

Fort Hunt Oral History
P.O. Box 1142
George Washington Memorial Parkway
Interview with William Hershberger
by Brandon Bies
September 29, 2010

WILLIAM HERSHBERGER: Believe it or not, we had a computer. Did you ever hear about it?

INTERVIEWER: No.

WH: No? We had a computer about two city blocks.

INT: I think it's working.

WH: It had radio tubes in it. And a guy came to see me one day [laughs]. He wanted some help with his radio tubes. That computer -- I shouldn't laugh about it, but it had tubes, old tubes in it, and you know how a basic computer works. They had a crew of people in there, and all they did [01:00] was change tubes.

INT: Oh, boy.

WH: And in there, what they stored, were all the predicted and past experiences of weather that they had so they could project a lightning day on one of the islands out there. Well, the guy came to see me, and because of his problem with these tubes, it was tremendous -- I mean, it was an early computer, and it was with the radio tubes in it. And he was real proud of it. He had all these people working with him, and, sure enough, he got it complete, and he was able to -- he took weather reports [02:00] from way back, and he predicted them, and that's what the troops used to make the landings in the --

INT: So this computer was used only for the Pacific Theater [02:12].

WH: It was only -- the only thing I know was it had the weather, past weather, and predicted weather, for the Far East in the Pacific. This was when they were getting up towards Japan [02:34]. This was the turn of the war. And he was real proud of that computer. So,

these are just byproducts that mainly you run into -- I didn't have much to do with it, but it was an interesting exercise to see them [03:00] run a computer that way at that time.

INT: Did they call it a computer at that time?

WH: Yeah.

INT: Did they?

WH: Yeah.

INT: I think Brandon's going to do an introduction.

INT: I'm just going to give a quick introduction for everyone, and then we'll maybe ask you a few more questions, including the easy one I told you I was going to ask you first. This is an oral history interview as part of the National Park Service's Fort Hunt [03:30] Oral History Project. Today is September 29th, 2010. This is an interview with Mr. William Hershberger, a former officer at P.O. Box 1142 [03:44]. This is Brandon Bies with the National Park Service joined by Vincent Santucci and David Lassman of the Park Service and National Park Service volunteer Dan Gross. This is the first in a series of recorded interviews with Mr. Hershberger [04:00]. And Mr. Hershberger, just like I told you, the first question I wanted to ask to start at the beginning is when and where were you born?

WH: I was born in Sugar Creek, Ohio, May the 29th, 1916.

INT: And did you have any siblings, brothers or sisters?

WH: Yes; I had five brothers.

INT: Were you in the middle, or?

WH: No. Well, I was -- half of the time there were five, and I was in the middle. It was always the three oldest do the hard stuff, and the three youngest get to --

INT: Yeah.

WH: -- it was shifted back and forth. So --

INT: And growing up, did you just go the local schools [05:00] and what not? Did you know what you wanted to be when you grew up? Did you have any interests when you were a kid?

WH: Oh, yes. I went to, believe it or not, a one-room schoolhouse. We had a nice library. We had books, for some reason, in there that told us all about foreign countries and everything like that. And so took the usual thing with first grade, second grade, third grade, and all those. And you finally get up in sixth grade and so forth, and I went to high school from there. But while I was in the grade school, eight-year grade school, at a simple, little [06:00], small school, we came across a book that had all of the features of the Greek empire, and we read all about the Parthenon, and we never could figure out how it all stayed together. So when we were in school at that age, we found out how it was they would carve those columns --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- and they would then, after they carve them in place, then they made little containers up in the ends, and to keep things in place, they'd pour laid into that.

INT: Really.

WH: So when an earthquake [07:00] came, everything shook, everything-- it'd stay in place. And we always read this in school, and that's one of the things that fascinated us. I mean how in the world they were -- years later, in my travels, I was on a round-the-world trip, I came -- I left Italy, Rome, and I went and stopped in Athens. And I got myself a seat on that site, and I -- the first thing I did, I saw Melany [phonetic], I saw the Parthenon and saw all that. So the first thing I did, I went in, the hotel person gave me a room, real nice

[08:00], and I went out and I looked at the Parthenon and all that stuff. That was when I was in the first grade.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: Not the first grade, the eighth grade -- the seventh -- six, seventh and eighth.

INT: Yeah.

WH: I was fascinated by that, and I had a friend who was fascinated by that.

INT: So did that influence what you wanted to do when you got older?

WH: About that time, Lindberg [08:31] flew across the ocean, and everything had to do like Lindberg did. And that's what put me on doing what I did later on.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: And the main thing about that was when you, at that time, talked about it, that was a very dangerous business [09:00], so people taught me, you should get into electronics, so that's what I got into, electronics. And I finished high school. And the reason, in high school, we had -- German people lived in Ohio, in Sugar Creek, in that area; has a lot of German people in it. So that was a language that they taught there. So I had two years of solid German language.

INT: In high school?

WH: In high school.

INT: Okay.

WH: And then I can -- I was real amazed with that, because when I came to Fort Hunt [09:57], I got in contact [10:00] with the people there, all the college professors we had. And they said, "Where'd you learn to talk German?" I said, "Well, they teach you in high school, had two years of college." And said, "What did you study?" And when I gave them the

subjects we studied, “Oh,” they said, “that’s college grade; I teach that in school.”

College. That’s where I learned German.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: It’s -- even German songs. Which -- they were very useful --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- to me in later life.

INT: Uh-huh. So did you go straight from high school to college?

WH: No, not straight. The first year, I worked in a cabinet shop. And [11:00] then I saved money and I went to Valparaiso Technical Institute [11:07], Valparaiso, Indiana.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: And I studied electronics there. I studied under a man named Hersman [phonetic]; he was a real, real professor. The electronic books that were published at that time, those guys were all friends.

INT: Yeah.

WH: Irey [phonetic], and so forth. So I got a real good background in what you should do when you fiddle around with electronics. And the one thing you don’t want to do is wet your fingers and see if [laughs] [inaudible] [12:00].

INT: And so did you graduate? Was that a four-year electronics program?

WH: No, that was about a year and a half.

INT: Okay.

WH: Before that, I had -- I went to school with -- in Chicago, and also an electronic course, mathematics, and so forth. So I had the mathematics and all that along with it, and this helped a lot. Valparaiso [12:40] had much more -- they had a lot of different things, they

had a lot of operators, telegraph operators, and all kinds. But that's the basic background I had.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: In a technical area [13:00]. And I followed that in what I did all my life.

INT: And so what did you do after you left Valparaiso [13:15]?

WH: Well, I worked at a radio station in Scott's Bluff, Nebraska. And then I went to -- I wanted to get in on the Great Lakes telegraph operator in Great Lakes, and then they were on -- let's see -- yeah -- they were on -- they had some trouble with their -- everybody belongs to the union, and some union troubles or something [14:00]. So I went on and -- I got home, and that's where I think I mentioned to you, where I ran into Sears, Roebuck, and Company [14:16]. The place, that was Canton, Ohio. So I went in there, and they asked me about fixing the radios and stuff. So I did. And they had a whole roomful. So I fixed all the radios in that room. And they liked it so much, that was really, really a big thing. And then Delta Airlines [14:53] was building the airline at that time, and [15:00] they learned about my work there. And so I went down -- we built transmitters. We built the radio station for the Delta Airlines [15:17], and I worked with Delta and the flight paths receivers and all that. So, my work was pretty much electronic --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- in that area, all the way through.

INT: And were you working one of these jobs when the war broke out? When Pearl Harbor [15:40] was bombed?

WH: Yes, I was at WFMJ in Youngstown, Ohio [15:44], which was the radio station there;

Noble newspaper had it. And I was in the control room. I did program work [16:00].

We had announcers and all that, and we had to work the controls. We also had recording equipment, the old type of recording. Spirals stuff and all that. And the big discs, and all that. And I worked in Youngstown [16:24] then before the war. And then I was drafted and was put in the 37th Division [16:38] for Ohio. And shipped off to Camp Shelby [16:47], Mississippi.

