

Fort Hunt History
P.O. Box 1142
Interview with Robert Kloss
by Vince Santucci and David Lassman
May 6, 2010

VINCE SANTUCCI: Quickly, what we wanted to do is focus on your 1142 story, but the basic background information is something we ask of all of the veterans.

ROBERT KLOSS: You know, leading up to it, I was in service for three and a half years, and I was at Fort Hunt [00:26] for two of those years. So I was there quite a bit of time. But I just wanted to relate from the time I went into service, as you said, almost a story, which I think is very interesting. I think I could almost write a book on this.

VS: I'm sure you could, and the information that you've sent us is very, very valuable.

RK: I was very interested, like in the movies "The Great Escape" and "Stalag 17" are two of my favorite movies [01:00].

VS: Good. Well, let me just do a quick introduction. Today is May 6, 2010, and we are interviewing Mr. Robert Kloss from his home in Peoria, Arizona. This is part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project. My name is Vince Santucci, the chief ranger at the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and joining me is David Lassman, park ranger here. So we're interviewing over the telephone. And I guess the first question is, when and where were you born?

RK: I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on December 9, 1921. I was drafted in Cuyahoga County, Cleveland, Ohio, in November 1943, and was sent to Camp Perry, Ohio [01:55], where I was subjected to testing, aptitude intelligence tests [02:00], and believe I finished pretty high. I was at Camp Perry only three days, and with -- several others was sent to Camp Campbell [02:12], now Fort Campbell, Kentucky. I was only 20 years old at the time and I was glad to get into service. At Camp Campbell [02:23] I was in the Signal Corps and

worked in a telegraph office operating various telegraph machines. I had basic training there. I wasn't very good at it; I couldn't hit a barn door with a rifle. I wasn't the type to be a military soldier. After about one year at Camp Campbell [02:49], I received orders to report to Washington, D.C., by train all by myself. I was picked up in the [03:00] middle of the night at a railroad station by an Army truck, and I was taken to Fort Hunt [03:10]. There's a stretch called the Mount Vernon Highway from Alexandria to Mount Vernon itself of about 12 years [sic], and about three miles from Fort Hunt, there was a pathway back in the woods which was kind of hidden. I ended up in a barracks with about 40, 50 others already there and it included my brother [Ernest William Kloss] [03:44], was already there. I ended up being assigned to a usual one-story barrack-type building known as "the Schoolhouse [03:58]." A Colonel [04:00] Wolf, a former civilian judge, was the commander with an assistant, Meredith Barney Reid [04:08], who was from Pittsburgh. A sergeant, George Rauch [04:14], that's R-A-U-C-H, had a room in the building where he roomed and slept. He and I were the only two noncoms that worked in the building. Major Reid [04:27] and Colonel Wolf [04:28] both had private rooms each, and there was a large room like a classroom with desk and chairs, a slightly raised platform at the head of the room with a blackboard. There was another large room at one end with tables and chairs and a large safe, which was a reading room. One of my jobs was to open the safe each morning, take out the reading material consisting of different manuals, and [05:00] put them on the tables to read. I primarily worked with a First Lieutenant [Henry J.] Staudigl [05:08], who was a Hollywood screenwriter, and together we produced a three-inch-thick, eight-and-a-half by 13 hardbound manual entitled "Evasion and Escape [05:25]." I was very good at English and spelling, and I

was the one that wrote out sentences so that the manual was produced. At the Schoolhouse [05:44], there were groups of intelligence officers all from the Air Corps [05:50], would come in for training, and after training they'd go back to their air bases to relate their [06:00] instructions to Air Force personnel. There were a lot of Air Corps personnel that were shot down and evaded capture with the help of the French Underground [06:16]. Some of these evadees came back to Fort Hunt [06:25] and related their experiences in classes which provided helpful information for intelligence officers. For whatever reason, all evadees brought in were officers, no enlisted men. I don't recall how many escapers were allowed in, but there were very few escapees, mostly evadees. The difference is, an evadee is generally Air Force [06:59] personnel that [07:00] were shot down and evaded capture. They were never caught. Once they were caught, they were escapees. But there were very few escapees that ever got out of prison. The German and American Air Forces treated each other with pretty much respect. When a plane was shot down and they had to parachute out, they were usually allowed to land. In Japan, whenever a pilot had to bail out, the Japanese pilots [07:40] would just shoot them on the way down. Every day, almost, there were planes shot down over France, Germany, Romania, and other countries. But those shot down over France were particularly lucky, in the sense that they became easier to avoid capture [08:00], and usually were led back through the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain. I heard many stories from Air Corps [08:10] personnel that were shot down. Some would meet French girls and stay in France, which was against the military tradition. Some of the evadees, after training in our school, would eventually become intelligence officers themselves, and they would travel to Air Force bases and talk to air crews. Right next door to the

Schoolhouse [08:36] was a similar building called “the Warehouse [08:39].” This had all kinds of evasion and escape aids disguised in baseballs, bats, games that were sent to POWs [08:49] in Germany. Air Corps [08:52] personnel were given a little plastic kit about 4x8 inches, and in the kit [09:00] were maps, compasses, language books, pills to make water safe to drink, and other items. For example, a POW [09:11] may have a pen with a clip on it, and if you stood the clip on the tip of the pen, the clip would point to the north. A short distance from the Warehouse [09:26] and the Schoolhouse [09:27] was an old frame, wooden, three-story house, which may have had a basement. I was in it only one time. It was called the Creamery [09:39]. I know this was the Cryptography Section [09:43], as my brother worked there under a Major [Maxwell B.] Becker [09:47]. I knew a Master Sergeant Silvio Bedini [09:52] very well. He was a genius at code work. I know little about this section, but [10:00] I do know there was a system of having relatives write back and forth to POWs [10:09] in Germany, and different codes were used, mostly depending on what day of the week the letter was written determining what code would be used. There was another old house in Fort Hunt [10:29] called the Sugar Mill [10:30], and the camp commandant stayed there. The personnel weren’t allowed to go into this building if they didn’t work there. There were only about 15 or 20 buildings. I read the history of Fort Hunt [10:52] going way back to the 1600s, and at one time there were quite a number of buildings there, but [11:00] in 1942, there weren’t that many buildings, and there weren’t that many trees. There were two baseball fields there. One was for hardball, and one was for softball, and we only had three or four teams composed of MPs, officers, and noncoms. I managed a softball team and also played on the officers’ team if they didn’t have enough players. There was a soccer field next to the

prison compound where German prisoners who were cooperative liked to play soccer. It went around the camp, as has been stated, that there was a German U-boat commander who was shot climbing the fence trying to escape [12:00]. He got over the first fence, but there was a second fence, which was more difficult to get over with barbed wire. What we didn't understand at the camp when we heard about it is, where did this U-boat commander think he was going to go once he did get out? But prisoners who were cooperative were given more freedom. They really enjoyed movies. Sometimes I went to movies with them, and I even had haircuts. There was a German prisoner that was cooperative, that was a barber, and he would give haircuts to camp personnel. As far as I knew, there was a fence around the whole camp. Just outside the fence in the city were [13:00] some small farmhouses, and there was a fire station nearby with an upper floor where dances were held every Saturday night. I used to go to a couple, but they really weren't that good. The neighbors that lived in the few houses that were outside the camp knew Fort Hunt [13:25]. It was no secret to them. I often went into Washington, D.C., at night and on weekends, and I saw a lot of baseball games, and I saw the [Washington] Redskins football games. Everything was free for servicemen, and I often went with an intelligence officer, a Major George Watson [13:53], who liked baseball. I used to go with him to see baseball games [14:00]. At the camp itself, we enjoyed -- there was a lot of poker going on, card playing, gin rummy, pinochle. I was a pretty good poker player, and I made quite a bit of money. I knew about 30 or so fellows which I remember by name, and some of the fellows were pretty interesting. Several personnel there were right from Cleveland, Ohio. There was a Don Pritchard [14:43] from Cleveland, who worked for the federal government before he went into service, and his best buddy was a fellow

