No.

VS: They didn't have a barbecue out in the field or something?

AK: No.

SK: Did you have any either direct contact with or were you aware of any representatives from the Office of Strategic Services [26:42], or OSS, coming to Fort Hunt [26:44]?

AK: I think so. Does the name Jack ring a bell?

SK: First name?

AK: No. It's a code.

SK: Oh, oh, oh, I'm sorry. J-A-C then [27:00]?

AK: J-A-C-K. Just plain Jack. That's all I know about them.

SK: We're listening closely. Do you have anything more about J-A-C-K? Do you know any more about J-A-C-K?

BB: Or what it stood for?

AK: No. It was the code name that we used, as I recall, for certain people. Some of the officers could have been with the OSS [27:36], because later one that I know went to CIA. Holbrook [27:45].

BB: Oh really? Holbrook [27:46]?

AK: Yeah. And I won't give [28:00] you his name, but I met one of the people who had been at 1142 [28:13], and he was rather startled when he recognized me.

SK: One of the prisoners, or guests?

AK: There were all kinds of people.

SK: They were startled seeing you at Fort Hunt?

AK: Fort Hunt.

SK: They were startled when they encountered you at Fort Hunt [28:37]?

AK: No. Here.

BB: I think either you or your daughter might have mentioned that there, yeah, that there was

an individual locally who may have passed away, his son or something.

AK: His son is around. I spoke to him. He doesn't want anything to do with bringing it up.

BB: Okay [29:00].

AK: There's some reasons for it.

SK: Is this a scientist?

AK: No. We had all kinds of people. There was one, a German, a young German. Arndt [29:25] was his codename, at least.

BB: What was it again? Arndt [29:31]?

AK: Arndt [29:32], A-R-N-D-T, I think. Does the name ring a bell?

BB: Yeah, I'm smiling because it absolutely rings a bell from previous interviews and from an interview that we had on Monday here in California, the name was raised.

SK: We're very curious.

BB: We'd love to hear anything that you know about Arndt [29:54].

AK: Was he a German?

BB: We'd like to ask you that [30:00]. I'd like to get your opinion. We'd be more than happy to tell you what we heard, but I don't want to bias your recollection.

AK: Then I'll have to say I'm not sure of the name, but there was one young German who I got the impression sometimes worked as a prisoner, posed as a prisoner. In other words, a stoolie [30:36].

BB: A stoolpigeon [30:37]?

AK: And this same young man used to go around with this Captain Berkley [30:47], the WAC that I --

BB: Emilie Berkley [30:49].

AK: Yes, Emilie Berkley [30:52].

SK: Friends or business relationship?

AK: Friends.

BB: Friends, okay. If I showed you a [31:00] photograph right now of this person, you think you'd recognize him?

AK: Not if he's an old man.

BB: No, no, a photo of him at 1142 [31:13].

AK: I might.

SK: He might know others in that photo.

BB: We have about a minute left of this tape. When we change tapes, I'll go and get that.

AK: Okay.

SK: The question I had, finally, when you left Fort Hunt [31:29], did you go through a formal debriefing where they told you -- you just got reassigned and that was it, like any other assignment?

AK: All of us had a habit of not talking about what we did. It was a "need to know" business.

SK: Absolutely.

BB: We're out right now.

SK: We're out.

(End of Tape 2B)

(Beginning of Tape 3A)

BB: -- 13, 2008. This is an oral history interview for the Fort Hunt Oral History Project.

We're here at the home of Mr. Arnold Kohn, at his home in Pacific Grove, California.

This is the third in a series of interviews. This is Brandon Bies and Vincent Santucci of

the National Park Service. With that, Mr. Kohn, I think we'd like to ask you some more specific questions about 1142 [00:31], but continuing with the discussion we just had during the break, would you mind again summarizing for us what you might remember about this Arndt, [00:45] Herb Carllson [00:46] character? Any information you might be able to provide about him.