INT: And so this is before the war, you were drafted before the --

WH: Before.

INT: Before December 7th you were drafted; okay.

WH: So [17:00] when I arrived down there, to show you how modern we were, I think I mentioned it --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: --we had people who weren't -- we got dressed and got off the train and everything and all that. And they gave a couple of people the old World War I leggings that you wind around--

INT: Yeah; the puttees.

WH: And we had the crank machine. You cranked the radio --

INT: The G-Man.

WH: We had a G-Man, and the operator, and you know what happens there, see. So that was the equipment we first had for the first three months. And they slowly started sending in other equipment.

INT: You said you were with the 37th Division [17:58]?

WH: Yeah.

INT: And were you [18:00] immediately, specifically assigned to work in radios?

WH: Yeah.

INT: Okay. So you were --

WH: I was in the Signal Corps [18:10].

INT: So, radios, Signal Corps attached to the 30th --

WH: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

WH: I was assigned to the unit, and I took my turn at G-Man. You don't know the G-Man, huh? G-Man's the generator --

INT: The generator man; he sits there, and it almost looks like a bicycle, right, that he's just cranking?

WH: Yeah. And he sends a message. And then the guy makes a mistake, so you've got to "G" it all over again. And that just -- well, that changed after we were down there.

INT: And you got --

WH: Started getting --

INT: You started getting batteries, right?

WH: Get the equipment so we don't have to have that [19:00]. But this was early, and it -- and then, right there, because I had been in the broadcast station WFMJ, they came down and they wanted a program for the hometown folks, so I put on a program. I was the engineer for -- get the microphones, and also for the music, you have to take care of that. So I was busy all the time when I was down there with that equipment.

INT: Do you recall roundabouts when you were drafted? Was it sometime in 1941?

WH: January.

INT: January of '41? Okay. So you spent three months at Camp Shelby [20:00], Mississippi?

WH: Well, three months, the first three months, we had to kind of make do. And then they started sending in the equipment. And then we were there until December the 7th; that's when the war broke out. And when we got up to that point, in the meantime, I worked -- there were three or four radio stations I worked for, and the Army started with the program for the troops and so forth. And I ran a lot of those for -- at our post in Camp Shelby [20:47]. And then we spent time on our actual training. [Dwight] Eisenhower [21:00] was our chief down there.

INT: Did you remember -- did you actually meet him when you were down there?

WH: Oh, sure. Sure. I was a radio operator, and I had a vehicle assigned to me, and we were out on maneuvers; played the real thing. And then all those things around New Orleans and everything else; there always was something. The training was really, really -- we had competent people, and we had the Signal Corps [21:52] unit that I was in was from Columbus, Ohio, the company was [22:00]. And it finally got good equipment and everything, and it was well equipped. And when December 7th came along, then we got ready to go to Indiantown Gap [22:17] --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- to get ready to go to the Solomon Islands [22:20]. And then that's where they came in and took us selected people to go to officer's school.

INT: Okay. So what was your highest rank as an enlisted man?

WH: Sergeant.

INT: Okay. And as a sergeant you were then selected to go to Fort Monmouth [22:49]?

WH: Yes.

INT: Okay. Was that something that you requested, or did they just say, "This is a bright guy; we want him" --?

WH: They came and examined, they needed people, they knew my background technically [23:00]. And I was running the programs for the radio stations, so I was familiar with all that. So, it just is a natural thing. And then the area of Fort Monmouth [23:25] was, well, that was interesting. It was the first run-in with the radio detection devices, he was in my class.

INT: And can you mention that -- you had mentioned that earlier, but that's an interesting little tidbit, since we're recording. Could you say again who this person was who was in your class [24:00]?

WH: Who was what?

INT: Could you just repeat that story again about who one of your classmates was?

WH: Oh, yeah. Well, he's the one who ran the radar [24:09] unit and spotted the Japanese coming into Hawaii.

INT: And so, he, too, was being made -- going through the Officer's School at the same time you were?

WH: Yes; he was at the school at the same time.

INT: And was yours the very first class of officers to go through, or had there been previous officers?

WH: One of the first ones, yes.

INT: Okay.

WH: I think the first, the second one; something. Our training people who taught us the training -- the marching and so forth, even though we were Signal Corps [24:51] people -

- they were West Point people and they wanted to make sure that these new recruits knew [25:00] how to walk.

INT: Can you talk a little bit about what sorts of training you received at Fort Monmouth [25:12]? Was this -- it sounds like you did lots of marching, but were you learning technical bits of information, or was it more how to be an officer in the Signal Corps [25:23]?

WH: It had all of those.

INT: Okay.

WH: And to give you an indication, these marches, we had the person who taught you marching and so forth, formations and all that sort of a thing, he would stand on the grounds in front of the building where we had assembled. He marches around the whole building, and you hear him [26:00] all the way around. And if we didn't do it right, we found out about it. You had to do it and do it right. And training was very, very, very strict. Because we were some of the first louies [lieutenants] being -- and you want to make sure that certain things were --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: And for me, it was a good thing. Because later on, in this work I had to do, and so forth, I had to work in various places. And if you didn't know the military procedures, why, you could quickly get yourself in a bind.

INT: When you were at Fort Monmouth [26:57], were you taught anything specific to military intelligence [27:00]? Or anything related to code work?

WH: The only part they were interested in were people who could speak German. And so, I just listed I had German and had 12 years of -- or, two years of high school German. And

they apparently picked that up, so --

INT: Did you receive any training in codes, or anything like that? How to send a code?

WH: Yeah. I knew the code; I mean, from my radio training.

INT: Okay.

WH: I knew the codes, and so forth.

INT: Okay.

WH: Those were radio amateurs, so -- and so, at that time, the amount [28:00] of people in this kind of work was not too large, and so you knew most of the people who were in that type of work. So information got around fast.

INT: And could you then talk about what happened to -- this was a three-month course in officer training at Fort Monmouth [28:28]?

WH: What happened?

INT: I'm sorry. It took approximately three months -- is that how long?

WH: Yeah.

INT: And then you were commissioned a second lieutenant in the Signal Corps [28:39]?

WH: Yeah.

INT: And what happened after that? Where was your next assignment?

WH: Well, the first assignment -- they said we could get home leave, and then my first assignment was Panama [28:53]. And so I came on home leave [29:00] and then went to New Orleans, waited for a boat to go to Panama [29:08]. And we spent about, oh, two months down there before a boat became available. The -- at that time, I didn't know as much about submarines as I did after I got to Fort Hunt [29:33].

INT: Have you -- would you have been a little more nervous if you knew what you later

learned about U-boats [29:45]?

WH: Well, we did -- it altered the time for departure in the evening, and after being there for about two months [30:00], back and forth, waiting to go, they established to go one night before, and then the next night, or that night, came along and said no go. And then, they didn't say anything, and we got on the boat and left the next night. And we slipped out, and we had no problems with any subs at that time. Of course, I was second [lieutenant] louie so I was an appointed officer on board ship with people who had been in the military for about 10 or 12 days. And they were down below: they won't eat their breakfast; they were crying; they never had any training. It was a good introduction [31:00]. So, we got to Panama [31:09] okay, and when we got there, then we -- they put all the lights out so to go through the canal area. And then, as we got to the western part of it, then they got an alarm or something and they let loose with the anti-aircraft fire. But it was all dark, and you had to make your way into your quarters. That was the first part.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: And then after that, then I was sent down to Talara, Peru [32:00].

INT: In Peru. Okay. All right. We're going to pause real quick and just flip the tape here.

[End of Tape 1A]

[Beginning of Tape 1B]

INT: From Panama [00:07], you then went to Peru [00:10]. You spoke to us a little bit in the office about that, but could you quickly summarize again, with the airfield and everything, what it was you were doing in Peru?