by the name of Bob Crawford [14:54], and the two of them almost every night used to go into Washington, D.C. [15:00]. There was another fellow from Cleveland by the name of Sidney Lynn [spelled phonetically] [15:07], who was quite a character, who was a dress salesman, and he had a Cadillac automobile. Sidney was quite odd, in that every night he would never eat in the mess; he'd always dress up and get in his car and go into town. There was a fellow by the name of Clarence Ost [spelled phonetically] [15:33], who was the first sergeant in administration and in barracks. Silvio Bedini [15:41], by the way, stayed and quartered right in the Creamery [15:46] itself. I didn't know the names of -- there were quite a number of MPs in the camp, nor did I know the names of any of the German-speaking [16:00] monitors or officers within the prison. I don't think there were more than around 200 camp personnel there. I think there needs to be explained that there were so many people listed as being at Fort Hunt [16:22], but there is a difference in camp personnel and those people who come and went, that were there for short periods of time. Prisoners were brought in and out, and once they were interrogated, they then were sent to regular prison camps throughout the United States. As I understood it, after the war was over, that some of these German prisoners stayed right in the United States. They liked the country and they never went back [17:00] to Germany. Of course, if they were cooperative prisoners, it was -- they wouldn't be accepted very well if they went back to Germany. At Fort Hunt [17:22], all of us had an adjutant general's office card with our pictures in it, and we could go into town, and if we ever got into any kind of trouble or questioning, we had this AGO card which -- and the MPs couldn't do anything with us as long as we had this card. In the camp itself, there was a tall flagpole, and once in a while we were called out in the field and listened to military [18:00] music over a

loudspeaker and maybe marched around it a little bit. But there was no evidence much of military training. We didn't exercise. There was a swimming pool at one time there, and I went in the swimming pool a few times, but for some reason or another, in the short while I was there, they filled in the swimming pool with dirt. When the war ended, the camp was disbanded and I ended up going to Fort Ritchie, Maryland [18:41], and I worked in the Pentagon [18:44] a short time as the courier carrying messages from the Pentagon to the White House. I was also a short time in a building called the new War Department Building [18:58]. I was in [19:00] service three years, six months and six days, and was discharged from Camp Atterbury, Indiana [19:08]. I was in service from August 29, 1942 to February 18, 1946, and I was in the Military Intelligence Service [19:21] from November 16, 1942 -- 1943 to September 2, 1945. After service, I got out and went to Ohio State University in September '46 and graduated in three years, in 1949, as a psychology major [20:00]. Actually, after graduation from college, I went back to Washington, D.C., as I was offered a commission as a second lieutenant back in Military Intelligence Service [20:15], but at the last minute I changed my mind, and I went back to Cleveland. I happened to work for Erie railroad, and it was odd that a fellow by the name of Stanley Hajek [20:29], who was also in the personnel at Fort Hunt [20:33], worked for the railroad. In 1951, I began work for the Veterans Administration in Cleveland, Ohio, and after a couple of years I was transferred to Phoenix, Arizona. I retired at age 66, and I've been retired 22 years. I'm now 88 years old [21:00]. As stated, I don't think there are many living ex-Fort Hunt [21:09] personnel. I was only 21 when I was there, so being one of the younger ones, I still happen to be around. Fort Hunt didn't have -- they say, as I mentioned at one time, about there being a hospital. As

far as I knew, there was no hospital at Fort Hunt [21:31]. There was just a little dispensary where maybe you could get aspirin. If you needed medical attention, personnel were sent to Fort Belvoir [21:45]. I was in the Fort Belvoir Hospital, and eventually in Walter Reed Hospital with a broken nose. At the current time, I'm 100 percent service [22:00] connected veteran. I want to get back to the manual that Lieutenant Staudigl [22:13] and I helped produce, who Air Corps [22:19] crews, intelligence officers used to gain knowledge and present information to Air Corps personnel. What I wondered about, interrogation techniques, actually, when we wrote the manual, the manual contained information on what Air Corps [22:55] personnel could expect when they were captured by Germans [23:00], the interrogation that they would be succumbed to. It was most similar to what we did. There was no waterboarding, as far as I knew, in the interrogation techniques. The interrogation generally consisted of -- well, they had microphones all over the place for listening devices, and monitors day and night used to listen to conversations between the German prisoners, if there were any, and gain information that way. Other techniques were they'd have a fake Red Cross [23:49] worker that was actually not a Red Cross worker, but played the part to try to gain information from prisoners [24:00]. It was all very interesting, the techniques that were used. As I said, the same things were applied to American soldiers that were captured by Germans. Fort Hunt [24:23] was unusual in that we didn't adhere to the Geneva Convention [24:31] at all in interrogation. We all wondered if the White House even knew what was going on at Fort Hunt, because it was so unusual and secretive. I enjoyed, quite a bit, my service [25:00], which was -- I mean, I almost was -- I was almost -- didn't like to be discharged. I enjoyed quite a bit being in Washington. One

thing that is very interesting, there were seven -- the ratio, there were seven girls to every male in Washington, D.C., so it was kind of nice for military personnel. A couple other things that were unusual. In the Fort Hunt [25:33] personnel, there were no black personnel, nor were there any female personnel at Fort Hunt, which was kind of unusual. Of course, back in the days of World War II, black personnel lived separately in barracks and so on. They weren't intermingled as they are today [26:00]. As I stated, Fort Hunt, as it was in 1942, couldn't exist today because they're so lenient in the way they handle prisoners and so on today. They seem to capture terrorists, and the next thing you know, they've let them go. When Harry [S.] Truman [26:28] was president, I thought he was a great president because he was very strict, and he's one of my favorite presidents along with Ronald Reagan [26:41]. As I said, today it would be entirely different, and I don't think Fort Hunt [26:46] could exist today. As I understand it, it's now a picnic grounds, and, as stated, I went back there once and saw how it was [27:00]. You sent me pictures and detail, describing the history of Fort Hunt way back into the 1960s, and that's all very interesting and so on. As stated, I think I could write a book on my experiences at Fort Hunt, as I said, because I really enjoyed military service, and I almost hated to get out. I finally was discharged out of Camp Atterbury [27:35]. As I stated, I was very interested in going back into service, but at the last minute, I sort of changed my mind. I ultimately went to work for the Veterans Administration, and as stated, I'm now 88 years old and 100 percent service-connected veteran [28:00]. I'm very appreciative of having been in the military service. I'd have been so disappointed if I wasn't drafted. And I enjoyed working till I was 66 for the federal government. As it is today, I'm so lucky to be alive. I'm pretty active, and my mind is in pretty good shape. Physically I've slowed down

quite a bit, but I do play golf. I read a lot, and I'm enjoying myself, and that's about the end of my story.

DAVID LASSMAN: That is quite a story [laughs], and you didn't skip a beat on it. That was pretty impressive.