AK: If he is the man that we think it is, he was [01:00] -- I think one of his assets was that he could post as one of the German prisoners. I'm surmising some of this. If I had spoken with him and he had told me this, I don't remember exactly any longer. But this is what I still remember. Also that one of the names he used was Carllson, Herb Carllson [01:38], I think, and Herb Arndt [01:40]. I'm guessing that Arndt [1:43] was the name he used when he was posing as one of the prisoners, and probably under parole, like I mentioned, that he could walk wherever he wished. As Carllson [02:00], that was the name he used, as I recall, when Captain Berkley [02:11] moved to the post and they became friends. Helen [02:20], I think, also knew him as Carllson [02:23]. That's about all that I can recall. As I mentioned, I came back from Europe and I was just so pleased to be at what I called the country club, playing golf and tennis and swimming, movies, that I showed very little curiosity about what was going on. I actually don't remember any work that I did. I know I went as an adjutant, signing [03:00] things, as I mentioned before, intelligence officer for the post, and even with the Scientific Branch [03:12] I remember entertaining the scientists. I remember going up to the port at New York, at Staten Island, picking them up and busing them down, but what I did in the office, I don't remember at all. I probably did no work whatsoever.

BB: Did you get the impression that other people were doing work?

AK: Oh, yes, I probably saw that they kept busy. I know at one time I'm sure we had about three enlisted men. We had a Sergeant Whelchel [03:52], and his wife also worked in the Scientific Branch [03:56].

BB: I'm sorry. What was his name again?

AK: Pardon?

BB: What was his name again [04:00]?

AK: Whelchel [04:02].

BB: Arthur Whelchel [04:04]?

AK: Yes. He worked in the Scientific Branch [4:07]

BB: His wife did, as well?

AK: She did, as well. Helen [04:13] remembers her, as do I. She came from Georgia and always called me, "Captain Kohn!"

[laughter]

BB: Were they married at the time, do you know?

AK: They were married, yes.

BB: She would have had the last name Whelchel [04:34]?

AK: Yes. Mrs. Whelchel [04:36].

SK: First name?

AK: I could ask Helen [04:40], but I don't remember.

BB: We have some photographs. Remind me when we're done. We have photographs of Arthur Whelchel [04:49] as well. I should have put those in your computer as well. I didn't realize. Unfortunately, he has passed away. But that's very interesting [05:00]. I didn't realize that he was part of the Scientific Section [05:04].

AK: Yes. I think he went out to Mitchel Field [05:10] with us. He'd be on one of those orders.

BB: He actually was on one of those orders, yes. The order transferred everyone to Mitchel Field [05:21], and he was listed on that, which was a surprise.

AK: That was, as I mentioned, an act as a cutoff. You closed down one agency, you have to change everything.

BB: Could you summarize for us what sort of work the Scientific Section [05:43] was doing when you were supervising?

AK: It was responsible for receiving the scientists as they arrived in New York [06:00], passing them through customs, bringing them to 1142 [06:05], finishing what I call the Fragenbogen, which are the questionnaires, and which is, by the way, what Helen [06:18] and the other young women's work was in the section, and probably the other men who were there, those young men, worked as interpreters, not so much interrogators, just getting information, probably filling out the reports which the girls typed later. That was the Scientific Section [06:50] What Ringwald [06:54] did, what I did, I don't remember. I think most of the time we were [07:00] just partying.

VS: When the Scientific Section [07:06] went to New York, you say, to bring scientists back, you say they brought them through customs.

AK: They came on military ships. They were brought in legally as prisoners of war [07:29]. They did not go through Immigration. The way that was handled later, especially I know the group in White Sands [New Mexico], they would be taken across the border to Mexico and given visas and then brought legally into the United States. Whether we did that with all of them, I don't recall [08:00], but I do know that those were handled that

way.

BB: The scientific prisoners -- I probably shouldn't use the word prisoners, but the German scientists who were at 1142 [08:16], were they treated as prisoners?

AK: No.

BB: Were they kept in Compound A or were they kept in these cabins, or somewhere else?

AK: I think they stayed in A, which was comfortable, as I said, just like a motel. There weren't too many at one time, I think at the most a dozen at any one time.

BB: Were they monitored?

AK: No.

BB: So this was -- all the monitoring had --

AK: As far as I know, they weren't, but the other guys --

[talking simultaneously]

AK: You never can tell.

SK: A very valid point [09:00].

BB: So about how long would the German scientists be there for, before they would go somewhere else?

AK: That depends. If they had been brought over for a specific -- in those days, for the Army, Navy, Air Force, they would ship out just as soon as we finished some of the paperwork and got them identification papers, the paperwork was finished. Then they would leave. Later on, when it was called Paperclip [09:46], at headquarters we had no contact with the scientists; just the paperwork went through the Pentagon [10:00], Exploitation Branch, that's what it was called then. I think I had -- well, it was Exploitation Branch and probably some section, but Key [10:23] was there also. He, I think, had the

administrative desk. I had the operations desk. That's what we were called. That was the breakdown: division, branch, section, so on.