WH: Yes. We had Air Force fighters down there, and also flew the patrol, with B-24s. And

you had about 10 seconds to get out of the B-24 if you hit water. But it was an interesting exercise. Soon found out, there's a shortage of electronic people [01:00] down there, so I got requests from ocean-going liners and so forth, come in to fix their radios. So they called the base, and the colonel would tell, "Oh, Yeah," and you go out and you fix the equipment on the boat. And one of the boats went out one day, and they had a whole boatload of watches; a whole boat of watches. [laughs] It's unbelievable. So we got involved in additional things there that wasn't necessarily related right to our --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: --but [02:00] we did it as favors to the local business people.

INT: Could you talk a little bit about that airfield? You mentioned about the locating devices that you were working on?

WH: Yes. Yeah, we got a shipment with a new direction-finding equipment. And when we got that, we installed it. And when we installed it, it took us about a day and a half, something like that, and had it all fixed, ready to go. And made good use of it. It really worked nice. People were pleased to be able to help somebody on something like that. And, of course, this [03:00] went through Panama [03:02]; back at the headquarters they all wanted to know what we did and all that sort of thing. They were very interested in hearing how we did all this and were able to pinpoint the boat, [unintelligible] seaplane out there.

INT: And when you were in Peru [03:31], was that where you were at when you took a few trips in an American submarine?

WH: No, I didn't take any trips in the submarine.

INT: Oh, you didn't go in a submarine? Okay.

WH: No, I never went in a submarine. We only detected, looked for submarines.

INT: Oh, you were looking for them; okay.

WH: That's what the B-24 was.

INT: Okay, so you were flying -- you actually went up --

WH: Only on certain scheduled flights; yeah.

INT: Okay [04:00].

WH: And I flew on to the Galapagos [04:03] -- or Galapagos -- Islands. And we'd land, and then we'd have spent about, oh, four hours or so, and then we'd come back in. It's about 700, 800 miles out there, something like that. So that was a routine that they had for -- and at that time then, the U-boats [04:29] left the western part of South America. So these went back on the other side.

INT: So there were actually U-boats [04:42] at that -- German U-boats [04:43], on the western coast.

WH: Yeah. And the Japanese, when they hit Pearl Harbor [04:51], they were concerned, the Panama [04:53] command, they were concerned that they would come into the Panama area [05:00], and they wouldn't know what'd turn-up, you see. They had to -- and when they got hit as hard as they were with -- in Hawaii, they were very sensitive to that; I mean, they were -- anybody who had any ideas and all that, they were quick to try to do something about it.

INT: And what was your role when you were on these B-24 flights? Were you doing radio work? Or were you actually up looking for U-boats [05:40]?

WH: No, I was looking -- I was actually up under the gunner's seat on the top. And you just occupy that seat in case you ever had to use it. And then observation and -- on a flight

[06:00], communication, and so forth. If any communication problems came up or something during the flight, this was something that had to be looked into, so -- but that was the main thing. I only went on a couple of those flights --

INT: Okay.

WH: -- and then they would return, and do their maneuvers, and all that sort of thing, at the end of the day. By the time I got ready to come back -- when I got orders to return -- I came -- they took me up to -- halfway up to Panama [06:52] to -- on the B-24. And I had my footlocker, and [07:00] I went out and started to take off in the afternoon, and the pilot said, "Wait." He said, "The loading is not quite right," he said. So you -- "Would you mind," he said, "you stand back in the bomb bay and you stay back there for the takeoff, so it balances everything just right." That's the first time I was in a live bomb bay. So that worked out okay. You do things that you have to do. And then after we came up to the other country [08:00] that's just north of that, why, I got a regular ride in a C-47 --

INT: C-47 transport plane? Yeah. And where did you go from there?

WH: Well, then I was down there, waited for a flight, and then they got ready to leave, and I was going to Texas. And -- oh, they needed a person to run the classified mail, so I had - - was burdened with a great big sack of mail; I had to escort the mail. So I [09:00] -- we made a landing in between, and it was hot; oh, my gosh. And I had to stick with that mailbag. It was bad.

INT: So this was just a one-time assignment? While you were on the plane --

WH: It was a one-time assignment. That's right.

INT: You were stuck with the classified mail.

WH: I was a second louie.

INT: And so where were -- were you stationed somewhere in Texas, or were you going onwards to Washington [09:37]?

WH: No, I got up to Dallas --

INT: Okay.

WH: -- and I delivered my packages and everything. And then I got on the train, and I went -- headed for Ohio, where my home was. And then from Ohio, went to -- right around Christmas [10:00], then I came to Fort Hunt [10:08], or 1142 [10:08].

INT: And this was Christmastime, '42, or '43?

WH: It was Christmastime '42.

INT: '42; okay. And how did you come to learn that you were being transferred to P.O. Box 1142 [10:26]? Was this something you applied for, or did you just receive orders?

WH: Well, I received orders to report to the Pentagon [10:36]. And when I got to the Pentagon, why, this is where they put me. That's --

INT: Where were you when you received those orders? Were you in Peru [10:50]?

WH: No, I was -- I got to the Pentagon [10:56], and then they assigned me [11:00] to Fort Hunt -- 1142 [11:05].

INT: But when did you receive the orders telling you to go to the Pentagon [11:08]? Was that when you were --

WH: Oh, that was on my trip.

INT: On your trip back?

WH: To report to the Pentagon?

INT: Okay. Okay. And as soon as you got to the Pentagon [11:22], they verbally told you

you're being --

WH: This is where they sent me.

INT: Okay. Safe to say that, prior to that time, you'd never heard of P.O. Box 1142 [11:35], or anything like that?

WH: No, I hadn't heard of 1142 at all.

INT: Okay.

WH: Didn't know what it was.

INT: Okay. Was there any tests that you took, or any questioning, or just, "You have a new assignment; here it is."

WH: Well, it was a next assignment for me.

INT: Okay.

WH: See, it was the Pentagon [12:00]; the Pentagon, when you first walked in there at that time, it was still being renovated, things weren't in place the way it should have been. But people soon got to know what you could and could not do, and so forth. And then they -- when they signed me -- I think that was within the first day or so when I went out to --

INT: And so you were sent down to 1142 [12:40]. Did someone sit you down and brief you as to what this place was, and what was going on here?

WH: Yes. There was a person there and -- what was the name [13:00]? He installed the first units on the first unit that we had.

INT: Compound and compound bay?

WH: Yeah.

INT: Okay. Was he an officer?

WH: Yeah; captain.

INT: Okay.

WH: Oh; Captain Morris [13:19].

INT: Okay.

WH: See. And he had contacts with the FBI [13:26], knowing about the equipment, and all that. So that was a technique for the way to run it, why, he made the first installation on the first building.

INT: And so is that who briefed you when you arrived [14:00] as to what this place was?

WH: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

WH: That's where the -- a lot of activity was there in keeping that equipment running and in using it. And then, I don't remember exactly how I got into -- oh, the prisoners who came in were at the direction finding and also the heading of the communications. And we were heavy, on the first duties there, we were heavy [15:00] with submarines. So that was the big thing on the submarines job. So --

INT: So when you arrived there, were you told that you would be involved in questioning and interrogating, or were you told -- were you given the impression that you would be working on maintaining equipment?

WH: No. Because of my special electronics and so forth, they could use me -- well, I did things that were [16:00] -- made it easier for interviews on German prisoners, and so forth. I didn't have any other language other than German. So -- and then there was maintenance work to be done on, and there was a maintenance crew there for that. And - - but there was always something, little thing; people wanted this, and they wanted that.

And so that's -- I got into the electronics because that's where a lot of the people that they brought in there [17:00] talked about the radar [17:04] systems that they had, the Germans.

INT: The radar --

WH: They had some excellent radar [17:] systems.

INT: On U-boats [17:12]?

WH: Not on the U-boat.

INT: Okay.

WH: Their main radar [17:].

INT: Their actual mainland-mounted radars?

WH: Oh, yes. Yes.

INT: What sorts of people had that information? Were these people on U-boats [17:26] or other prisoners?