RK: Well, it was fun. I really enjoyed card playing. I was a good poker player, and we had a lot of fun at [29:00] Fort Hunt playing baseball games and so on. It was very interesting what was going on and the work I had in the Schoolhouse [29:13]. You haven't written much about that phase of it. As I said, there were three phases. There was interrogation; there was cryptography, and military intelligence officers' training, which hasn't been covered much.

DL: The training component?

RK: What?

DL: The training component?

RK: Yes.

DL: We don't know as much about that as we do about the interrogation and the cryptography [29:45]. Do you know much about the training?

RK: Yes, I do.

DL: Was that primarily your area of --

RK: Yes, that's where I worked every day. It was just like a civilian job. At 8:00 in the morning, I [30:00] reported to the Schoolhouse [30:02], and, as I said, my job was handling the manuals and so on. I just wish that -- everything, as you know, was destroyed once the war was over. There was no sense to having Fort Hunt [30:20] anymore. It was just disbanded. But I, along with Sergeant Rauch [30:30], we were the

two noncoms that worked in the Schoolhouse building, which was, as I said, the building was the same as the Warehouse [30:41]. They both looked alike. They were side by side right by the Creamery [30:46].

VS: Interesting. The Schoolhouse, was that the main facility for the training?

RK: Yes. Intelligence officers [31:00] came in from various air bases. We dealt all with the Air Corps [31:06], not with the Army. Although I was in Army military intelligence, it was actually more Air Force than anything. For example, there was a raid on the Ploesti oil fields of Romania, and 70 aircraft, 70 B-24s were shot down in one raid. So there were just thousands of Air Corps personnel that were shot down, and those that landed in France were very lucky. Quite a number of them came back through the Pyrenees Mountains. But they'd come into our camp, and they'd tell their stories on how they survived and managed to escape, which then [32:00] a military intelligence officer would go back to their bases and tell all the air crews, you know, what could happen if they were shot down.

VS: Well, you've probably just raised several hundred questions to us [laughs], based on what you just came up with. Let's see. It looks like the tape is just about to run out. So maybe I'll go ahead and turn this over, and we can chat --

(End of Tape 1A)

(Beginning of Tape 1B)

VS: And that looks like it's good. Okay. Trying to remain chronologic, and you went through that tremendously; that was useful, very, very useful information. I took pages of notes. A couple of questions that I think that we want to try to get in context is, we've got where you were born and raised. When you went to school, you completed high

school?

RK: Yes, I completed high school. I graduated when I was 17. I skipped a grade. I'm not bragging about my intelligence, but I was pretty smart in school. I was very good at reading, writing, and arithmetic [laughs].

VS: Okay. Do you remember what year you graduated?

RK: I graduated in 1939 from high school and 1949 from college.

VS: Okay. Very good. Well, you were busy between those [01:00] two dates.

RK: Yes.

VS: So it looks like you enlisted in 1942. Were you enlisted, or were you drafted?

RK: No, I was drafted, but I was really happy to go.

VS: You were drafted. What did you do between the time that you graduated high school at 17 and when you were drafted?

RK: Back in those days you're talking about, I'm in the era of Depression, and when I got out of high school, it was very difficult to find a job. I was almost willing to go and get a job as -- work for free to get experience. So the first job I ever got, I got paid \$14 a week, and it was the hardest job I ever had, and, as I said, I was only 17, 18 years old. I went from that job to working for the General Electric Company as [02:00] a mail boy, and I was around 19 years old or so. I eventually got a job with a company called Cleveland Tractor Company, which made big machinery, earth-moving machinery, and I jumped from a job of about \$17 a week to one that got paid \$200 a month. In a short while, I got drafted and, as I said, I was very happy to go into service. I didn't have much military training and all going through. I went through basic training. I had to walk 30 miles one time. But I wasn't very good at shooting. I just couldn't shoot a rifle; that's all there was

to it [03:00].

VS: Where did you do your basic training?

RK: I did my basic training at Camp Campbell [03:06]. We opened -- I was one of the -- we were one of the first groups there. The place was a mud hole, and we were one of the first groups there, and I worked in the telegraph office. As I said, I could run telegraph machines and so on, in the 18th Service Signal Corps [03:27]. That's when I received my orders one day, just for me alone, which kind of really scared me a little bit to wonder about where I was going. I didn't know where I was going when I received orders to get on a train, go to Washington, D.C., get off at the station and somebody was to pick me up about 2:00 in the morning.

VS: Okay, very good. By the way, do you have copies of your orders and discharge papers? Do you have your records?

RK: Yeah. Yes [04:00].

VS: We'd love to see and get a copy of those someday.

RK: I have copies and commendations and so on.

VS: Very good.

RK: I've sent you just about all the pictures I had of group personnel. The pictures that I -- you've sent me some -- a number of pictures, but I do not recognize anybody at all in any of those pictures. I think those pictures were before the time I was there.

VS: That could be, so what we were going to do -- you started mentioning names. You mentioned Donald Pritchard [04:40] and several other names, and I'll send you some photos that we have that actually depict names of people that you were aware of.

RK: Yeah, I listed all the people. Don Pritchard [04:54] was a very interesting fellow. He

was a ladies' man. He and his [05:00] buddy Bob Crawford [05:02], boy, they couldn't wait every night to get into town. [laughs] But there were others there. As I said, there were about six people right from Cleveland there. A fellow by the name of Alex Molnar [05:17], William Strainic [05:20]. This Sidney Lynn [05:23] was from Cleveland. Don Pritchard was from Cleveland. And there was a Glen McCoy [05:32] from Youngstown, Ohio. The names I remember are Walter Duevell [05:39]; I remember him, and Alex Molnar, and Eddie Grimminger [05:43], a Russell Bauer [05:45], a Tom Himiller [spelled phonetically] [05:48], a George Jacobs [05:49], Norman Duke Hoffarth [05:52], George Meidein [spelled phonetically] [05:53], and Stanley Hajek [05:56], and then Isadore Gershman [06:00]. Of course, I mentioned Clarence Ost [06:03] was the first sergeant, administration. Silvio Bedini [06:10] was kind of a quiet person. He didn't mingle around much with anybody. He kept to himself. He smoked a pipe, and he was kind of a fuddy-duddy, in a sense, but he was really the top expert in cryptography [06:28].

VS: Very good. We'll come back to that. So this is great stuff. We had the opportunity to interview Silvio Bedini [06:36].

RK: Yes, I know you did. He died shortly afterward.

VS: Exactly, and likewise, Donald Pritchard [06:42]. We went to Cleveland and interviewed him, and he had passed away shortly after.

RK: Well, I hated to mention -- I knew Don Pritchard was married, but, boy, he was really after girls all the time in Washington [laughs].

VS: Very good. Okay. So let's see --

RK: I used [07:00] to enjoy -- I guess it's still there. I used to like to go to the Shoreham Hotel. They oftentimes had music outside. I used to like to go there and listen to music,

and celebrities would come in there. That was a great place. I guess it was along Rock Creek Park there.

VS: Very good. Well, let's see. Just a couple of other questions here. You had mentioned that you went to Camp Ritchie [07:26] after 1142.

RK: Right.

VS: You didn't go to Ritchie at all prior to going to 1142 [07:31]?

RK: No. Camp Ritchie was a place near Hagersville, Maryland. It was down low in the valley, had a lot of stone buildings. There were a lot of English and Canadian personnel there. I was only there a short time. They didn't know what to do with me after the war was over. They had no idea what to do with me. I did go back [08:00] to the Pentagon [08:01], and I used to carry papers from the Pentagon to the White House to one of the entrances there. You weren't allowed to go in the White House, but I could go to the entrances. And for a short while, I worked in the new War Department Building [08:21], which is a building that had order of battle, big maps and so on, which would pinpoint where -- troop locations of the enemy and so on. I don't know if the building is still there or what it's used for today.