BB: So these German scientists, was your group trying to get information from them or just to kind of process them, or a little bit of both [11:00]?

AK: Again, it depended who they were. Mixed up with some of these so-called scientists -- some of them were not scientists. Some were mechanics. A group of them were amputees. They had prosthetics. They were brought over for our doctors to study, to see how they worked and handled it. Some were the people, for example, we brought over that wind tunnel, which is up at Moffett Field now, and we brought over the people how to make it work. We brought over [12:00] inventors who had invented certain special equipment. I remember one with whom I spoke quite at length had invented a special propeller for a tug. We brought over, by the way, these huge tugs, these oceangoing tugs. We brought over -- what do you call this? A tremendous thing that you fill with air and it lifts a ship up.

BB: A dirigible? Or a blimp?

AK: No, it's like a dock. The ship sails into it, the water is pumped out, and it comes up.

BB: And makes it like a dry dock or something?

AK: Yes [13:00]. Brought over the people who handled that. I remember that a cousin of Messerschmitt's tried to sneak in through the system, but they caught him, kept him out. [laughs] Then the story I mentioned before, where one of the von Braun [13:23] group brought his mistress over instead of his wife, and she's the one who complained about it; she wasn't getting the money. [laughs] So we tried to figure out if she was in Germany, who was with him at White Sands. I guess I know this because I was getting the

correspondence; any problems and so on would go to my desk at the Pentagon [14:00]. And Cone [14:02] took over command of Project Paperclip [14:07] when it went up to Mitchel Field [14:10]. Again, I'm not sure I did anything up at Mitchel Field [14:15]. [laughs] I don't remember doing anything. He was the commanding officer and he had his staff, and I only worked for him again when he took a small group to the Pentagon [14:33]. Another group was sent to the port to receive the scientists and process them into the country. Another group was out in the field probably checking on them. But we were split up, as the orders will show, the ones we were looking at. So there were only Key [15:00] and I and Major Falwell [spelled phonetically]. He was executive officer of the Exploitation Branch under Colonel Cone [15:15], C-O-N-E again. Coincidentally, Helen's [15:22] niece was the secretary to the colonel.

BB: This was at 1142 [15:32]?

AK: No, this was at the Pentagon [15:34].

SK: The transition from what was going on at 1142 [15:38] to the Pentagon [15:42] not only included a change in who the commander was, were there any other changes that you were aware of?

AK: Almost all the personnel, almost all, not the -- some of the [16:00] -- let's see, they're not interrogators; they're case officers. That's really who the special interrogators were. And some were -- Arndt [16:13], no, he wasn't, but there's a guy named Wolf and a bunch of others. I can't remember the names right now. Actually, I met them in Germany again later when I went over there. They were still in the business, as it were, interrogating and so on.

VS: Sticking with 1142 [16:41] for a minute, though, during the break you were talking about

how you would take these German scientists into Washington.

AK: Yes.

VS: Could you tell us a little bit about that?

AK: Yes. In the military, in intelligence anyhow [17:00], there's something called a confidential fund, which funds all kinds of interesting things. If I was scheduled to entertain the scientists who were living at Fort Hunt [17:19] at the time, I would go to this guy whom I met later, so I know his name, Colonel Dean [17:27], and pick up 20, 30, \$50, \$100, I don't remember what it was, and then that would pay the way. We might have hired a bus or used one of the military buses to take them to Washington and go to some nightclub, dinner, and I would pay for everything, and also run interference so that [18:00] nobody bothered them. If somebody got suspicious, what were these Germans doing, talking German, I would be able to take care of it.

BB: Were you in uniform?

AK: Yes.

SK: Were you taking individuals or were you taking groups?

AK: Small groups, half a dozen.

BB: And the intent of this was to keep them happy, per se?

AK: Yes. If they were delayed at Fort Hunt [18:38], say for a week or two weeks, we'd give them an outing.

BB: Do you know if -- where or when along the line was the decision made to send a German scientist to one location or another? Who decided to send this person to White Sands, send this person to Wright Field or Wright-Patterson, and so on and so forth?

AK: Most of the time it came from the agency requesting a certain -- either a scientist by name

or a skill. Then over in Germany that part of Paperclip [19:24] would locate them, recruit them, process them, and put them on a ship to this country, and then we would take over and send them to where they had been requested.

BB: Can you give any examples of the types of scientists who passed through? You mentioned von Braun [19:52] and his rocket group. Were there any other examples of scientific specialties that passed [20:00] through?