WH: Most of my information, there was a guy from the Navy that interviewed a lot of the U-boat [17:45] people that came in there.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: I got to know him quite well. And he had [18:00] pretty good stories about how they do all this and all that, and he got a lot of information. And there was an admiral that he worked for, and later in life, I crossed lines with him -- the admiral. I didn't know he was in the place he was. And I went to a dinner and, lo and behold, there he was with the admiral. [laughs] That happened later, so --

INT: What was the -- would you care to name -- do you recall the name of the person from the Navy that you were working with?

WH: Oh, what was the name?

INT: Was it -- was it Jack [19:00] --

WH: No. He was staff, and he was not an officer; he was a --

INT: A civilian?

WH: Yeah.

INT: Was it --

WH: No, not civilian. He was an aide to the -- and what do you call that, the Navy has?

INT: Was his name Alberti [19:23]?

WH: Not Alberti; no.

INT: Did you know Jack Alberti [19:25]? Does that name sound familiar?

WH: I don't --

INT: Alberti was one of the naval -- he was a civilian who worked with the Navy doing the naval interrogations. And he was a very high-level person for the naval interrogations of U-boats [19:44].

WH: I see. Yeah.

INT: His name was Jack Alberti [19:46]. And it sounded -- that sounded a lot like who you were describing.

WH: Yeah. I can't remember it offhand.

INT: Okay. Sure.

WH: His name.

INT: Sure.

WH: But I may not because he was an aide [20:00] to the officer, naval officer.

INT: Okay.

WH: And we met in the most unusual places.

INT: And so you worked closely with him? He would let you know that, hey, this naval prisoner has good information about radar? And then you would go in and talk to that prisoner?

WH: Yeah. There were -- this leakage -- I call it leakage information.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: The leakage information was where they -- suddenly the submarine people would appear, and if they picked them up, they had show tickets for the [21:00] -- in the pockets. And they were curious to find out how they got all this. One day, one of the guys was out training, and he was late in training and, sure enough, a bulletin surfaced while he was doing this, and they got those guys. So this was a lot of going back -- I don't know if you've seen the stories or something of that or not. But the actual people from the boat got on the base.

INT: I'm not sure if I follow you entirely. Are you talking about German sailors from the U-boat [21:58] --

WH: Yeah.

INT: -- when they were [22:00] off doing things that they would do when they were off the ship?

WH: They'd park their U-boat and go to the movie.

INT: And go to the movie. Oh. And you're --

WH: I wasn't supposed to say that, was I?

INT: But -- and -- but are you referring to German movies, or American movies?

WH: American movies.

INT: American movies. Okay.

INT: And would this be --

WH: This one student was flying, and he didn't make his grade, and so he was flying extra time. And this was when they found this out. I don't know if you hear stories like that or not. I'm sure you do.

INT: We definitely hear stories like that. We hear -- we've heard similar stories [23:00], but never to that level that they were coming to watch American movies. We've heard other stories about things that were in the pockets: calling cards from prostitutes, and what not. But not American movie tickets.

INT: And so, presumably, these German submariners were captured, brought into 1142 [23:32], and they shared that with the Americans, that they went into the movies?

WH: No. They took them off, picked them off right down on the base, before they ever got to Fort Hunt [23:46]. They picked them up; the airport picked them up.

INT: Okay.

WH: It's -- it was kind of loose [24:00] in the early days when you didn't know exactly, and you heard about these things, some of these things. So it -- these are the early stories, that information I got, and so forth. You had a lot of things -- you had a lot things to -- you were busy; a lot of things to look into real quick.

INT: Were you called in for, again, for these the U-boat [24:49] sailors, these German sailors? Were you called in for any issue involving radios [25:00], or radar, or signals? Were those the only cases, or did you meet with every prisoner?

WH: If there was an interesting thing about communications, why, they would -- we would talk.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: Outside the Navy, it was pretty tight with its information.

INT: Would the Navy get the prisoner first? And so, they -- by the time --

WH: Yes. As far as I know. I -- that part I couldn't tell you.

INT: But by the time you met with them, had they already been interrogated by somebody else, on maybe another subject?

WH: Well, I just don't know.

INT: Okay.

WH: When the U-boat [25:56] people were first picked up, they were picked up by people that [26:00] -- not from the -- were not at Fort Hunt [26:06].

INT: Right.

WH: So you -- that gets a little different treatment. So, but the Navy pretty much had its own way of taking care of their prisoners from the subs, and so forth.

INT: [affirmative]

INT: So you had mentioned earlier you had some interactions with some of the naval interrogators? Would you characterize the working relationship between the Army and the Navy of 1142 [26:53]? Was it a good working relationship?

WH: My relationship with this one person that [27:00] worked with the admiral, never any problems; I mean, he really, really knew what the game was and what really had to be done, and so forth.

INT: Was there sharing of interrogation records between the Navy and the Army?

WH: I don't know about that. All I know, I was there. And because the equipment that they were using was similar -- I mean, people used the same equipment, see, in the same area.

So it pretty much comes in through the way whoever assigns the prisoners to whatever room to go to, and all that stuff [28:00]. But you see, these people -- it went out there earlier, I guess I saw them more often, because later, I didn't get to see too many because they were so busy with the prisoners from the -- North African prisoners that came over; they brought them over.

INT: So, to summarize, you're saying that you saw more U-boat [28:43] prisoners right off the bat. But once the North African invasion started, then you saw less U-boat?

WH: Yes.

INT: Okay.

WH: See, that -- the U-boat [28:55], they came under pretty good control [29:00] after a while; I mean, they really get that.

INT: Did you feel that anything that was gathered at 1142 [29:25] directly impacted the U-boat [29:29] war, in terms of cracking U-boat codes, or finding out information about U-boats, or was that more something that the Navy was handling, and out of your area?

WH: The Navy was handling that --

INT: Okay.

WH: -- and it was -- the Navy was very careful about that; I mean, they could easily get in trouble for being too lenient.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: See, so they were right up to it [30:00]; I mean, they were close with that operation that they had at that time at Fort Hunt [30:11].

INT: We've got about a minute and a half left. Dan or Vince, do you have any --

INT: I've got a list of names.

DAN GROSS: Yeah, I've done some research and looked up the names of the naval officers who worked at Fort Hunt [30:32], so I have a whole collection of them. I thought, since you mentioned that he was not a regular naval officer, I also thought it was Alberti [30:44], but one of the other names I have is one called Howland [30:48] [phonetic], and one Albreath [30:51] [phonetic]. But I can show you the list, and you might be able to recognize it from the list.

WH: I just don't remember [31:00] the name.

DG: Yeah.

WH: He was -- he managed other later in life.

DG: I have another question. When you were assigned a prisoner to do an interrogation, did you do any preparation before hand, so that you could be prepared to ask specific questions to the specific prisoner?

WH: They might have. But a lot of my -- well, now I'm getting into something that's a little bit different, and then you -- this is -- when you interview people, I had the [32:00] -- I soon formed the opinion real quick that us working with electronics and all the things happening, and then I began to -- working with the prisoners. If I looked at the prisoner, and someone says, "He's a general, he was this, he was that," I'd listen to that. And I soon learned they come in the room, the first thing I do is, "He is a human being."