VS: What is the location where all these maps showing order of battle?

RK: Well, it was called the new War Department Building [08:49]; that was the name of it.

VS: In downtown Washington?

RK: Yes. It was separated from the Pentagon [08:57]. The Pentagon wasn't in downtown Washington; it was out a little ways [09:00].

VS: Yes, the Pentagon is actually on the Virginia side of the Potomac.

RK: Yes.

VS: Was it on the same side as the Pentagon or across the Potomac in D.C.?

RK: Well, the Pentagon [09:13] was across from -- you took the bridge across to go to the Pentagon.

VS: Yes. It's on the Virginia side.

RK: Yes.

VS: Okay. Very good.

RK: I was never much on the Maryland side too much. There was a camp right across from Fort Hunt [09:30], an OSS [09:32] camp. I was never over there, but we knew it was there.

VS: Can you tell us more about that location and everything you know about it, and how did you find out about it?

RK: Well, obviously, all of us could talk. You know, Fort Hunt [09:51] was so secretive you were never supposed to say the name. You always went by Post Office Box 1142 [09:57]. You never told any relatives or friends when [10:00] you went on leave. You could never say where you -- you could say you were in Washington. That's it. You couldn't say. This OSS [10:10] camp, we all knew it was across the river. I didn't know what went on there, but we all knew it was there, and that's all I can tell you about that. I don't know anything about it. That was a secret place, too.

VS: Do you think that the OSS [10:27] facility was across the Potomac River from --

RK: Right. It was right across from Fort Hunt [10:32].

VS: Because what's over there today, it's the old Fort Washington. So, somewhere near Fort Washington?

RK: Yes, that's right. Yeah, that's right.

VS: Any idea how you found this out or was it just discussion among --

RK: It was just discussion among us. I was never over on that side.

VS: Okay. We had heard rumor of another OSS [10:54] facility on the same side as Fort Hunt, closer to --

RK: I don't think so. Fort Hunt [11:00] was roughly two, three miles from Mount Vernon itself.

VS: Yes.

RK: You know, one side is the Potomac River; the other side is all tree-lined.

VS: Okay. Well, someone said that there was a facility at what is called Collingwood, where there was an old home there that was used for a short time by the OSS [11:23]. You hadn't heard of that at all?

RK: No. No, I didn't know. All I could tell you is we knew there was a camp across the way.

VS: Okay. Great. So when you were sent to 1142 [11:35], can you begin -- where you departed, where you had received the orders to go to this place in Virginia, what did the orders instruct you to do, and then --

RK: Well, as I said, it was kind of secretive, and I was very apprehensive about it. I was in Camp Campbell, Kentucky [12:00] and I, alone, received these orders out of the blue sky one day to get on a train, go to the railroad station in Washington, D.C., near the capitol building there, get off the train, and somebody would meet me. So about 2:00 in the morning, I get off the train and a couple of MPs in a truck picked me up and took me out to Fort Hunt [12:30] in the middle of the night, took me in the barracks, assigned me to a cot. I was just wondering what in the world was going on.

VS: When they picked you up, did you ask them any questions about where you were going,

and did they talk to you about it?

RK: Well, yes, they told me we were going out to a secret location, that I wasn't supposed to tell anybody about it [13:00].

VS: So you arrived there at night.

RK: Right, 2:00 in the morning.

VS: Okay. What was your impression? Did you have any idea where you were?

RK: No. I had never been to Washington, D.C. before, and, of course, in the dark of the night, I couldn't tell where I was. I had no idea where I was going.

VS: Okay. What were your first impressions? What was it like? Did you come up to a gate where there were guards?

RK: Yes. You came up to an opening, which was kind of hidden. You could go right by it and not know it was there. It went back a few yards, and there was a small station there with MPs that you would have to pass through.

VS: Did they stop you and ask you for your ID?

RK: Oh, yes, they'd stop you and asked for identification before you could go by them. You know, another [14:00] thing, when you had mail, as we were there, when we wrote letters, our mail was censored going in and out. They wanted to make sure you weren't telling relatives about what was going on.

VS: How do you know that? Did they tell you that?

RK: Yes, they told us that.

VS: So if you had received mail, what address would they use if they didn't know where you were?

RK: Well, they could be addressed to Post Office Box 1142 [14:34]. I mean, nobody knows

where that is.

VS: Well [laughs], that's very interesting. I wanted to chat with you a little bit about that. So it actually worked as a viable post office box to receive mail?

RK: Right. Our mail came in, and we got mail, but as I said, somebody looked it over before we got it.

VS: Okay, and so was this P.O. box [15:00] a real box in Alexandria, or do you think it was just a pretend box that --

RK: No, I guess it was an actual box, probably in the post office. I mean, but that's no identification of any kind. There's a lot of post office box numbers.

VS: Okay. So there's no secret meaning behind P.O. Box 1142 [15:23]?

RK: No. I don't know where they came up with the number. Could be any number.

VS: Do you recall approximately what date you arrived at 1142?

RK: Yes. I have a certificate here. "Military Intelligence [15:44] Division, War Department, acknowledge the appreciation and loyalty and devotion to the duty of Sergeant Robert F. Kloss while serving in the Military Intelligence Division War Department during the period November 16 [16:00], 1943 to September 2, 1945."

VS: So does that represent the dates that you were stationed at 1142 [16:11]?

RK: Right.

VS: So you were there for almost two years.

RK: Right.

VS: That's great. That's fantastic.

RK: Yes, as I said, you're not going to find anybody like me. You've been talking to some of the monitors, like George Weidinger [16:30], I think he was only there like eight months.

See, those people used to come and go. See, that's why there's a long list of so-called people that were at Fort Hunt [16:42], but the camp personnel, I don't think were more than around 150 and most of them were MPs.

VS: Okay, all right. Do you have any thoughts as to why they had sent you to 1142 when you didn't have [17:00] any sort of military intelligence training or interrogation skills or anything like that?

RK: No, I had no idea. I thought at first it was because I was in the Signal Corps [17:13], but, as I said, my testing, I had a very high IQ, and so I don't know if that had anything to do with it or not.

VS: I was just wondering if there was some sort of skills that they felt that you had that may lend itself to providing the training.

RK: Well, as I said, I was very good at reading, writing, and arithmetic, and English. I'm very good at English and words and spelling.

VS: Do you know any foreign languages?

RK: No. I know a little bit of German, and that's it. My mother and father were from Austria.

VS: So they were born there, and you were born in this country.

RK: I was born in this country. They came over [18:00] here as teenagers.

VS: Oh, okay. All right. Very good.

RK: But I'm very partial. I think Germans are the smartest people in the world [laughs].

VS: Okay.

RK: It was a battle between Russia and the United States who could get the most German scientists. We got Wernher von Braun [18:24], you know, which is very good to have. I never saw him. I never saw him. As I said, some of the cooperative Germans would

have some of the run of the camp. They'd be walking around here and they're exercising, as I said. They loved to play soccer, and they really liked to watch movies.

VS: I see. Okay. Let's see. So you came in, it was night; you come up through the guard post; they check your ID [19:00]. You go through. What happens next? Do you go to a barracks?

RK: Yes, I was assigned to a cot in the barracks. There were roughly four or five barracks buildings, and I suppose there were around maybe somewhere between 25 and 40 personnel in each barracks.

VS: Okay. So you went into the barracks.