AK: They're not really scientists, but I mentioned these amputees. I'm sure there were some doctors who were specialists in this work, and probably the word "specialist" is a better way of describing all these people. Only a few of them were what we would call scientists, but they had different specialties. I mentioned the wind tunnel. I mentioned the dry dock. That's what that is called. And the tugs, planes, airplane motors, probably bombs as well, all variety of specialists whom we wanted and [21:00] whom we also wanted to keep the Russians from getting.

VS: Do you have any idea of how many German scientists or specialists were brought into this country? Was it in the hundreds or more than that?

AK: Before it was finished, I left before Paperclip [21:23] was finished. I would guess, as a guess, around 200.

SK: As part of the recruitment -- this may be outside of your area -- when they were recruiting these scientists, were they providing them opportunities for citizenship? Were they offering them opportunities to bring family members over? Was that any part of what you were involved in?

AK: No. The recruiters did that [22:00]. The recruiters put them under contract, a formal contract, and that contract would say whether they could bring anyone else in or whether

they can expect to become a citizen.

VS: Were they, for the most part, willing to come in?

AK: Yes.

VS: Were they pressured?

AK: No one was ever brought in against his will.

BB: Do you know if any of the specialists who were brought in -- there's really no way to sugarcoat this -- had been involved in war crimes or anything like that, or maybe just questionable activities, diehard members of the Nazi [22:48] Party or anything like that?

AK: I suspect that there were a few in von Braun's [22:53] group. One of the women had been a gauleiter [23:00], a regional chief, female chief, and unfortunately, at White Sands, I believe, she worked as a kindergarten teacher, and that upset a lot of people when it became known that she had been an active Nazi [23:23].

BB: She was the spouse of one of those people?

AK: Yes, of one of them. There was a guy named Rudolf, I think who was deported, from the von Braun [23:37] group. It was in the papers. As a matter of fact, that was the first I read where Paperclip [23:52] was made known, as far as I recall.

VS: Was there ever any Justice [24:00] Department or FBI [24:02] inquiry regarding some of the individuals coming through 1142 [24:08]?

AK: No. The only correspondence -- and I got all of that kind of stuff -- was from a Jewish agency that questioned bringing Nazis [24:28], no matter who they were, and letting them become citizens.

VS: Did someone have to address that, develop a response?

AK: Me.

VS: You.

AK: Yes, but not over my signature. That kind of stuff assigned -- as a matter of fact, something that I thought was very amusing, I got a letter from one of the recruiters in Germany asking about changing [25:00] the wording of a contract. It was awkward, or something like that. So I staffed it, which means I go around to any agency that is interested. For example, in the Pentagon [25:18], I went to the Judge Advocate to ask if this change would be okay. I finally wrote up a letter saying, "Sure. Go ahead," and took it to the colonel, because everything I sent had to be approved. He told me to make it for his signature, so I rewrote the letter for his signature. He took it to the executive intelligence, who said to rewrite it for his signature. That was a colonel, full colonel [26:00]. I rewrote it. It went to the director of intelligence, who took it to the secretary of the Army, and all the time the wording had to be changed. Instead of, "Go ahead and do this," it was for "action," "for action deemed advisable," "for your information," and finally it went from the secretary of the Army to the general in charge in Europe, "for your information." So I wrote another letter to this captain in Germany, told him, "Go ahead" [laughs].

VS: Did you work with the State Department, or was the State Department aware of the fact that you were bringing in these enemy aliens to the country [27:00], offering them opportunities to stay here? Were they involved in those --

AK: They knew all about it, every one of the agencies. After the military, towards the end of my work in the Pentagon [27:19], other agencies showed interest. I mentioned the surgeon general, for the amputees. The Department of the Interior, various others. They would ask for certain people, so some of these specialists would go to them. There was a

special wording, "No longer needed by the military. Available." Finally they were allowed to go to private business.

VS: I believe in your first [28:00] interview you talked about a questionnaire that went off to the agencies that they filled out requesting these specialists.

AK: Yes. They had to certify that it was in national interest, a very formal document, the wording I don't remember any longer, but it was very specific. Then the military had to say, "We no longer have any further interest. Go ahead."

BB: We have about three minutes of this tape

VS: Question. Are you familiar with the ALSOS Program?

AK: No.

BB: It was an abbreviation. It was A-L-S-O-S [29:00].