[End of Tape 1B]

[Beginning of Tape 2A]

WH: In discussing a human being; I assume that to -- that's the way I looked at the person. And so I treated him like a human being. And it does not make any difference what he says, what he does, what he -- like, different experiences they had; they come from all

walks of life, and they're all different. But the main thing that is that he is going to react. He is going to react to certain things, because all human beings do. And he reacts to whatever happens to be that he's sensitive about. And if you talk to him [01:00] long enough, you're going to spot all of a sudden his sensitivity points. And you -- and that's the big thing about it. You can treat them all the same, and -- but you have to, you have to learn that he is a human being. People say, well, he's this, he's that, he's whatever it is -- I just look at the person. And that's the way I did with them, with most of the people I talked to. And you soon learn where the soldier's from. He eventually tells you certain things [02:00]. And you will -- and it gets kind of easy. So you get all kind of information, but in that information, if you're careful, you find out a lot of things that we like to know. And that's -- that was my approach to all of this. This thing that he's not a human being, well, when he's not a human being, I guess he gets to be a -- I don't know what you'd say now -- he's -- well, he's -- he can't get out of being a human being [03:00], is what it amounts to. And you certainly discover that there are certain things that are all the same. And the more you do this, and with that approach, the easier it is to see what you can do.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: To classify people any other way, I don't know. I mean, surely, you're curious; I mean, with -- when you talk religious background and all that sort of thing. You get into this field, and then it's a different -- that's different. The person [04:00] has to eat; he has to sleep; he has -- and that's where I've found that you can -- you can really -- you look at that, and things kind of just normal out. Now, I guess people like to classify, I don't know, different types; I don't know. On one trip I made, it was the last trip, the

submarine surfaced [05:00], when it came on the way to Japan [05:05] at the end of the war, the German war, at the end of it. And it was on the way to Japan [05:16]. And so many of our top negotia -- interrogators and so forth had already gone to Europe, were over there for the European people -- so I was responsible for bringing the sub people to Fort Hunt [05:47]. And that was an interesting exercise [06:00] in that when I went up there, right away there were a thousand questions people would ask. But I had to -- certain things I had to pay attention to, and so when I took all these people on board, I just got the German staff officer, shook hands with him, said, "You agree everybody will behave, right?" and they were, "Oh, yeah." Shook hands with him. And so we walked out, and I don't know how many prisoners we had anymore; I forgot. And as I stepped out with him, I go to walk out on the -- to get on the plane, I look up [07:00], and here are people all around the plane, all over the place, watching us get on this plane. I felt pretty small that time. I had all these people to take on board, and bring them down. Now, that was an experience that I've never forgotten, really. That's just one of the things --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: And when you -- this thing I talked about, a person, when you looked at -- I looked at each person, person from the boat there, and they had all kinds; I mean, that was a real [08:00] cross section.

INT: You're talking about the folks that were on this U-boat [08:07]?

WH: Yeah. That were on the sub.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: The two giant Japanese, they committed suicide --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- and so the others [inaudible].

INT: Was the staff officer you're referring to, was he -- was that the German general --

WH: Yeah.

INT: -- who was on board?

WH: Yeah. That way, when you find that, you can shake hands and he will abide by it. That was my only -- I mean [inaudible]. And all these people watching this, it was -- at 500 people, it's -- and the airport, up in Maine.

INT: When you say [09:00] it was a real cross section of people on the boat, can you explain what you mean?

WH: Yes. There were -- there were so many different things on the boat, you know. And so, they had different people and different things on their way to Japan. And some of those things, I don't -- I had to make sure about one or two things on board. And luckily, that was -- they had to open the holes. They were all -- not soldered in, but [10:00] what's the -- the plates were, and so you couldn't get to some of the equipment, and so forth. So that was done by the Navy, and so that was no particular problem. People with different ideas, and different things that they were doing, like, they're suddenly so diversified, and --

INT: Were they specialized, say, as an engineer, or as a scientist, or some other specialty?

WH: They were in this area.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: Some of them were, yeah [11:00].

INT: So, did you see any of the cargo on the U-boat [11:11]?

WH: The what?

INT: Did you see any of the cargo on the U-boat [11:13]?

WH: Oh, the cargo.

INT: Yeah.

WH: No, I didn't go over -- I didn't go aboard the U-boat [11:16].

INT: Okay.

WH: I was there, and, luckily, I mean, at the meeting that you had, the people spoke about -- there were two people spoke about it.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: And that's one of the things that I am concerned about that it -- that it has to be understood, and they talked about the danger of people who were handing it and all that sort of thing. But as far [12:00] as the weapons, like for the project, there was no weapons-grade material on board. See, the people talked -- they had weapons-grade material on board, because that was not -- it's not correct; there was no weapons-grade material on board.

INT: Did you know that at the time, or did you find that out only after talking to the prisoners [13:00]?

WH: I found that out, and that's when I went -- when I went there, I had to find out about that, and so I was able to confirm that.

INT: Yeah.

WH: But they had to open that. The other part is, they had some cameras on board, and they -- everybody, when they opened the hold like that, why, everybody wants to get a hold of those cameras, you see. So, I don't seem [phonetic] concerned about that.

INT: There were German cameras on the U-boat [13:39]?

WH: Yeah.

INT: And people wanted to get those cameras?

WH: Yeah, the good old German camera.

INT: They wanted the camera; they didn't want to see what the photos were?

WH: No.

INT: No; okay.

WH: They want the camera [14:00] So -- but I couldn't get over the publication -- or, the public -- being out there watching us getting on board, the plane coming down.

INT: So you actually flew with General [Ulrich] Kessler [14:29] and some of the other personnel from the U-boat [14:34]; you flew from the base up in New England [14:37] down to 1142 [14:42]?

WH: Yeah.

INT: You flew -- you accompanied them down in the plane?

WH: Yeah, I was in the plane with them.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: I sat with the general.

INT: But this wasn't -- this was just -- was this some of the -- obviously, the whole crew didn't fit on one plane.

WH: Oh, no.

INT: Or was this just some key personnel [15:00]?

WH: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

WH: I don't know just how many there were anymore; I forgot.

INT: Were there --

WH: I knew at the time, but --

INT: Were there other Americans that traveled with you?

WH: Other Americans that traveled with me?

INT: Yeah.

INT: From 1142 [15:23] up to New England [15:24]?

WH: No, I was the only one. I got down and then -- you have to remember, the U-boat [15:36], when that boat came in after the Germans --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- quit the war. So, it's a little different situation, and -- but [16:00] the idea, you know, of what all was important and all that just didn't -- hadn't reached that point. But this thing that I'm talking about, start out here with this business about the human being, and the -- that, for me, is a very, very, important, important thing.

INT: Would you [17:00] like to take a break, or -- we can keep asking questions, but we've been going for a little while, and we can take a break, or we can schedule another time. Obviously, we have more questions we'd like --- we'd love to ask you. But whatever you're comfortable with, at this point.

WH: Well, I feel all right. I sit here. I don't have to go to the bathroom right now. I guess I'll answer any questions you have, if I can.

INT: Well, sure. Well, since we're --

INT: Do you want to keep going a little while longer?

INT: Since we're speaking of the German U-boat [17:41], the U-234 [17:42], did you work with any of the other, any of the Germans who were on board? One of the names who

comes up a lot is Heinz Schlicke [17:54] --

WH: Yes.

INT: -- the German scientist who did a lot of work in similar fields [18:00], not just radar [18:01], but did you work with him? Do you recall Heinz Schlicke [18:08]? Do you remember him?

WH: No, I don't remember.

INT: Okay.

WH: That was pretty much Navy.

INT: Okay.

WH: The Navy didn't like for you to cross their lines.

INT: Because some of the folks we've -- some of the other 1142 [18:31] veterans, for example, Fred Michel [18:35]; he recalls working fairly closely with Heinz Schlicke [18:40] off of -- who came off of the U-234 [18:43].

WH: Oh, yes.

INT: Spending several months working with him at 1142 [18:47].

WH: Yeah. I had -- so, they may have talked to them [19:00], which I'm not aware of.

INT: Okay.

WH: Because I didn't stay -- I got to Washington [19:08], then I -- let's see, I didn't stay for any interrogations there.

INT: In New England [19:21]? Or in Washington [19:22]?

WH: No, it -- I did all the business I had to do when I was in New England [19:28] --

INT: Okay.

WH: And so when I came back, I turned over all the prisoners to whatever assignments they

wanted to make.

INT: At 1142 [19:41]?

WH: At 1142, yeah.

INT: Okay.

INT: And so, you said that you took care of the business that you had to take care of in New England [19:50]. And was your job also to escort them back to Washington [19:55]?

WH: Yes. I had to escort the whole group back [20:00].

INT: Yeah. And so can you say anything else about what your business was in New England [20:09]?

WH: Well, the big business is the one part that I even haven't talked about. The only thing I mentioned is there was no weapons-grade material --

INT: Right.

