

Fort Hunt Oral History Project

P.O. Box 1142

Interview with Louis Al Nipkow by Brandon Bies, Vincent Santucci, and Steven Kleinman

Walnut Creek, California

February 17, 2008

INTERVIEWER: We're ready to get started here. Today is February 17, 2008. This is an interview as part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project for the National Park Service. We are here in Walnut Creek, California at the home of Mr. Louis Al Nipkow, a former officer who was stationed at both P.O. Box 1142 [00:34] as well as P.O. Box 651 [00:36] at Camp Tracy [00:38]. This is National Park Service historian Brandon Bies joined today with Parkway Chief Ranger Vincent Santucci as well as Colonel Steven Kleinman. And with that, Mr. Nipkow, we can go ahead and get started. Would you mind starting us off just briefly with a little bit of your background information [01:00], most importantly with when and where you were born.

LOUIS NIPKOW: Well, I was born in Japan [01:16] and I lived there for approximately 17 years altogether, and I used to attend functions up in the U.S. Embassy [01:16] in Tokyo [01:17], parties that they had; and I became acquainted up there with the Military Attaché. I have forgotten his name, but my father was Swiss and my mother was British although her mother was Japanese. And, I was born a Swiss [01:41] and I am still a Swiss citizen also, a citizen of the U.S. of course. And, in 1943 the ex-Military Attaché that I was familiar with out of Japan [01:57] was on a tour of the country recruiting for an 18-month [02:00] training course in Army military intelligence; and he happened to find me, locate me, and after a long discussion I volunteered for that course.

INT: If you wouldn't mind -- I apologize for interrupting -- if we could go into even a little bit more detail about some of your earlier life and one thing if you don't mind saying, when your birthday was.

LN: My birthday is February the 24th, 1915.

INT: So, almost Happy Birthday.

LN: It's very close.

INT: Yes, it's very close. Fantastic. And, so did you say you spent, was it consecutive, the first 17 years of your life in Japan [02:48]?

LJ: No, my Dad's headquarters -- he was in the silk business and the Swiss [02:57] were very important in the silk business in the early years [03:00] in Japan [03:02] and his headquarters were in Zurich, Switzerland [03:04] and he got to go back there for meetings every three or four years. And so, of course, I went back there with him all these different times. But, altogether it came to about 16 or 17 years that I lived out there.

INT: And when you were living out there you spoke or learned fluent Japanese [03:30]?

LJ: No, I've got to admit my Japanese, I understood it fairly well but I really didn't speak it that well, and, you know, like for interrogation purposes my Japanese [03:49] was never handled, what was necessary. We needed the Nisei [03:53] very, very badly for that. So I could understand it, and, of course [04:00], when I did speak a little bit of it, it was -- the dialect was pretty good because I lived out there but I didn't speak it fluently at all.

INT: Okay. So when you lived in Japan [04:12] you were attending English-speaking schools then obviously.

LN: I attended -- well, yes, we had originally it was the American kindergarten I went to and then it was a British school, and then, of course, we had the earthquake in 1923 when everything was destroyed. And then I ended up going to the American school in Japan [04:42] which was a Rockville [phonetic] Institute school. And, it's a very important

school out there now, and so -- well, actually I graduated from there and then I was an only child, and [05:00] my father wanted me to go to finishing school in Switzerland [05:06] on one of his last trips there; and my mother was very close to me, and in those days if I went to school in Switzerland and we had a summer vacation, it took you three weeks to go one way. It took you six weeks to go and come back so that you wouldn't have a vacation. And so they finally compromised and my dad got a tutor from the University of Lausanne [05:37] to come out to Japan [05:37] for three years and mainly, of course, on industry and that kind of stuff, then I went into his company to start things, and if you want to follow up on that --

INT: Sure.