RK: Right. I was assigned a cot, went to sleep.

VS: So you didn't wake everybody up when you came in?

RK: The next day, they took me to the Schoolhouse [19:35] where I was to work.

VS: Okay. Very good. So the next morning you woke up, and I'm sure you were very curious what was going on.

RK: Right. It was just a brand new experience to go through.

VS: This is probably too much to expect for you to remember, but do you remember who came up to you and said, "Hey, come with me. I need to take you to the Schoolhouse [20:00]?"

RK: No, I don't. I don't remember that. You know, Fort Hunt [20:08] was unusual. We didn't go much by military protocol between -- none of the going around saluting all the time and that sort of thing. It was pretty liberal, the way we were handled.

VS: Okay. So you went to the Schoolhouse [20:29]. Can you tell me what happened next?

RK: Well, I was taken over there and I met Colonel Wolf [20:38], and as I said, who was a

former judge and so forth. He was kind of a nice fellow, along with -- Barney Reid [20:48] was an exceptional -- Major Reid was an exceptional officer, and, in a sense, as I said, it was very interesting and, in a sense, a lot [21:00] of fun. It was a new experience but it was great.

VS: Okay. So you were involved in the Military Intelligence Service [21:12] Training Section of 1142.

RK: Right.

VS: How many people were involved in that particular portion of 1142 [21:20]?

RK: Well, as I said, there was Colonel Wolf [21:23], a regular Colonel Wolf and then a Major Reid [21:28], and then there were maybe a half a dozen officers who helped train military intelligence officers, Air Corps [21:42] people that came into the school. They'd come in for periods like for a week or 10 days and go through training, and take what they learned back to their own personnel at air bases throughout the country. They could be [22:00] coming in from anywhere. As I said, we occasionally had -- I remember one evadee called Cecil Woodgate [22:15]. Lieutenant Woodgate was a very interesting fellow, and he was an evadee. Of course, he would tell his story to intelligence trainees about how he managed to get back to our country with the help of the Underground [22:35].

VS: So for the MIS [22:40] training program -- and is that correct to refer to it as the MIS training program at 1142 [22:46]?

RK: Right.

VS: How many -- how many individuals were involved in that program that were, I guess --

RK: Are you talking about the personnel or are you talking about the people that came in?

VS: The personnel [23:00] who were involved in the training program.

RK: That was probably about six officers.

VS: Six officers. And were there any enlisted men?

RK: Just myself and Sergeant George Rauch [23:14]. He lived in the building.

VS: How do you spell Rauch?

RK: R-A-U-C-H. He's from Philadelphia.

VS: Okay. Was there a commanding officer for this section?

RK: Yes, Colonel Wolf [23:27].

VS: That was Colonel Wolf, okay. And then the other --

RK: And Barney Reid, Meredith Barney Reid [23:33], a major, was his assistant.

VS: Okay. Then the rest of the officers, you may have given us their names, but could you repeat those?

RK: Well, I remember George Watson [23:43], and I remember Cecil Woodgate [23:47].

VS: Then the other enlisted person that was with you, his name?

RK: George Rauch [23:57].

VS: Rauch, okay. Did you and George do [24:00] essentially the same thing, or did you have different responsibilities?

RK: Well, he just handled paperwork, keeping track of details, who was coming in and out, and that sort of thing. He stayed right in the barracks. They'd let people stay in these different places as sort of a guard. He lived right there in a room and had a bed -- had a cot and so on, and there were just the two of us.

VS: Very good. Did you do essentially the same kind of work as the officers, or did you do something different?

RK: Well, the officers were instructors. They'd get up on the platform in the schoolroom and

relayed, you know, [25:00] details on what would happen if the Air Corps [25:07] personnel got shot down, trying to be helpful to enable them to evade capture. But I was, more or less, in the reading room where the officers came in to read material that might be helpful, different kind of books and manuals, but particularly the manual that Lieutenant Staudigl [25:36] and I wrote.

VS: Is this something that you have a copy of?

RK: Boy, I wish I had one. If I'd have kept one, they'd have hung me up at the nearest tree.

VS: I'll tell you what. We're going to hunt for one at National Archives.

RK: I don't think you'll find any.

VS: Okay. Can you tell us what the title is, and we'll see --

RK: "Evasion [26:00] and Escape [26:02]," that's the title of the book. It's a hardbound book about three inches thick and about eight-and-a-half by 13.

VS: And you worked on that exclusively or primarily?

RK: Right. Lieutenant Staudigl [26:19] and I did it.

VS: Then it was reviewed by the superior officers?

RK: Right.

VS: Yes, we're going to have to hunt for that, because that sounds like a --

RK: Yeah. You're not going to find one. I would have loved to taken one, but, boy, if I ever got caught, then goodbye me.

VS: Oh, yes. But that was the basic guideline manual for the program?

RK: Yes. I did get off with an escape kit, which ultimately, I don't know what happened to it.

VS: Well, if you find it, send us a picture.

RK: I don't have it. I know what was in it, you know, all maps and compasses and language

books [27:00] and so on, how to speak French and so on, maybe maps and that type of thing in a little case.

VS: How about a physical description of the Schoolhouse [27:12]? Was it a classroom or was it offices?

RK: Well, it was a building -- you have a picture. When you show a picture of the Warehouse [27:23], I guess it was very similar to the Warehouse. They were side by side, and they were just one story up on bricks, elevated slightly off the ground, and when you went in the door, at one end was where Sergeant Rauch [27:46] slept and then there was two offices, one for Barney Reid [27:51] and one for Colonel Wolf [27:53]. Then there was a classroom, which was a good part of the building [28:00]. It had a platform at one end and a blackboard and so on, and then at the other end was the reading room with a safe with all the material in it that officers could read.

VS: You call it a reading room. Was it sort of like a library?

RK: Well, it had long tables and chairs where you could sit down and read, and every night I had to pick up everything and put it in the safe and lock it, and then each morning I opened the safe and put the stuff out for everybody to read. See, these buildings, they were heated just by a coal stove. They weren't modern buildings, by any means. There were no stone buildings in the whole place. They were all just wooden structures, and they had no air conditioning and no heating [29:00].

VS: So in the reading room then, I assume this was sensitive information, what was available in the reading room was sensitive information?

RK: Right. That's why they even kept it in a safe.

VS: Were there things like photographs, maps, anything else that you would maintain there?

RK: Well, yes, there were maps and so on, diagrams, maybe, of France and some of the European countries and details on, you know, routes to the Pyrenees Mountains. That's where almost everybody -- all these evadees came through, the Pyrenees. The French Underground [29:46] was very helpful.

VS: How were they helpful?

RK: Well, if you could run into one of them, they could lead you. They knew the country, and they could secretly lead you through a path [30:00] to the Pyrenees Mountains and take you right there.

VS: Did you have any French instructors or British instructors?

RK: No.

VS: Any other Allies came to --

RK: No.

VS: Because you were involved in training, you indicated that you had brought individuals who had been successful in escape and evasion come in short-term to do some training for other folks?

RK: Well, not for training. They'd just come in and tell their stories, which may be helpful in how to avoid capture.

VS: So they presented that information to you as sort of a debriefing?

RK: Yes.

VS: And then you would use that to help to develop planning and training as it relates to escape and evasion [30:51].

RK: Right. You got it.

VS: That's interesting. How many people during your time there do you think came through

and did a debriefing with [31:00] your section?

RK: Oh, they'd come in groups; they'd got to be about 100 or so.

VS: That's incredible.