WH: -- on board.

INT: Right.

WH: Because there was people that talked about this before.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: And there was no weapons-grade material.

INT: Was that -- was the concern -- was there a belief or concern by American forces that the uranium [20:51] was weapons-grade material? And so was that one of the reasons you were sent for is to ground-truth and find that out?

WH: Yeah [21:00].

INT: Okay. And you found that out by questioning people in New England [21:08]?

WH: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

WH: Through very legitimate --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- efforts. It -- there's a story behind that.

INT: Who on board knew about the uranium [21:33]? Was there a one particular person on board who knew about the uranium, or did a variety of people have the knowledge?

WH: Yeah, they had a person on board, and when they came in, they had to find out what to do. And -- but it was welded into the compartment [22:00], see --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- you have to -- cut the weld, and all that stuff. So that part of it was handled in very, very, very clever ways to take care of that. So the reports came out during the -- that they had -- that some people talked about this could be used for this, it could be used for that and all this, but the weapons-grade material is the thing that has to be met if you [23:00] want to talk about that. In that case, it wasn't.

INT: From other sources -- like, there are books that reference that U-234 [23:16] and there's even a documentary about the U-234. And so there were other items that were on the U-boat [23:28] that were of interest or concern?

WH: There was concern about the people they were sending, in trying to describe what they were going to do on this trip, when they arrived in Japan [23:50], see? But since the Japanese committed suicide, well, then [24:00], a lot of that thing went into speculation, see? I mean, people speculate about things and you don't know what the facts really are.

INT: Any thoughts about that whole sharing of intelligence and weapons technology with the Japanese? Was that a big concern at 1142 [24:32]?

WH: Well, this is one of the key things. I -- in this case, the [25:00] -- let's go back to the situation as it was. The situation turned out as it was, all things just about as good as you could possibly get it, and this comes from the people that were in charge. You talk about, whats-his-name, General --

INT: Kessler [25:38]?

WH: Yeah.

INT: Kessler.

WH: There was great -- in that -- in the magazine article that I have, they talk about this [26:00]. There was great difference of knowing what would happen if someone else would have this right now. There was tremendous effort to find out if there was anything else. And that's the part that to have very definite information on.

INT: So were you tasked with questioning the people on the U-boat [26:43] about -- again, realizing the Japanese officers had killed themselves, about what the ultimate intent of that uranium [26:52] was when it got to Japan [26:54]? Was that what one of the chief concerns was, what was going to happen to this uranium?

WH: Yeah [27:00]. Well, when we -- when it was not weapons-grade, and then the -- you could breathe easy. Because that was a big thing. It's a -- I just can't [28:00] quite see, I mean, all the angles to those activities that went on with the project. I think, overall, it was probably about as good as you could ever find. Sure, there were other things that happened, that had to be done, because of -- oh, look at it, the situation: [Franklin] Roosevelt [28:40], he died --

INT: Right.

WH: -- at the time. And [Harry] Truman [28:46]. And I know there was an article in the paper

recently, or some of the Post put an article in the paper, and said reinstating a Truman [29:00] inspection, this is what they should be doing right now, reinstating the Truman inspection. The problem is --and you probably know this, I don't know -- the problem is he went on the trip and didn't know he was a vice president; he didn't know about a project. He didn't know about it; he had to be briefed. Now, you've heard -- I don't know if you've heard that before or not.

INT: I think we were aware that Truman [29:52], yeah, Truman did not know everything or much about the bomb.

WH: And so who was the person here that just recently [30:00] in this article -- I just read it a couple of weeks ago -- said that they should get somebody to go on an inspection trip with him to see where all his money is being spent. And mentioned the Truman [30:22] trip.

INT: So, a couple of questions. Was there any discussion, or intelligence, or concerns about any other German U-boats [30:40] that may have gotten to Japan [30:41]?

WH: Not to my knowledge.

INT: There was no fears that, perhaps, other U-boats with important items or personnel could have been going to or arrived in Japan [30:56]?

WH: No. Not that I know of [31:00]. In fact, well, this is one of the things I have to -- with all of the activity with what I was involved in in those areas, there was the last piece of information they got -- and this is before they actually send off the bomb -- was that there were -- that there was no other material like it. And that's when they breathed a sigh of relief-- because they had heard so much about -- well, I can see why [32:00] -- had the Germans flying the rockets, and they had certain cables running certain things and all that.

And there was a lot of back and forth, and it required a lot of effort to make sure there isn't weapons-grade material floating around.

INT: Was that a concern before the U-234 [32:32] was captured?

WH: Oh, yes; very much so.

INT: Can you elaborate on that at all?

WH: Yeah. That's -- that was a --

[End of Tape 2A]

[Beginning of Tape 2B]

WH: -- opinions. All I will say about it, you get a group of scientists together, and precision people, all of them have ideas. They have ideas. And when they meet each other, they must just talk about their ideas; you know how that is? You know something, and you know it's going to work this way, and they're all afraid that if they don't make a little piece of paper, and write it down somewhere, they'll forget about it, or, "What did I do with that thing?" One of the things you have to remember, when you work [01:00] with all these people, after they get through with their discussions and everything, you be very, very, careful, and you collect every piece of paper that you can possible get your hands on, because that's like gold [laughs]. That's about all I will say about it.

INT: Sure. Just one more question, though. So you're saying that there were concerns about what the Germans may have shared with the Japanese prior to the capture of U-234 [01:39]. But when you determined that the Germans didn't have weapons-grade --

WH: Yeah.

INT: -- uranium [01:54], that that kind of set the American mind at ease? That was the point that it occurred [02:00]?

WH: Yeah. That occurred, and I can tell you why that came about that way. When all these people got together and they were talking about all this, they decided that they had to take it up and understand there was a discussion with [Adolf] Hitler [02:39]. I don't know if you've heard this or not. And they tried to tell Hitler that if you get a uranium bomb [02:53] and all this stuff, it's going to -- Hitler's first question was to the staff [03:00], "What's the counter offer to that?" They said, "There isn't anything." "I don't believe it." He didn't believe it. So he didn't put any pressure on. I don't know if you'd heard that or not.

INT: Could you clarify? He didn't believe that the program could be successful?

WH: He said, "For every device, there is a counter device." And when they told him, "There is no counter device," he said, "No [04:00]."

INT: Can you -- what do you mean by "counter device"?

WH: Well, if I get a tomato right here, and I throw it in your face, it splatters.

INT: Right.

WH: You can throw a tomato at me and that'll splatter, too. And I probably won't --

INT: Okay.

WH: -- I can still see enough, so I can see the tomato coming at me. But with -- there's no counter device.

INT: Okay.

WH: Once you ignite the device and let it go --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- there's nothing you can do about it at that point. See --

INT: So he wouldn't believe that.

WH: He wouldn't -- that was -- yes; yes.

INT: And did you come to learn that through the questioning [05:00] of the prisoners, or did you learn that later?

WH: Well, this was -- I pulled this out here; this is the special assignment I had.

INT: So you're more important than we even thought.

[laughter]

WH: I don't know if you heard these things or not.

INT: We know that there was a certain level of work going at 1142 [05:35] that relates to the Manhattan Project [05:36]. It's written on some people's files. Fred Michel [05:41]; his file from when he was discharged from the military says on it, on his military file: "Worked at P.O. Box 1142 [05:53] on the Manhattan Project [05:55], 1945." So --

WH: Well, we translated [06:00] -- we translated a book for the Germans. We had a lot of Germans that taught. Even the college, top college professors went over there to interview. The technical that I've been talking about, was so strong -- coming all the way up, electronics, and so forth, was so strong and so fast-developed in a matter of years that you had to get something to counter that, see? And so there were tremendous exchanges made, see? And the books didn't add, so I would say -- I would frankly say [07:00], I'm the one that got the book and I added classified, write to people who told me it represents -- this is it. When you get into this business, you can say, "Well, this is right, or this is wrong. Stay with that book and don't do that one, and don't do this one."