LN: 1937 we went back to Switzerland [06:00] again, and I was very fortunate that was the best winter I ever had. I had three months of skiing in St. Moritz [06:10]. And my wife who was from California [06:14] was studying voice in Paris [06:17], and her brother joined her there and they went to the American Express Company [06:24] to find out where to go for Christmas vacation. And they said the best place was The Palace Hotel [06:29] in St. Moritz [06:31] so that's where they ended up, and my dad being Swiss [06:35] and very frugal, we stayed at a modest hotel and here were these two -- we used to meet -- after skiing you went to The Palace Hotel [06:48] bar for a little dancing and a little drink, and my dad and mother had friends from England [06:56] there at the time; and this young, very attractive couple used to come in, and they said [07:00] that's the honeymooning couple from England. I said, "No, I don't think they're English." Well, anyway, Christmas Eve night was beautiful because Charles Laughton was staying at the hotel at the time and he played Santa Claus and Claudette Colbert was there. You're too

young to know those people probably. But anyway, so Christmas Eve night the two came down and had dinner -- and I had more guts in those days than I do now, and I said, "Oh, I'm going to go down and talk to them." And sure enough they were brother and sister from California [07:39]. And to this day my wife insists that she said to her brother, "That's the man I'm going to marry."

[laughter]

And I went back to the office in New York [07:54] to work for a while, and we still don't know how [08:00] we ran into each other again in New York. She was on her back to California [08:04]. And I was a real spoiled brat in those days and I decided the beaches in California and the girls were too good to pass up. I'd love to come out here. So my dad said, "Take six months, and see what you can do." And so, to cut a long story short, in 1939 we met again and got married, so.

INT: And that's --

LN: That's the whole history.

INT: Super.

LN: It's amazing.

INT: And then if you could clarify for me, your -- did you receive some college schooling then, while you were in Japan [08:41] or did you actually attend a university for a set period of time?

LN: No, I finished with that tutor for three years --

INT: Right.

LN: -- and then, of course, this course that I was in was an 18-month course. It was one year at Michigan [09:00], Ann Arbor [09:04] for which I got credit for, and then three months

of basic training in Alabama [09:14], and then six months up in Fort Snelling [09:18] to get our commissions, and then I was assigned to Tracy [09:24].

INT: Got you.

LN: And I don't remember the exact period I was in Tracy, but it wasn't all that long and then some of us got a call to go back to Washington [09:36] in a hurry because the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [09:45] had gone back to Washington [09:47] and so that's how I ended up there in 1142 [09:50].

INT: Got you.

INT: How did you up in -- were you in the Military Intelligence Corps [09:54]?

LN: Yes.

INT: How did you end up in that branch?

LN: Well, that whole course [10:00] was run by Military Intelligence [10:05] as far as I know. It's probably a mystery to you, isn't it? I don't know. It was Military Intelligence but, so --

INT: Do you think they selected you because of your experience living in Japan [10:25]? Did they come after you or did you pursue intelligence -- opportunities with the Intelligence Branch [10:30]? Do you remember?

LN: No, they -- to tell you the truth, I'm not sure why I was selected for Tracy [10:46] obviously, because -- no, actually, all of us there at the University of Michigan [10:52], part of the course was language, Japanese language course, so it was Japanese [11:00] related.

INT: But did you -- were you drafted?

LN: No.

INT: So you [unintelligible] --

LN: I enlisted. Yeah, he made out the plans and I thought, well -- you know, they were so desperate for people that had lived in Japan [11:22] and that knew anything about Japan. So I thought, well, it was something I could do.

INT: So it was understood right off the bat from you that you were enlisting in the military for this purpose?

LN: Right.

INT: And this was after Pearl Harbor [11:40]?

LN: Yes. Yes.

INT: Can you just share briefly your recollections of when Pearl Harbor happened. Were you here in the United States at that time?

LN: I was here. It was so totally [12:00] unexpected, and I don't think we really knew the full amount of damage that was done out there. I mean, we knew there was a bombing attack, I mean, but it was pretty devastating and very, very devastating really for the whole country -- but that's about --

INT: Did you maintain contact with any friends or anyone -- were there any friends of yours in Japan [12:44] when the war broke out?