RK: I don't know. I used to know every Air Force base throughout the United States. There's quite a number of them all over the place. Almost every state has an air base. So there's quite a number of them, and of course, there's intelligence officers stationed at every one of them.

VS: Are you familiar -- there's an organization called the Escape and Evasion Society [31:36].

RK: No.

VS: Basically, it's a group of people that were involved in some type of escape and evasion [31:45].

RK: Well, there were many people. There were escapes. They tunneled, they often tunneled, or when they did escape, they dug tunnels underneath, going outside the fence, but [32:00] once they got out, it was very difficult for them to ever get back. Most of them were picked up, and if they were picked up, they were just generally shot.

VS: I see. I'm going to probably lose this tape here, so I'm going to go ahead and just replace it, and then I'll do a quick introduction again.

RK: Okay.

VS: How are you doing? Do you have enough energy to go on a little longer?

RK: Oh, I could talk all day.

VS: This is great stuff.

(End of Tape 1B)

(Beginning of Tape 2A)

VS: Okay, I'm just going to do the brief introduction again. Today is May 6, 2010, and we're interviewing Mr. Robert Kloss as part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project. Mr. Kloss is at his home in Peoria, Arizona, and we are interviewing by telephone. My name is Vince Santucci. I'm the chief ranger of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and accompanying me is Park Ranger David Lassman of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. So we were beginning to talk about some of the guests, visitors that came to you that had either successfully evaded capture or even, in some cases, escaped.

RK: Yes. There were very few escapees, if any [01:00]. Almost everyone that was there were evadees, not escapees.

VS: Okay. There was one name of somebody who successfully escaped named Davey Jones [01:13]. Do you recognize that name?

RK: No.

VS: He had claimed that he had done some interviews after his escape.

RK: I can't recall. The only one I recall is Cecil Woodgate [01:31]. He's the only one I remember by name that was an evadee.

VS: We also talked to somebody by the name of John Wylder [01:40]. He said he came there for thirty days. His last name is spelled W-Y-D-E-R [sic], and he was shot down in the Pacific, and the Philippines helped him to evade capture, and then he was picked up by an American sub, taken to Australia, and then flown home.

RK: Well, the military [02:00] intelligence, we had a division in Australia. A few of our people were sent from Fort Hunt to Australia, but we had nothing to do with the Asian theater.

VS: All right. When someone came to Fort Hunt [02:22] and visited with your group for a debriefing, first of all, how did -- how were they sent there? Did you have a list of names of people that you wanted to come to the site and get orders issued, or were these people just sent there, and they showed up?

RK: Well, I don't know exactly how they got ahold of these guys. I don't know the details on that. How they picked them up once they found out they were -- evaded [03:00] capture and got back, I don't know. I don't have any idea how they picked them up.

VS: When they came to Fort Hunt [03:10] to meet with you and your group, how long did they typically stay? Was it a day? Was it a week? Was it a month?

RK: No, they came in and out. They might be there -- there were always new ones coming in with new thoughts and ideas, so that in the training procedures they might be there only a week or two, and then new ones would always come in.

VS: So when they came there, was there a process or a protocol or some manner in which you interviewed them? Was it done individually?

RK: Well, that was done by Colonel Wolf [03:54] and Major Reid [03:56]. They handled that [04:00]. They were interviewed by those two.

VS: Would they record those interviews or would they just write things down and create --

RK: I don't think they were recorded because, again, they didn't want that information -- everything was so secretive. Oftentimes, it wouldn't be written down.

VS: We had heard that if somebody had either escaped or evaded capture, that generally they want to take them away from the combat theater because, if they were ever captured again, they would be able to share information about how they successfully escaped.

RK: That is right. That's absolutely right.

VS: Can you provide me just any more insight as it relates to that? Because we've been told that several times.

RK: No. All I know is [05:00] they would never be sent back into where they could be captured or recaptured again. That would be an absolute no-no. I do know that much; that's all I can say.

VS: So you said that you really didn't deal with the Pacific theater, per se.

RK: No. Absolutely none. When the war ended, forget Fort Hunt [05:27].

VS: So then you actually had the opportunity, though, to work with individuals who evaded capture in Europe.

RK: Right.

VS: Okay. So did they provide you information about the French or the Dutch Resistance [05:40]?

RK: Yes.

VS: What kind of information would they provide you?

RK: Well, they would provide, you know, maybe names and places where an evadee could go to to get help [06:00], I mean, how to find help in the first place.

VS: Okay. Anything else specific?

RK: See, again, they couldn't really write stuff out, information out; it would all have to be by memory rote.

VS: Okay, all right. Did they talk at all about some of the techniques that they used for evasion that then you used that information to train individuals?

RK: No, nothing to do with evasion at all. Zero.

VS: Evasion, okay. Was there ever any discussion about the use of escape devices and how

they may have helped someone evade capture or get out of a prisoner-of-war [06:57] camp?

RK: Well, you know that [07:00]; that was more or less dealt with the Warehouse [07:04], where they provided all these secret things, like things in baseballs and games and so on, and sent to them. I can't believe the Germans were that stupid in not knowing what was going on.

VS: Do you remember talking with anybody that mentioned that they were able to receive escape devices or coded messages successfully as prisoners?

RK: No. No. I don't think any people ever came back to Fort Hunt [07:48] that -- particularly enlisted men. There were just no enlisted men coming back with any kind of stories [08:00]. All that came back were officers and, as I said, Air Corps [08:05] personnel. We had nothing to do with the Army itself. We dealt strictly with Air Corps.

VS: Okay, all right. Okay. Let's see. Were you familiar with the referencing of the program that Silvio Bedini [08:26] was in, referred to as the MIS-X Program [08:29]?

RK: No.

VS: You had not heard of that?

RK: No. I don't know anything in that. I know what Silvio Bedini did, but I was never with - - I was in the Creamery [08:42] only one time.

VS: Oh, so you actually went inside?

RK: Yes. I was inside. When I first got there, my brother worked for Major Becker [08:52] in the Creamery, and he took me and introduced me to Major Becker one time. That's [09:00] the only time I was ever in the Creamery [09:01]. Of course, the other fellows in the barracks that worked in the Creamery, some of the fellows that I mentioned by name

worked in the Creamery, such as Sidney Lynn [09:12] and a few others that worked in the Creamery.

VS: Okay. You said that at one point you actually had an escape kit.

RK: Right.

VS: Did you get that at 1142 [09:25] or did you get that --

RK: No, I got that at 1142. Well, see, it was displayed in the training of intelligence officers. They were shown these escape kits. Of course, these 10-man crews on B-24s, each one of them would have one of those when they took off on a flight.

VS: Can you describe what was in the escape kit?

RK: Well, in the escape kit, as I said, were [10:00] a little linguist -- language booklets, maps, compasses. There was even a pill to put in water to make water safe to drink, and just little things like that. The kit wasn't that big, but basically there would be a flag, an American flag to designate you were an American, and that was about all that was in it. It wasn't that big, but just enough to make it useful.

VS: Did you ever see any of the other escape devices that were being shipped to American POWs [10:48] being held?

RK: No. No. I was never in the Warehouse [10:50].

VS: You didn't see the baseballs or any of the other items?

RK: No. I just knew. We had some discussion among personnel [11:00] ourselves, no outsiders, but we could talk about it with one another.

VS: Okay. You say your brother was there.

RK: Right.

VS: What was your brother's first name?

RK: Ernest.

VS: Ernest Kloss [11:12]?

RK: Ernest William Kloss.

VS: Do you know what his job was?