VS: We're curious because it sounds an awful lot like Paperclip [29:08], but it was the European portion of it, where they were trying to locate and capture and bring back these scientists to America, and, boy, Paperclip [29:21] sounds extremely similar to that. Were they part of the same program with a different portion of the government working on that?

AK: Let's see. I'm sure that what they called defectors were brought over under the program, and this -- getting close to being secret -- the entire defector program was secret. Nothing that I'm talking about [30:00].

VS: There's a DVD production that we have in our files. Maybe we'll send that to you and let you take a look at it. We'd like to see what your opinion is, because they talk specifically about trying to track down and locate Wernher von Braun [30:19] and others, and how they got him and brought him back to this country. In fact, he was hiding, and

the way they depict it, part of his fleeing and moving around, is he was in an automobile accident, was injured. He actually had a big cast on his arm in that famous photograph of him being brought into this country. We'll send that to you. See what you think.

BB: Let's go ahead and flip the tape real quick. I want to readjust your microphone there real quick.

(End of Tape 3A)

(Beginning of Tape 3B)

VS: Were you aware of any other nationalities other than German scientists coming through Paperclip [00:06]?

AK: I would guess; I don't recall specifically. I would guess Austrian and I know of one Hungarian, but not -- I only know of him being picked up through this other intelligence agency I worked for in Germany. This is after I left Paperclip [00:40]. They processed him, and he was Hungarian. But I would guess -- well, yes, there were some Russians.

VS: Russians defected and came to our country?

AK: Under a different status. I don't [01:00] know whether it was exactly Paperclip [01:03]. See, I was in Germany at the time. The people would have been those of, we called it, the Vlasov group. You've heard of that. This is the Army, the Russian Army, a division that worked with the Germans. It was a bad idea because it took three or four German divisions to watch this Russian Army, because they were interested in themselves, not in the German cause. So you had defectors from that group, and many of them were scientists or specialists.

VS: It may not have been a part of Paperclip [01:51], but being late in the war when they transferred some Japanese interrogators and prisoners to 1142 [02:00], was there ever an

instance where there may have been a Japanese scientist that was brought to this country?

AK: The only ones that I know of -- and this was during -- when prisoners were coming in -- was that Japanese group from Germany, from the Japanese foreign office, the embassy in Germany. That's the only group that I'm aware of.

VS: And they weren't necessarily scientists?

AK: No, they were not.

BB: Can you expand upon that anymore, what you remember about that group, about maybe how many there were and what the interests were?

AK: That was the -- I think there were about a dozen, no more. That was the group that I mentioned who were first housed -- this is after the German prisoners were gone. They were first housed in the A compound [03:00] and objected to it because of the barred-windows atmosphere, and suspected, I suppose, that they were being taped and were driven in this closed van around the post for half an hour, housed in one of the other buildings, by which time they had microphones installed. That's the story that I heard. I don't know anything else about it.

BB: I think you mentioned earlier that you remember one of these individuals was the Japanese ambassador to Japan -- excuse me, to Germany?

AK: Whether it was the ambassador himself, I don't know, but it was certainly the group, the embassy, the people in the embassy [04:00], which was tricky because they're not supposed to be --

BB: Right, they're diplomats.

AK: Yes. They have immunity.

BB: Do you have any idea what sort of information they were trying to get from them?

AK: No. They just wanted to eavesdrop, see what they were talking about. They were on their way back to be repatriated in Japan.

BB: In this whole discussion of scientific specialists in Operation Paperclip [04:44], were you aware of the facilities up in Boston at Fort Strong [04:51]? It was called Long Island in Boston Harbor.

AK: Only [05:00] by name, as I mentioned, and the fact that you showed me those orders.

BB: But just by name. You don't remember at all what was going on there, folks coming and going from there?

AK: I probably did, but I have forgotten.

BB: Okay.

VS: You picked up German scientists in New York. Was it Staten Island or Long Island, New York?

AK: Staten Island. The Army -- there was a special area where Army supplies -- during the war, there was another place that was in Brooklyn, a big place [06:00]. That's where I embarked to go to England. But this was a much smaller area on Staten Island.

BB: And these were, again, scientists or specialists coming in. This is where they had first arrived in the United States, presumably?

AK: Yes.

BB: Do you remember how they were transported? I mean, would it be on military transportation, a bus or --

AK: Yes.

BB: A train or usually a bus?

AK: I would bring a bus up, a regular Greyhound bus, and bring them back to Fort Hunt

[06:47] by bus.

BB: Would there be guards involved at all?

AK: No.

BB: Or did you have trust, since these were not military prisoners per se?