LN: No, all my friends were basically over here [13:00]. My dad and mother, they were given, I think, something like 30 days to leave Japan [13:19]. They had to pack up, and we were very fortunate to get anything out of there because they were forced to leave Japan which they did on very short notice when the war broke out.

INT: So your parents were actually there?

LN: They were there when World War II [13:40] started and then, of course, Pearl Harbor

[13:43] came along. That was before Pearl Harbor I think that they left I'm sure. But, there was [14:00] really nobody left out there of my friends; they were basically all over here, and I either lost or lost track of all the friends I grew up with, but basically were Americans and they went to college over here and back and forth and so forth.

INT: And so for the year or so between Pearl Harbor [14:27] and when you enlisted, were you working a full-time job here?

LN: Yes.

INT: And what was that?

LN: That was a company called Schwabacher and Frey [14:38]. It was a big stationery-type store. They did a lot of printing and they were big at the time. Things have changed so much, even in the last [15:00] two, three, or five years of businesses that were here but no longer here and active. So a lot of things are a little hard to remember.

INT: Sure. Was there here in Walnut Creek [15:13] or in San Francisco [15:13]?

LN: San Francisco.

INT: San Francisco. And so in 1943 you had this conversation, did you seek out a person in Military Intelligence [15:27] or something like that in the U.S. Army [15:29]? How was this arrangement made?

LN: It was this fellow who was the Military Attaché [15:38] in the American Embassy [15:40] in Japan [15:41] that contacted me. And then I signed up and went to [16:00] -- anyway, it was locally, but south of here that I went into the service.

INT: Okay.

LN: And this was a real eye opener to me because I went in as a private, you know, and here I was in the barracks with 50 other people. And I used to, when we came over here -- we

used to go to Europe -- we almost always went to Del Monte [16:44] which was down there, you know, around Carmel [16:49] and there was a camp there -- I've forgotten the name of it --

INT: Fort Ord?

LN: No, it was a small camp where [17:00] inductees went in --

INT: That went through the south of Camp Roberts.

LN: No.

INT: Okay.

LN: What the heck was the name of that? Well, I don't remember, but I'll always remember it because here were these total strangers, you know, with a guy sleeping on top of me, and on both sides of me, and I looked out the window and I could see the Hotel Del Monte [17:30] over there, which was the luxury hotel that I used to stay at.

[laughter]

I was in the barracks ready to go. And we were on a train to Ann Arbor, Michigan [17:50] and the group that we were in was rather a special group [18:00]. I mean, we had privileges that the others didn't. I had a little booth and Santa Clara University [18:09] had a bunch of ROTC [18:13] people that were going on the same train, and two of them had to sleep in the bunk up top; and in those days, that was a three-day trip from here to - - and, out of the goodness of my heart I spent one night -- I let them sleep in the bottom and I slept up top, but they were a good bunch. And then I got to Ann Arbor [18:40] and that was the start of the Japanese [18:42] language course and sort of military training. And that was a year there.

INT: Do you remember how big your class was?



LN: Well, we were separated [19:00] into how much language we knew, both written and spoken; and then the military part was the whole group together. And I would say it was a very, very good group. They wrote music, they were all college graduates for the most part, and they had a song that they wrote which I have forgotten but, you know, and played and everything. It was big time.

INT: It's very interesting that you should mention that. We first learned about that about five days ago. We interviewed another gentleman. His name is George Stoner [19:50], and he may very well have been in your class. His experience sounds like it almost mirrors your experience. He had taken [20:00] some Japanese [20:01] language courses in college and then went to Ann Arbor [20:08]. He was at Snelling [20:11]. He spent some time at Camp Savage [20:12].

LN: Oh, yeah.

INT: Were you at Savage?

LN: No, Savage was just before us.

INT: Okay. Okay.

LN: Yeah. He was ahead of me.

INT: Okay. Well, his group had put together this big play production that was used for raising money for war bonds and all sorts of things, and that sounds very similar to what you're describing. Do you recall, did your class have a number in Michigan [20:39]?