INT: So, you had two years --

WH: What we did, we translated one of those books. And he could never forget about that.

The book was published in about December of '45, and was published as a military book,

and you could get it at one time [08:00]. You could -- that book was available to people who wanted it, in the military.

INT: Was this the book, the translation? The book that --

WH: Yes, that's the book with the translation.

INT: It basically translated German technical terms to --

WH: It was translated into German; it was American terms --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: -- translated into German terms.

INT: Right. And you helped to coordinate putting that together? Did you help?

WH: Yeah.

INT: And you had two years of German, so it -- presumably, we're talking about a lot of very technical words. Did you work with others who had scientific German language skills to help to put that together?

WH: Well, I had people who knew [09:00] -- one of the important things was at that time -- not now; I'm not talking about now -- at that time, it was very important to know, if you tried to do something, that you had the right book, or you're on the right track. Or you get down a lifetime, and you get there, and it ain't going to work, see? And we had people who could tell you, pretty well, how that would go, see? And that's what -- that had a big impression afterwards that many people who worked on this got different reports, and so forth [10:00]; it gets delimited with other ideas, with other books, and all that sort of thing. And this was already known, that was known as early as, I would say, let's see, '39 -- let's see '42; yeah, '38 or '39, '40, somewhere in there, there was one book written which was accurate. So --

INT: And these were books that were on the U-boat [10:56], that were taken off the U-boat [11:00]?

WH: No, those books were not on the U-boat, [negative]. See, the part about that is [laughs], once you start something and then you stay with it so long and you don't know if you're on the right track to begin with there are many people go a lifetime who don't know that, see? But this did not happen with the project plain, pure, and simple [12:00]. They were on the right road; I mean, there were certain things they did, and they could tell they were doing, and they could do certain things, and certain things were possible. So this is important in this -- this is why the book that we translated, that was done to translate into German words that would properly be able to, if you used them properly, would mean the right thing. See, there are variations. There are even variations [13:00] with slipstick. You know what that is, huh? Huh?

DG: You have to be an engineer like me to know.

INT: What was it?

WH: All we had to do was ask the guy what -- how you computed this, and he said, "Oh, I got my slipstick on" and you walk off [inaudible] and that's fine, go use your slipstick.

DG: Slide rule.

INT: Oh, okay.

WH: You know.

DG: Yeah.

INT: I'm going to ask you a different question, and so we'll come back to this [14:00].

INT: Yes, if we stated the name "Operation Paperclip" [14:04], does that mean anything to you?

WH: Paperclip?

INT: Yes.

WH: No, to me, it doesn't. No.

INT: Were you part of that project? Do you know?

WH: Paperclip [14:18]? No, what are you talking about in the paperclip? Was one of these computers right now we have today?

INT: No.

INT: No, no. "Operation Paperclip" [14:34] was the code name for the systematic recovery and bringing over to the United States of the German scientists after the war. In 1945-46 --

WH: Oh.

INT: -- Wernher von Braun [14:50] and his V-2 group, and all those other scientists.

WH: Yeah.

INT: The project that went on well into the late 1940s, but very much had a lot going on [15:00] at 1142 [15:03], probably from late '45 into '46.

INT: You know much about that program?

WH: That program -- no. No, the point is that there were a lot of people involved, and a lot of stories involved, and a lot of books being written, and we even have a problem even with today with some of our computers, with -- you see [16:00]. They're always finding ways to improve the read-outs, and so forth, to make sure that when you get how many million, or billion or two in pieces away that you're still on the right track.

INT: Brandon and myself are big Civil War buffs, and we've read lost of Civil War books, and we'll never have an opportunity to talk to a Civil War veteran that fought in the Battle of Gettysburg. And right now, we view this, is that you are such an important person for us,

to help to clarify facts that we may not ever be able to clarify [17:00].

WH: Yeah.

INT: And you're absolutely right, there's a lot of things out there that are written that are probably wrong. And when something gets published in a book, it tends to have a level of credibility. And so, what we've done in this project, is to try to get those firsthand accounts to try to preserve the record. Even though these men, like yourself, are in your 80s, or, in your case, 90s, many of these men had incredible memories. And, the fact is that they're not going to remember everything; they're not going to remember all the details.

WH: No.

INT: But collectively, all of these interviews are very powerful. You've provided us extraordinary insight today that now probably raises hundreds of questions in Brandon's and my mind. And we're more intrigued by what we're hearing from you [18:00]. I was sort of under the impression that you had something to do with Operation Paperclip [18:09], and so I'm surprised to hear that you weren't involved in it, thinking that your association with the U-234 [18:18] and there being scientists on this boat, was how you were tied to Paperclip [18:28]. But maybe that is not correct.

WH: No, no. I would say, outside of basics, that I used back at Fort Hunt [18:43], why, I was a -- well, I could say one thing with the person [19:00]. I would never want to quote his name or anything. But he had tremendous knowledge and knew a lot about what things were. He knew why you couldn't do certain things, as far as the Germans were concerned, and why they were where they were when the war ended. And I would -- he was excellent; I mean, he knew all the angles. And he was precise. So, the fact that there

was all this controversy [20:00] -- Lise Meitner [20:04]; you've heard of her?

INT: [negative]

WH: This is the lady --

DG: Meitner? The atomic, German atomic physicist Meitner [20:17]

INT: Oh.

INT: Yeah.

WH: Lise Meitner [20:20]? Do you know her?

INT: Yeah.

WH: She used ordinary math to do her computing. [laughs] Can you imagine?

INT: And how do you know that?

WH: Huh?

INT: How do you know that?

WH: Oh, I had to know that. That's -- it's [21:00] -- you recognize the name, right? Lise --

DG: Lise Meitner [21:06] is an enormously important --

WH: That's right.

DG: -- person involved in atomic energy. So, we may be trending in an area you may not want to talk about, but I've kind of -- listening to you, it seems like you may have had ties with the Manhattan Project [21:33], then?

WH: Yes, I did.

INT: Okay.

WH: Yes.

INT: All right. And we don't have to talk about that anymore. But that clearly changes, at least my view in terms of what your role was more compared to before the interview

today.

WH: That's one of the reasons why I wouldn't want to [22:00] name the person that I spent hours with, and he assured me this couldn't happen this time, couldn't happen this time, wouldn't happen that time, because Hitler [22:14] did this, Hitler did that --

INT: And this information was gained in New England [22:22], before you left New England?

WH: No. This information was gained not from the submarine trip --

INT: Not from the U-boat [22:35], from somebody else.

WH: Not the submarine trip but this was given to us when the Germans collapsed, they gathered up all of the people in this area [23:00] of work, and they put them all, they sent them up to -- somewhere up in England; and, of course, they wanted to talk to each one these, and everybody wanted -- there was one person that they wanted to bring here, which they did, and talk to us about it. We wanted to have an opinion. That person came here and told us exactly what the status was.

INT: That was at 1142 [23:43]?

WH: Yeah.

INT: And that was communicating with you? And was that before the U-234 [23:57] was captured?

WH: Yeah; oh, yeah [24:00].

INT: And so, your discovery that there was non-weapons-grade uranium [24:06] on the U-234 [24:08] confirmed what you may have learned from this individual?

WH: He is one of the foremost people over there. [affirmative]

INT: Wow.

WH: And they said, "Hallelujah," when they found that out.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: Because that was the last one. They wanted the confirmation here, not from going to the [inaudible] hall, somewhere over there, and getting that. And this is [unintelligible]. And that was true.

INT: So was there a discussion, if what ended up being on board the U-234 [25:00], the uranium [25:01] that you were sent to go look at, if it was not weapons-grade, why was it being sent to Japan [25:09]?