RK: No, I don't. He just assisted Major Becker [11:22], probably in paperwork.

VS: He was in the same program as Silvio Bedini [11:28]?

RK: Right.

VS: What can you share with us about Silvio Bedini? Because he was quite a person.

RK: Yes, he was [laughs]. Yes. He was kind of a little odd. He wasn't one to -- like, he didn't play baseball; he didn't play cards. He more or less kept to himself. He was a very quiet, kind of secretive person. He smoked a pipe, and he was what you'd [12:00] call a fuddy-duddy [laughs].

VS: Okay. He had told us a story about a dog that he had for a short time.

RK: Yes.

VS: You don't remember him having a little dog?

RK: No. No, I don't recall that, of any dogs at all in the camp.

VS: He told us he found a dog when he was hiking in the woods one day and brought him back and had him for a short time.

RK: Well, it's true; personnel used to walk. I walked up to Mount Vernon a couple times.

VS: I guess the name he had for the little dog was called Rigor Mortis.

RK: He maybe did have one, but it wasn't out running around in the camp, I'll tell you that.

VS: Okay [laughs]. You'd mentioned that most of the personnel were MPs or guards.

RK: Right.

VS: Can you describe just the physical layout of the camp [13:00]? Were there fences, barbed wire fences?

RK: Well, there was a barbed-wire fence completely surrounding the camp, except at the entranceway there; it separated from the town where the houses were over -- where the houses were, there was a barbed-wire fence running along there. The camp really wasn't that big in the area. I don't understand at all when I'm reading this material you sent me, which is very interesting, about there being a golf course. I don't know where they get -- I guess there's enough land there other than the camp itself to have a golf course.

VS: Yes. I don't know if there was a golf course or not.

RK: See, I used to go to Fort Belvoir [13:57] and play golf. Fort Belvoir had a golf course [14:00]. Fort Belvoir is only about 12 miles away.

VS: Sure. Did the MPs use guard dogs? Did they drive Jeeps? Did they ride horses? What do you --

RK: No, that wasn't necessary. The camp was too small to have any kind of patrol of that sort. The prison camp itself had a double-fence enclosure. The outside fence was particularly -- the barbed wire would be slanted. I don't know how that guy could ever climb the second fence and get out. He would have to injure himself quite a bit to make it out, and then once he got out, I don't know what the world he would do. I mean, what could he do?

VS: Okay. Yeah, I don't know. So can you tell us more details about that particular incident? You say that this was a U-boat captain?

RK: Right. Well, you have it described. You have his name, even. It happened [15:00] about 7:00 at night.

VS: Okay. Were you at the camp at the time that this occurred?

RK: Oh, yes. The next day it was all around the camp.

VS: Did you see or hear anything?

RK: No.

VS: Okay. So you only found out about it after the event?

RK: Right, the next day. We all knew about it. What we wondered about it is why did they even bother to shoot him. That was not necessary.

VS: What were the details that you had heard about his attempted escape [by Werner Henke] [15:40]?

RK: Well, all I heard is that basically that he was a U-boat submarine commander and that he was climbing a fence, and the guards in the guard towers up a short distance -- the camp wasn't that big [16:00]. I guess they just machine-gunned him down. But there was no way he could have climbed that fence. I don't see how he could climb the fence because, at the top, it was slanted inward. So how could you possibly get out with barbed wire?

Boy, I mean, how could you do that?

VS: Yeah. Okay. Were you aware of the interrogation program that was going on?

RK: Well, as I said, in the manual we wrote, our interrogation and German interrogation is pretty much the same thing. We had instructions from German interrogation, which was quite similar to us. You could expect [17:00] faking to be American just like we did, and fake American Red Cross [17:10] personnel, what have you. You know, you were supposed to just give your name, rank, and serial number, period. That's what you were supposed to do. But sometimes, to get favors, you would talk, just like the Germans did. If you gave them certain favors, they would likely talk more.

VS: Okay. While you were there, did you ever see the prisoner compounds?

RK: Oh, yes. I couldn't help but see it. I was never inside it. The buildings were a little bit different. As I said, we didn't have any heating. You had coal stoves, and you could see smoke coming out of the pipes above the buildings and so on.

VS: Was there one prisoner compound, or was there more than one?

RK: No, there was only [18:00] one, but there were a few buildings within the compound.

VS: Can you explain? If I've never seen a photo or I didn't know anything about them, how would you describe these prisoner compounds? Were there barbed-wire fence? Were there guard towers?

RK: Yes. There were. I don't know how many guard towers there were, but there were guard towers. As I said, the whole place wasn't really that big. It was kind of small. I don't think there were very many prisoners there at a time because the prisoners come and went after interrogation, so they didn't need a huge place to room and board them. They were just there for short periods of time. So it wasn't necessary to have much of an expanse of a prison camp. It was just more primarily for interrogation purposes.

VS: Okay. Do you know anything about some of the individuals who [19:00] were brought in for interrogation?

RK: No, I don't. I never -- as I said, I didn't really talk to or could talk to any of the prisoners. I'd just see them around. The MPs have more -- could more or less talk to them, but I had no occasion to really talk to any of them.

VS: Okay. Did you know anything about German scientists that were brought to 1142 [19:33]?

RK: Well, I knew they were there, but I didn't know who they were. I didn't have a list of

names, or we didn't know names of people. It's only afterwards that we knew who was there.

VS: You weren't aware that 1142 was set up [20:00] for the interrogation of the highest-ranking German officers, German scientists, and political leaders?

RK: Yes. Well, I knew, as I said, that it was so small, there weren't that many.

VS: Did you know about any other programs that were --

RK: No, just the three phases, that's it.

VS: We have learned about a separate program called the Military Intelligence [20:32] Research Section, MIRS. Were you familiar with that?

RK: No.

VS: It was basically intelligence officers extracting information from captured German documents, maps, orders, photographs, newspapers, magazines.

RK: No, I don't know anything about that. I don't know if that was part of Fort Hunt [21:00].

VS: We talked to four veterans who worked in this very small program, where they would get in duffle bags full of documents every day, and they would go through and triage them, and some people would look at certain kinds of documents, and somebody else would look for other kinds of documents.

RK: That may have been carried on in the Creamery [21:26], but I'm not sure about that. In the Sugar Mill, for example, I was never in the Sugar Mill [21:34].

VS: At the end of the war, when they were going close down 1142 [21:39], there was an order that the captured German documents were to be sent to Camp Ritchie [21:48] after 1142 was closed. Since you went to Ritchie afterwards, I was wondering if you knew anything about that.

RK: No, I don't. I didn't do anything [22:00]. I just went to Camp Ritchie because they didn't know what to do with me.

VS: Okay. All right. David, do you have any questions? I'm going to give David the phone.

DL: Mr. Kloss, now, I know you say you really didn't see much the way the escape and evasion [22:19] materials were being sent overseas to prisoners, but did you see any escape and evasion materials beside the escape kit, like any of the buttons that had compasses in them or any other uniform parts that air crews would have had that had escape devices in them?

RK: No. No, I don't know anything about that.

DL: Okay. Thank you very much.

VS: Something I thought that was very interesting that you said is that you said that there was fake Red Cross [22:54] workers.

RK: Yes.

VS: Can you tell me more about this? Were they men or women or what other details do you [23:00] have?

RK: There were no, absolutely no females in Fort Hunt [23:05]. Not a single one did I ever see a female, nor did I ever see a black service personnel.

VS: But can you tell us about these fake Red Cross workers and what they did?