LN: No.

INT: Did you wear a uniform? Or were you in civilian clothes?

LN: No, we were in uniform.

INT: Uniform.

LN: Somewhere I had some pictures of us when we were at both Michigan [21:00] and down at the camp we were at. I don't know where they are now. Not that it matters because they were of no interest probably, you know, to you.

INT: The camp at Carmel [21:21], do you remember how long you were there and what it is you did there?

LN: Well, we were just inducted there.

INT: Okay.

LN: And it was for maybe 10 days or something like that. That was all.

INT: Were there other folks there who went with you to Ann Arbor [21:40]?

LN: No.

INT: No?

LN: No.

INT: Okay.

LN: No, there weren't. There were some friends that eventually ended up there at Ann Arbor [22:00] in a group after me that came in. But, no, I was alone on that.

INT: So when you were at Michigan [22:09], this was a one-year period?

LN: Yes.

INT: And you mentioned you were divided into, I guess, was it two distinct groups?

LN: No, it was groups of maybe six, or eight, or 10 at a time --

INT: Okay.

LN: -- like language, speaking or writing and -- about Japan [22:30] in general and so forth. And, you know, it's interesting that I still get every six months or so, literature from University of Michigan [22:43] addressed to me from those days. And I mean, there's

nobody left, you know, that would know so I don't know why they keep sending it to me, but they do.

INT: Is that alumni association information or something like that?

LN: Something like that. Yeah, and the school [23:00], primarily about the Japanese [23:05] section of the -- there's still a big Japanese section there apparently at Michigan [23:07].

INT: So your training, at Michigan we're speaking of at this point, it was both military as well as language?

LN: Mostly language but military on the other hand too.

INT: And they were teaching you to speak and understand as well as to write?

LN: Not to write, but -- the main thing was to know the language. See, a lot of these -- most of the people there were college graduates who had studied Japanese [23:43] or were interested in Japanese so they took a year to teach them Japanese, to speak it, which wasn't an easy course, but there were some very dedicated guys that would used to go down to the 18-holer in the morning and they'd be [24:00] with their books looking at the characters there learning the Japanese [24:06] language. [laughs]

INT: At this point, were you taught anything whatsoever about military intelligence or interrogation?

LN: No.

INT: Okay, so strictly language?

LN: Basically, right. And, you know, some things related to the military like map reading and, you know, things of that kind, nothing really important, but that was a year.

INT: So then at this point, were you still considered a private or you hadn't been commissioned yet obviously?

LN: No, we were until we got our commissions.

INT: Okay. Where did you go to get your commission [25:00]?

LN: Fort Snelling [25:05].

INT: [inaudible] Snelling.

INT: So is that when you went next after Ann Arbor [25:10]?

LN: No, I went from Ann Arbor down to --

INT: Oh, you mentioned Alabama.

LN: -- Alabama. You know, what I was saying, it was sort of a fancy group because we had special train; three sections that took us down to Alabama. And I've forgotten the name. It's not Benning [25:31], but it's next to Benning, it's a smaller one. And the train pulled in there and it was obvious from the start that the sergeants thought we were a bunch of idiots, you know.

INT: [laughs]

LN: And we were put up in a condemned area which they put up some tents and barracks and stuff and we had to prepare the 16- or 18-holer and [26:00] they would ridicule us all the time, these sergeants. But we spent three months there just basic training and got out of there, so.

INT: You know when we say 16- or 18-holer we're not talking about a golf course.

[laughter]

INT: I was just going to --

LN: I'm sorry, but -- yeah, we had to do all that preparation. It was novel for me too, believe me. [laughs]

INT: Would you mind for the purposes of our audience to briefly say what a 16- or 18-holer

was?

LN: Well, I don't know if you want me to go into detail, but, you know, it's a little bit different. They were wooden toilets. They were a bench with individual holes and then there was one section that was for somebody that had a problem which is always [unintelligible] interesting [27:00]; and you'd no sooner sit down that the sergeant would come running around and, "Fall out, fall out."