WH: Oh. You have to have very different grades. Well, – this gets complicated subject, see. You can do a lot of the different things once you get the first thing that you're looking for. Then you start getting -- it gets a little easier. The one thing that I don't understand in all of this: Why Chernobyl? The helicopter pilots put all that waste in there; they died from flying to -- the Russians [25:55] really, really paid a price for [26:00] going out on a limb. They had a whole -- Russia had a whole lake that was terribly -- a terrible use on it -- if you want to see what's really -- the people in this area now; I'm not talking from -- I'm talking from the more modern time. But this -- the people in this area that have really taken a hold, and taken, and found out how all the power plants. The French did this, did an excellent job. The Europeans did an excellent job [27:00] of controlling it. And you find that the research that went into that takes a lot of work. And, in the end, pays off. It's -- this is a -- and when Eastern Europe -- well, let's see, when Central Europe, when Chernobyl took off, Central Europe really had a lot of problems. The cows were -- the wind and everything was carrying the stuff over into the pastures of the cows and everything else in Europe, and so they really had a time on their hands [28:00]. That was a rough time for them. And so they had to -- and as far north as Finland and all that, it

really -- and they've gone through, I don't know how many years, it's going on to -- well, what it is -- when was it? This is '20, or '10 --

INT: [affirmative]

WH: So in 99 years, you have to wait. So it -- the -- if you want to see something that really, as far as this area is concerned, that is -- that's a thing that really, really did a lot of things to the Russians [29:00].

INT: If you're comfortable speaking to this, was there concern, on behalf of the Americans, that the Russians [29:18] would be developing an atomic weapon? I know the chief concern was the Germans, but were we also concerned about if the Russians [29:30] were working on a bomb?

WH: I have to tell you this. The Russians [29:46] were our associates in World War II. And where I worked in the Pentagon [29:55], on occasion, people [30:00], they wanted certain information, I would get it for them, and all that. And when the Russian [30:08] asked for certain information, they were there too; they were our friends. So when the Russian asked you a question, you knew that they knew before they ever asked the question. There are some people knew, they let you float; for 10, 15 years, you'll never know the truth. And the Russians [30:40] were real quick with that. I'll just give you a normal example. The proximity fuse [30:46]; they knew about the proximity fuse. So -- and so [31:00] -- and they were in Washington [31:04], and they -- certain things they were -- they just knew about because they were associates.

INT: [affirmative]

WH: They were flying our airplanes.

INT: Right. Sure.

WH: See --

INT: The Russians [31:23] never came to 1142 [31:25], did they?

WH: Huh?

INT: The Russians never came to 1142, did they?

WH: [laughs] No. I don't think they did.

INT: Okay.

WH: Yes, they did. This one person.

INT: Was he a scientist or military?

WH: He was from a family -- it was a Russian [32:00] family that moved to the United States, lived in Iowa, and I don't know how long they were out there; they had children. And then they decided, well, they go back. And one of those boys went to school here. He worked up in our place.

INT: He worked for the Americans?

WH: Yeah.

INT: Do you know what he did?

WH: He worked in -- the Russian [32:37], he knew exactly what we were doing.

INT: But he was an American soldier?

WH: He was an American -- not a soldier; he was American, he went to school, and that family -- and they had a reunion recently in which they got together, see [33:00].

INT: So he was a civilian, but he worked at 1142 [33:07]? Do you know what he did?

WH: He worked up -- up there where they said that all they could see was wind blowing around up there. [laughs] You heard about that, didn't you? Yeah? Yeah, that family -- that was the one person that we wanted [phonetic], and he finally went back. They had a

meeting someplace -- where did -- I had a publication where I saw this. With all we did,
we got -- we were lucky we got as far as we did.

[end of transcript]

Index

37th Division, [Tape 1A] 16:38, 17:58

Alberti, Jack, [Tape 1B] 19:23, 19:25, 19:46, 30:44

Albreath, [Tape 1B] 30:51

Camp Shelby, [Tape 1A] 20:00, 20:47, 16:47

Delta Airlines, [Tape 1A] 14:53, 15:17

Eisenhower, Dwight, [Tape 1A] 21:00

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), [Tape 1B] 13:26

Fort Hunt/ P.O. Box 1142, [Tape 1A] 03:30, 03:44, 09:57, 29:33

[Tape 1B] 10:08, 10:26, 11:05, 11:35, 12:40, 23:32, 23:46, 26:06, 26:53, 29:25, 30:11,
30:32

[Tape 2A] 05:47, 14:42, 15:23, 18:31, 18:47, 19:41, 24:32

[Tape 2B] 05:35, 05:53, 15:03, 18:43, 23:43, 31:25, 33:07

Fort Monmouth, [Tape 1A] 22:49, 23:25, 25:12, 26:57, 28:28

Galapagos Islands, [Tape 1B] 04:03

Hitler, Adolf, [Tape 2B] 02:39, 22:14

Howland, [Tape 1B] 30:48

Indiantown Gap, [Tape 1A] 22:17

Japan, [Tape 1A] 02:34

[Tape 2A] 05:05, 05:16, 23:50, 26:54, 30:41, 30:56

[Tape 2B] 25:09

Kessler, Ulrich (General), [Tape 2A] 14:29, 25:38,

Lindberg, [Tape 1A] 08:31

Manhattan Project, [Tape 2B] 05:36, 05:55, 21:33

Meitner, Lise, [Tape 2B] 20:04, 20:17, 20:20, 21:06

Michel, Fred, [Tape 2A] 18:35

[Tape 2B] 05:41

Morris (Captain), [Tape 1B] 13:19

New England, [Tape 2A] 14:37, 15:24, 19:21, 19:28, 19:50, 20:09, 21:08

[Tape 2B] 22:22

Operation Paperclip, [Tape 2B] 14:04, 14:18, 14:34, 18:09, 18:28

Pacific Theater, [Tape 1A] 02:12
Panama, [Tape 1A] 28:53, 29:08, 31:09
 [Tape 1B] 00:07, 03:02, 04:53, 05:00, 06:52
Pearl Harbor, [Tape 1A] 15:40
 [Tape 1B] 04:51
Pentagon, [Tape 1B] 10:36, 10:56, 11:08, 11:22, 12:00
 [Tape 2B] 29:55
Peru, [Tape 1B] 00:10, 03:31, 10:50
Proximity fuse, [Tape 2B] 30:46

Radar, [Tape 1A] 24:09
 [Tape 1B] 17:04, 17:08, 17:14
 [Tape 2A] 18:01
Roosevelt, Franklin, [Tape 2A] 28:40
Russians, [Tape 2B] 25:55, 29:00, 29:18, 29:30, 29:46, 30:08, 30:40, 31:23, 32:00, 32:37

Schlicke, Heinz, [Tape 2A] 17:54, 18:08, 18:40
Sears, Roebuck, and Company, [Tape 1A] 14:16
Signal Corps, [Tape 1A] 18:10, 21:52, 24:51, 25:23, 28:39
Solomon Islands, [Tape 1A] 22:20

Talara, Peru, [Tape 1A] 32:00
Truman, Harry, [Tape 2A] 28:46, 29:00, 29:52, 30:22,

U-234, [Tape 2A] 17:42, 18:43, 23:16, 32:32
 [Tape 2B] 01:39, 18:18, 23:57, 24:08, 25:00
U-boat, [Tape 1A] 29:45
 [Tape 1B] 04:29, 04:42, 05:40, 17:12, 17:26, 17:45, 19:44, 21:58, 24:49, 25:56, 28:43,
 28:55, 29:29
 [Tape 2A] 08:07, 11:11, 11:13, 11:16, 13:39, 14:34, 15:36, 17:41, 23:28, 26:43, 30:40
 [Tape 2B] 10:56, 11:00, 22:35
Uranium bomb, [Tape 2B] 02:53
Uranium, [Tape 2A] 20:51, 21:33, 26:52
 [Tape 2B] 01:54, 24:06, 25:01

Valparaiso Technical Institute, [Tape 1A] 11:07, 12:40, 13:15
Von Braun, Wernher, [Tape 2B] 14:50

Washington, [Tape 1B] 09:37
 [Tape 2A] 19:08, 19:22, 19:55
 [Tape 2B] 31:04

Youngstown, Ohio, [Tape 1A] 15:44, 16:24