RK: Well, I just knew about them, see, in conversation with other personnel. But, as I said, in the book on evasion and escape [23:35] that we wrote, we wrote for our own prisoners to beware of people disguising themselves.

VS: Okay. Any other kind of disguises?

RK: Well, you had the usual thing where we might have an American who would pose as a

German [24:00] prisoner.

VS: Can you tell me more about that?

RK: No. Again, I'm saying the reverse is true. See, when I wrote the book -- when we helped write the book on evasion and escape [24:12], all these interrogation practices were part of the manual. So in reverse, it would be true of what we did. See, we would say what the Germans were doing, and we were doing the same thing the Germans were doing.

VS: So did you know anything about stoolpigeons?

RK: No. As I stated, some of the German prisoners, you know, they seemed to like being in the United States, and some of them were pretty cooperative. They themselves didn't like being in the German Army. They didn't necessarily all agree with what Germany [25:00] was doing.

VS: So there may have been some German prisoners who were more sympathetic?

RK: Oh, yes.

VS: They were maybe anti-Nazi [25:11]?

RK: Yes.

VS: Did you have any interaction with them?

RK: No, I didn't. I just knew about it, as again, in general conversation and see them walking around camp and so on. They were given a lot of special treats because they were cooperative.

VS: Did any of these German prisoners have jobs, like working in the kitchen or any other kinds of assignments?

RK: No. No, they probably would keep them away; that would be a little bit dangerous to let them handle food and so on. As I said, one fellow was a German [26:00] barber. They

may do things like shine people's shoes and stuff like that.

VS: Okay, all right. Let's see. Sorry, I'm just going through the notes that I have here.

RK: Well, it's pretty difficult. You know, you'll probably think of things when we're done.

VS: Oh, yes. You had mentioned that there were two fences, and that Werner Henke [26:30], the U-boat commander, was able to get over one.

RK: Right.

VS: Can you describe what you know about the second fence?

RK: Well, I just know what it looked like from the outside. It was about 12 feet high, and then at the top, it would have about a four-foot extension coming inward, so that when you tried to climb out, you got to the top, and how could you [27:00] -- your weight couldn't carry over an extension coming outward -- or inward rather.

VS: The distance between the outer fence and the inner fence, was there --

RK: Maybe 12, 15 feet.

VS: So you could drive a Jeep up and down there?

RK: Yes.

VS: You could take guard dogs?

RK: I'll tell you one thing, there weren't very -- you're talking about motorized vehicles. There weren't -- we didn't have any roads. There were no roads; there were just paths. There were no like paved streets or anything.

VS: Okay. Something interesting that you had mentioned, it had to do with the code writing that Silvio Bedini [27:51] was involved in. You had mentioned that there would be different codes that would be used on different days of the week.

RK: Right.

VS: Do you have any more details or insight as [28:00] related --

RK: No, I don't know anything about how code was used, but I do know they had fellows that they'd come in for training on code work, Air Corps [28:16] personnel again, and so that when and if they were captured, they could use this code work, writing to their girlfriends or mothers or family, whatever, and describe conditions or anything that might be of importance as they were captured.

VS: Okay, let's see. And so when they closed down -- or there was an order to shut down 1142 [28:49], can you tell me anything you know about circumstances as it related to the closure of 1142?

RK: Well, I don't know what you mean by the [29:00] circumstances. I was one of the -- I was not there when they started burning documents, but I was there quite a bit. Personnel were shipped out periodically, and I was one of the last to leave, but it was only after I left that they began -- as I said, you have pictures of them destroying documents by fire. I don't even know how they did it, but some of these books would be pretty hard to destroy by fire. But I'm sure they must have taken everything, stuff that they had in the safe in the Schoolhouse [29:44] was probably all destroyed. There was no purpose in having it anymore.

VS: How did you know about the destruction of documents?

RK: Well, I just know that it happened, that when we were sent out [30:00], we were -- everybody knew what was going to happen. They were just going to eliminate the camp, period; that's why we were being sent out.

VS: Okay, all right. You were gone by that time that that was occurring?

RK: Yes.

VS: Here, David wants to ask a question.

DL: Mr. Kloss, are you aware of other locations where the personnel were being shipped out to? You went to Camp Ritchie [30:28]. Do you know where other people were being sent to?

RK: No. They were dispersed all over the place. I went to Camp Ritchie maybe with only one or two other people, and others went someplace else where they might be used.

DL: Do you know who else went with you to Camp Ritchie?

RK: No. I don't remember the names. But it was only a short time that I was there. As I said, I don't even know why they sent me there. I didn't [31:00] do anything there, and I was only there a short time.

DL: After you left Camp Ritchie [31:06], you said you went and became a courier from the --

RK: Pentagon [31:11].

DL: Yes, for the Pentagon?

RK: Right.

DL: About how long were you doing that courier work?

RK: Just a short -- again, just a short while. There was a military intelligence division in the Pentagon. The Pentagon, I believe, is five stories and the rooms that military intelligence had the division there, I think when one of these planes hit the Pentagon [31:35] I think it hit the military intelligence section. But I was only there, again, a short time. I made a couple of trips to the White House and that was it.

DL: Now, any idea what part of the White House you were going to, what personnel you were meeting at the White House?

RK: No. You'd have a briefcase, and somebody would just come out and pick up [32:00] the

briefcase.

DL: So you never actually went into the White House grounds?

RK: You'd go in a staff car. You'd go to, I believe, a side entrance. There's different entrances to the White House. We just went to a side entrance in a staff car and then they would take the briefcase.

DL: Okay. How are you doing? Are you okay?

RK: Yes.

DL: All right. This book that you wrote, you said it was about eight-and-a-half inches by 13 inches by three inches thick.

RK: Right.

DL: Did it have any particular color cover? The more information we have about this book, the more we might be able to help identify -- there are a couple of --

(End of Tape 2A)

(Beginning of Tape 2B)

RK: One fellow that was -- he was a gay fellow, and he was caught in Lafayette Park right across from the White House, which was a hangout for those kind of people. One day he was caught, and suddenly in the barracks one day, everybody noticed he was gone and wondered where he went. But what happened was, he was a security risk, so he was just -- I guess, he was ultimately just discharged. But anyhow, you couldn't have that type of person serving in intelligence because he'd be a security risk.

DL: Were there any other security risks that you were aware of there at Fort Hunt [00:53] besides this one gentleman?

RK: No, just the one.

DL: Hang on. Do you have any more [01:00], Vince?

VS: No, I think this has been pretty good. I think this has been pretty good. We might think of some other information later.

RK: Well, if you do, you can write me or call me. I'm available and I enjoy talking to you.

VS: Well, likewise, and we really, really appreciate you taking the time to share this with us because this is very, very enlightening.

RK: Yes.

VS: Well, thanks again.

RK: Okay. As I said, if you ever run into anything, let me know.

VS: Thanks so much.

RK: I think I'll be around a while. I'm determined -- I'm determined to live -- once I set my goal at 87, and I reached 87, now my goal is 92.

VS: Good for you. Hopefully, we'll get a chance to meet maybe at some point.

RK: Yes. Well, I do a lot of work. Right now I'm doing some paint job on my house. So I play golf and so on, I swim [02:00] and so on. I'm having a lot of fun.

VS: Well, very good. Best of luck with everything, and we'll certainly be in touch, and thanks again for your time today.

RK: It's enjoyable talking to you.

VS: Oh, likewise. Thanks again.

RK: Okay.

VS: Bye.

RK: Bye-bye.

[end of transcript]

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