[laughter]

That's what it amounted to [phonetic].

INT: When I was in Desert Storm [27:18] out in the middle of the desert, in the Air Force [27:21] it was the same as an Army unit, we had to build, you know, a three-holer that was -- [laughs] it was a different lifestyle, sitting shoulder-to-shoulder with somebody.

LN: Oh, yeah. It takes a little getting used to.

[laughter]

Would you gentlemen like some coffee or anything?

INT: I think we're fine for now. We can take a little break shortly if you'd like. We've got about five minutes on this tape --

LN: Okay.

INT: -- and then we'll have to flip it. Could you talk a little bit more about your time in Alabama [27:55]? Could you go into more detail, was this basic training in the sense of weapons handling [28:00]?

LN: It was basic training in weapons handling and it was all military, whatever they teach you at a basic training camp, and that was two months.

INT: Was your group just the same folks from Ann Arbor [28:24] or were there other folks

mixed in?

LN: The same group.

INT: Okay.

LN: The same group.

INT: So at this point, this would have been sometime in 1944?

LN: This would have been '44 I think, yes.

INT: Okay. And so then from Alabama [28:44] did you say you went to Snelling [28:47] at that point?

LN: Right.

INT: Okay, so you never went to Savage [28:49]? To Camp Savage?

LN: No. I think Savage was closed by that time. Savage was the first of the Japanese [29:00], and I think that closed down and so I never did see Savage [29:03].

INT: So Snelling [29:09], what was different about what you were doing at Snelling as opposed to at Ann Arbor [29:12]?

LN: Well, Snelling was more military than it was language. It was generally, you know, armaments and all that kind of stuff [unintelligible] but it was not language. It was just a matter of getting your commission basically.

INT: Did the specific training relate to intelligence work then at that point? Or just general --

LN: [unintelligible] mostly general.

INT: And so would this training at Snelling [30:00] be equivalent to going to NCO [30:02] training?

LN: Probably. Well, actually more like OCS [30:07].

INT: OCS?

LN: OCS, right.

INT: And still, but no direct interrogation training or anything. Just, again, more military problems and what not.

LN: More military. Right.

INT: And how long were you at Snelling [30:29] for then?

LN: Six months.

INT: For six months, okay. And again, your same exact group, your same class followed all the way through?

LN: Right.

INT: Okay. Were any of the instructors at Snelling [30:45] people that you had dealt with earlier at Ann Arbor [30:48] or were these two distinct camps?

LN: No, there were two different camps.

INT: Okay.

LN: And, as I recall, I don't think there were -- there were a lot of Japanese [31:00] at Ann Arbor [31:03], you know, the Nisei [31:06], but at Snelling [31:09] I don't think there were any Nisei.

INT: And when you say they were there, were they in your class, or were they in other groups that were studying the same things?

LN: Who is this?

INT: At Ann Arbor [31:24].

LN: They were teachers.

INT: Oh, the teachers --

LN: They weren't in the class, they were strictly teachers.

INT: And so your classes then were entirely Anglo? There were no Nisei [31:38] or any other Japanese Americans [31:41] actually in your class?

LN: None. None.

INT: Do you know if there was a reason for that? Do you know if that was like, do you recall there being an Army policy?

LN: Well, you know, there was a great suspicion [32:00]; for instance, when I was -- before I enlisted, when I was a when I was with Schwabacher-Frey [32:16], we had a lot of calling to do on different armament plants and different things, you know, for the printing and all that kind of stuff. And it wasn't always easy for me to get into some of these places; and one very interesting thing was, you know, when the war started, they were very strict about Japanese [32:55] or anybody that was part Japanese or been to Japan [32:58]. And so, having lived out there [33:00], I had to report, and some real nut case, "What are you doing here? You should be in camp." I said, "First of all" -- I gave him the whole story. "Well you shouldn't be here. So you should report to the Immigration Service [33:30]." Well, I've forgotten his name now, he was a very nice guy, and I went up there and he said, "That ridiculous. Give me the name of this guy." But that's the kind of thing you put up with so --

[End of Tape 1A]

[Beginning of Tape 1B]

INT: Then you as one-quarter Japanese [00:09] remember experiencing discrimination?