AK: No, I was the only military with them [07:00].

VS: Were they given perks? Were they given gifts, money, things like that, to keep them happy, keep them satisfied?

AK: Yes, I'm sure they had pocket money to go to the PX and see the movies, to buy stuff at the PX.

VS: But they weren't free Americans. They just couldn't, you know, run off to Alexandria when they wanted. They had limits?

AK: Yes, they had to stay on post unless I took them into Washington, D.C. Some of the others might have taken them also. I don't know. But that was one of my jobs.

BB: When the scientists were at 1142 [07:54], were there still some military prisoners there, or is there a clearer line [08:00] in your mind of when the military prisoners stopped and the scientists began?

AK: Not prisoners per se. They were repatriated. But those that defected, ex-prisoners who said they were out of -- who were worthwhile as far as the military was concerned, who wanted to stay were still at 1142 [08:35], one being this Russian gentleman I mentioned, whom I met later here.

VS: Did they just wear civilian clothes that they brought with them, or did you provide them with some sort of clothing that identified them?

AK: No, nothing to identify them as who they were [09:00]. Where they got their clothing,

probably thought the PX and the post tailor and so on.

VS: So they looked like civilians?

AK: Yes. Well, they came over dressed in German civilian clothes.

VS: Did they try to Americanize them by giving them American fashion?

AK: No, not especially.

VS: Okay.

BB: And so, can you -- any more questions about the scientific side of things?

VS: Can you, in your own words, explain to us what the Exploitation Branch was and its role and function?

AK: Paperclip [09:49] was one of the many code words that the military uses. That described the entire program. The [10:00] military section in the Pentagon [10:04] was officially the Exploitation Branch, branch being where it sat in the hierarchy. Branch, as I mentioned, division, something or other branch, section, desk. So the Exploitation Branch was what it was called in the Pentagon [10:32], on the general staff. Then someplace there you'll notice that I was appointed to the general staff, which was a cheat, because I tried to get the big badge. It's a beautiful thing, but they wouldn't give it to me. [laughs] I'm still mad about it. Very unfair.

BB: [11:00] So again, when you were dealing with Paperclip [11:05], was any of this from the Pentagon [11:08] or was this all at 1142 [11:12] in terms of where you were located?

AK: At 1142 [11:16], it was only the Scientific Branch [11:19]. Paperclip [11:19] didn't exist yet. That was the name that was given to the project after it was reestablished with the headquarters in the Pentagon [11:33].

BB: Really? Okay.

AK: It didn't really exist while we were at Mitchel Field [11:39].

BB: Really.

AK: Yes.

BB: So we're talking about a couple of years, then, after the war ended, until you really heard the term Paperclip [11:47]?

AK: Not years. I think months, that's all, at the most. Closed down Fort Ord, moved everybody to Mitchel Field [12:00], stayed there a month, say, two months, and then split up and the headquarters went to the Pentagon [12:12] and that officially would be Paperclip [12:14].

VS: But actually, activities that are Paperclip-like [12:24] were occurring at 1142 [12:26] prior to an official name being given to that program.

AK: Yes, there it was Scientific Branch [12:32].

VS: Okay. And so what was the role of 1142 [12:37] versus the role of the Pentagon [12:40] for Paperclip [12:42] or pre-Paperclip [12:43]?

AK: Scientific Branch [12:45]?

VS: Yes.

AK: That was under CPM still. It was just a different activity. You had X, Y [13:00]. The attachés also come under the Intelligence Division, and you had the program, the Scientific Branch [13:10] program also under the Intelligence Division. Our superiors were in the Pentagon [13:18].

BB: While you were at 1142 [13:23], in charge of the Scientific Section [13:26], were you aware of other sections that were still working at 1142 [13:31]?

AK: Yes. Like I mentioned, X [13:33] was almost finished. Y [13:38], which was just about

finished, was some of the stay-behinds in the cabins and elsewhere, and Scientific Section [13:52]. Could have been something else. I don't know.

BB: Could you help us differentiate between [14:00] the Y [14:01] Program and the Scientific Section? Was it that the Y [14:06] Section was more of an interrogation section?

AK: Yes. The Y [14:10] was prisoner-of-war [14:12] interrogation. Assets or -- sometimes they're called, or sources. They were a variety of people as prisoners of war [14:27].

BB: You mentioned that some of the prisoners who were being interviewed, interrogated in the Y [14:36] Section, they were in those cabins?

AK: Yes.