LN: Occasionally, yes.

INT: Did that seem at all to come into factor once you were in the military?

LN: No, I wouldn't say so at all. I've always wanted to give a lot of credit to the military



because I think the military is really by and large just a great outfit.

INT: And so back to the general discussion again, at Ann Arbor [00:56] you had a number of Japanese American [01:00] professors, instructors and what not, and these were civilian instructors or were any of them in the military?

LN: Civilian.

INT: Okay. When you got to Snelling [01:11] were you now dealing with military instructors?

LN: Right.

INT: Okay. And so there were no longer any Japanese Americans [01:19] involved?

LN: Right.

INT: Okay. So you were at Snelling [01:24] for six months?

LN: [affirmative]

INT: And then you were commissioned, the entire class at once commissioned as Second Lieutenants?

LN: [affirmative]

INT: Okay. Did you have any sense where you were going to be going from there? Did they brief you as a whole or how can you explain that a little bit?

LN: Well, the bulk of the group ended up out in the Pacific [01:50]. Now, why I was selected to come to Tracy [02:00] I don't know. Breaks the game I guess because I know some of them that went out there did very well, very well when they got out of the military too. Some ended up in the Philippines [02:30], some in Japan [02:30] and so it was both good and bad. I happened to have a wife and a child and I was not particularly anxious to go out especially once the war was over. So I was just as happy to get out when I did [03:00]. I could have gone over, and, you know, that was when the CIA [03:05] started

to bloom too, and one of the majors that was in my group somehow happened to be in Japan [03:27] also. He was head of the -- I think it was the National City Bank at that time in Japan and he had always been very friendly, a family friend and everything, so I don't know if he had anything to do with it or not, but he wanted to know if I wanted to either go to Japan [03:54] or end up in the CIA [03:58]. Well, at that point of raising a family [04:00] I really had no particular interest in continuing, so I left.

INT: Just so you know, your experience is not unique among the veterans we've spoken to. An awful lot of them were heavily recruited by the CIA [04:21] and a number of them did end making lifetime careers out of the CIA.

LN: [affirmative] Well, I think it was a great opportunity if that's what you wanted, but I turned it down.

INT: Absolutely.

LN: As I am now, I'm really flattered that anybody, after all these years all of a sudden somebody wants to know what happened and what was going on, so.

INT: Since we're talking about the CIA [04:52], do you remember any contacts with anybody from the Office of Strategic Services [04:56]?

LN: No.

INT: All right. And the people with quote CIA [05:00] at that time, the CIA was still a couple years from its formation. They had the Central Information Group, they had the [unintelligible] and things like that.

LN: Yeah, it was

INT: As I recall it was just about starting, wasn't it?

INT: By 1947.

INT: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: But there was a couple intervening -- because OSS [05:25] was knocked down by Truman [05:26] shortly after the war. Yeah, he didn't like having that type of capability.

INT: Before we move on, obviously, you can probably tell we're about to talk a little bit about Byron [05:45] and what not, but before we get there, do you know from speaking with your fellow veterans and other fresh lieutenants who were headed off to the Pacific [05:56], were they all going to be with U.S. Army [06:00] units? Was there any intermingling whatsoever of Army interrogators working with the Marines or Navy personnel, or did Army stick with Army?