BB: Were there ever folks from the Scientific Section [14:44] put in those cabins, or were they all held in A?

AK: I don't recall. I'm sure they might have. Whatever was available [15:00].

BB: And from your recollection, though, with the Y [15:05] program, were those cabins bugged? Did they have microphones?

AK: All the cabins were bugged. All of them. Plus, as I mentioned, the paths.

VS: Do you want to ask about MIRS [15:21]?

BB: Sure. Are you aware of another program known as the Military Intelligence Research Section, or MIRS?

AK: Well, part of X [15:40] must have been.

BB: They seem to be not X [15:47] and not Y [15:48]. They were their own section. You may not have been aware of them because from what we've been reading, they moved from 1142 [15:57] to Camp Ritchie [16:00] around July of 1945, and you wouldn't have been at 1142 [16:05] yet.

AK: I don't know about Camp Ritchie, but there was some other places where I think the materiel went. I think somebody thought that's where I was, because there's a mysterious order transferring me from that place to CPM. You may have come across it. I had no idea what it was. It had a funny name.

VS: We recently found an archive that had a piece of paper with a roster that listed MIS-Y [16:44] personnel, MIS-X [16:47] personnel, MIRS [16:49] personnel, and at the bottom there was one name that was listed under what was referenced MIWD.

BB: Was it MIS-WD [17:00]?

VS: It may have been MIS-WD, but it was a WD. It's equivalently written hyphenated, like the X, like the Y, and the RS.

AK: MIS is intelligence. WD would be war department.

VS: Okay. We had struggled with that a little bit. There was a western defense that was referenced as well. War department is also an option. Are you familiar with that, why that would be separated on that sheet of paper, singling it out, the MISWD?

AK: If it's something like western division, it could be a foreign agent. It could be. I'm just guessing. I don't know.

VS: This is way out there, but one of the things that [18:00] we haven't gotten a lot of information on, but it certainly is an interesting discussion, and that is what sort of communication was going on between the Japanese and the Germans, and linking maybe intelligence they were gathering in the Pacific with things that they were gathering in Europe. Is it possible that WD may serve the role of crossing over the intelligence from Europe and the intelligence from the Pacific?

AK: No. There's a dramatic story of a super spy who -- I think they made a movie of that. I

think a German went to Japan and was -- I only have a vague memory. It could have been something like that [19:00].

VS: Brandon can tell you the story very well, but it's a story of U-boat 234. I'll let Brandon tell it. He's much better.

BB: There was a U-boat, and there may have been some holdovers from this group still at 1142 [19:21] when you were there, so please cut me off if you recognize this story at all. But at the very end of the war, the Germans were realizing all was lost, so they took their largest U-boat, it was a mine-laying submarine, and filled it not full of mine, but full of the latest German technology, disassembled Messerschmitt jet fighters, key components to the V-1 and V-2, hundreds upon hundreds of boxes of documents on scientific devices, and 560 kilograms of uranium [20:00], as well as about a dozen of their leading scientists, engineers, people with knowledge of their nuclear program, of their entire anti-aircraft defense program, of infrared and radar, all sorts of things, and put them all on this submarine, and it was bound for Japan to transfer all of this technology and these scientists to the Japanese. Well, not quite halfway through, the war ended, and the German crew essentially said, "To hell with this. This is a suicide mission. We're giving up." And they surrendered to the Americans, and every single crew member and scientist and potentially a lot of that technology all went to 1142 [20:55]. This would have been around the very late spring, early summer of '45 [21:00], and we do know for a fact that a number of those scientists and specialists who were on the U-234, on their way to Japan, stayed at 1142 [21:10] for quite some time being debriefed, and a couple of them ended up, almost as in like Paperclip [21:19], staying in the United States, bringing their family over, and living out the rest of their lives here in the United States.

AK: It could be true, but that's one story I never heard of.

VS: There's a book on it, and if you're interested, we can send you that title. But it seems like your Scientific Section [21:44] should have had some role with that group. There was some uranium oxide that was on that U-boat. So we were curious if you had any knowledge about it [22:00]. Perhaps it was something that was already contained once you were around.

AK: It's not fair. I should know about everything [laughs]. That one I know nothing about.

VS: Was there any communication you know with 1142 [22:18] and the Manhattan Project [22:19]?

AK: They would be kept completely separate. They had their own code system. It's strictly "need to know." I've got a top-secret clearance plus a signal intelligence clearance, which has special codes, so secret that I don't even know -- remember them anymore. That's honest. I just don't remember, I must say. So I'm privy to a [23:00] lot of secret information that many people don't have, but that one, no. Later on, when I worked as a training officer, operations and training, at an MI battalion, this was combat intelligence, I sent some of the officers to where the atomic bomb was demonstrated. You may have read some of them, I think, are still suffering from it because they brought them over the ground too soon. I didn't go; I sent them. That's when [24:00] I first went to combat intelligence school. Later I went to the postgraduate-level strategic intelligence school in Washington.

BB: In wrapping things up a little bit, could you tell us a little bit about the transfer, the shutting down of 1142 [24:27], anything you remember about that and where the unit went after that?

AK: Well, the unit is what we took up to Mitchel Field [24:41], everyone, and you saw the orders, about 100 of us.

BB: It looked that way, yes.

AK: And then there's the other set of orders on smaller sheets from Washington [25:00], which says where all those people went, different sections of places and rooms. That is what actually my orders to 1142 [25:16] should have read. They should have sent me to a room in the Pentagon [25:21] and from there taken me down. So somebody made a mistake.

BB: When you left 1142 [25:32], your entire section, do you remember if there were many hangers-on, any folks who were still left behind from other sections or other personnel?

AK: Not at Fort Hunt [25:43]. It was closed down and it was given back to the park.

BB: But as I think Vincent asked earlier, you weren't present for any of the demolition of buildings or anything?

AK: No. I was present at [26:00] the official closing down of the post, but not of -- the engineers probably came in and bulldozed the stuff.

VS: When you say "official closing," what do you mean?

AK: Everybody, all the military people, left and went up to Mitchel Field [26:20]. No military was left behind, as far as I remember.

VS: So was there one day that was designated that "Today it's officially closed?"

AK: Yes. The orders sending everyone up, that was the official day. Key [26:37] and I, and I think another couple of officers, may have stayed there another day or so.

BB: How long were you at Mitchel Field [26:46] for?

AK: I could look up the orders, but about three months, I guess, over the winter.

BB: Again, was it essentially [27:00] you were doing the same work as you had been at 1142 [27:05], just now Mitchel Field [27:06]?

AK: No. I don't remember doing any work.

BB: Any German scientists at Mitchel Field [27:14]?

AK: No. I don't think any of them were being brought over during that time. It was only after the orders came out that some of the men who had been at 1142 [27:33] went to the port in Staten Island. Some went elsewhere. Colonel Cone [27:41] and Key [27:42] and I and two other officers went to the Pentagon [27:49].

BB: So you went to the Pentagon [27:54]. Again, what, in general, was your assignment at the Pentagon [28:00]?

AK: The operations desk. Key [28:06] kept on as the administrative officer.

BB: This was still for Paperclip [28:11]?

AK: This was just Paperclip [28:13].

BB: Just Paperclip [28:14].

AK: Exploitation Branch.

[inaudible commentary]

BB: Sure, we're actually going to be stopping in a minute or two.

MALE SPEAKER: I won't stop you. I just want to ask one question.

BB: Sure, if you'd like, we can go ahead and actually just stop right now. That's no problem.

MS: Okay then.

BB: No, that's fine.

[audio break]

BB: You were in operations for Paperclip [28:39]. You were head operations officer for

Paperclip [28:41]?

AK: Right.

BB: Do you remember what sorts of tasks you were doing at that point in the Pentagon [28:46]?

AK: You're talking about Paperclip [28:51].

BB: Yes.

AK: I explained that Paperclip [28:54] was the codeword for the program, the whole program [29:00]. At the Pentagon [29:01], I was in a section of the branch called Exploitation Branch. Exploitation Branch did Paperclip [29:14].

BB: Got you.

AK: So that's it. I was the operations desk that anything required, as I mentioned, correspondence that changed policy, that had to do with processing requests and so on, went over my desk.

BB: Okay. So, for example, is that where you mentioned this incident where a letter came in from somebody realizing that, you know, hey, I'm not getting my benefits? You know, that would have been at the Pentagon [29:54], not 1142 [29:55]?

AK: Yes. That would probably come to me, pass over my desk [30:00].

BB: If you wouldn't mind, the last minute or so, just briefly summarizing the rest of your military career.

AK: Let's see. I got tired of trying to find a parking place at the Pentagon [30:21], sometimes a mile away, and you weren't supposed to be late, ever. So I would have to then dash to, say, the judge advocate general's office and call from there and say, "This is where I am," even if I had been late. So I asked -- I went to the office that handles this and asked

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[end of transcript]

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