LN: Well, I really don't know that. I don't know. I don't really know because I would say that it wasn't just the Army [06:33]. My closest friend who was born across the street from me, a fellow by the name of Tad Van Brundt [06:45] [phonetic] who was of the few Americans that absolutely spoke fluent Japanese [06:54], absolutely fluent. He and his brother both, and [07:00] Tad [07:03] was in World War II [07:28] but he also ended up in Korea [07:28] when they were driven back on the border up there, and then he ended up in Okinawa [07:28]. This has nothing to do with based on me being not interested, but the people of Okinawa wanted him to become the governor there, and he never did make it, but it's rather interesting because he was a big handsome guy, went into the movies eventually, but he spoke Japanese [07:52] absolutely fluently, one of the few that I know of; and so [08:00] I'm not sure what units they went to. It could have been both Army, Navy or anything else.

INT: Kind of side noted. Do you gentlemen know that many people in Okinawa [08:19] wanted to become part of the United States after the war? They wanted to be part of

Japan [08:19]. They'd been ostracized and put down by Japan for so many years, they wanted to become a state essentially.

LN: Well, they were all for this friend of mine Van Brundt [unintelligible] they liked everything --

INT: They were ostracized. The Japanese [08:38] government didn't even -- said they looked different.

INT: In speaking of the -- you mentioned your friend was so fluent in Japanese [08:52], as a whole could you characterize -- when your class graduated after a year and a half, almost two years of training in Japanese [09:00] language, was everyone pretty much at the same level or would you still say there were some people in the class who were absolutely fluent and others who were just scraping by?

LN: No, there were some that were, very few that were fluent. And as an example, I was sort of a strange one there because as I say, I could speak it and I could even understand some of it but I couldn't know writing or reading. And depending on what you knew on speaking, writing, and reading, you went to different classes, and I would jockey from the low grade [10:00] in writing to maybe the higher grade in speaking and in between for anything else. I graduated with a B from there, but I don't think I really deserved it because, I mean, I -- I'm not a good student. Learning to read and write in a language like Japanese [10:31] is way beyond my capabilities.

INT: And so, how did you come to find out that you were not going out to the Pacific [10:48] but you were going to Camp Tracy [10:51]? Was that the next step in the procession?

LN: I had -- we had a call all of a sudden [11:00] from the, I think it was a colonel who was in charge of Camp Tracy [11:10] but there were several of us who had been picked to fly

back to Washington [11:19] to interrogate the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [11:22], and it was rather funny because I've always hated flying. So I remember saying to the colonel, "Would it be all right if I take a train or whatever?" He said, "No, no this is a first class flight." He says, "You got to be back there. It's a first class flight. Not everybody gets that kind of flight." So anyway, I had to go through with that, and there were seven of us that ended up [12:00] down in San Francisco [12:01] airport, and in those days I think it was a DC-3, and I had a young fellow next to me that didn't like to fly either. And, you know, in those days the DC-3's wound up before they took off, they'd flutter around a little bit on the ground. And he said, "Let's get out of here." I said, "No, captain [phonetic], we got to get on there." And the fellow that sat next to me on the plane was a captain in the Army. Now, I don't know if he was a reserve or what, he was probably in his fifties at the time, and [13:00] a flight in those days back -- we went back to Washington [13:08]. We left San Francisco [13:10] at 6:00 and we landed in someplace in Nevada and then we landed in some other place, and then you landed in Chicago and you got to Washington at 4:00 in the afternoon. And this captain who sat next to me, he was on the window seat and we were going over Tahoe and they served up refreshments of some kind, and he was saying, "Look at the lake. Look at the lake down there." I took one look, and I, if I get on the roof [14:00] I'm like this [laughs] and I sort of passed out I think. Because my dad used to do a lot of flying at the time, told me, "Well, it's all right. I'll give you a pill to take." So I took a pill and it really knocked me out, I mean, I didn't know what was going on most of the time till we got to Washington [14:33], but flying was a totally different thing in those days.

INT: And so, you flew to Washington after you'd already been at Camp Tracy [14:35]?

LN: Yes. Oh, yes, right.

INT: Okay. And so the flight you were just describing was your flight to P.O. Box 1142 [14:56], to Washington, D.C. [14:57]?

LN: Right.

INT: Okay [15:00]. Can we have a time frame when you finished at Snelling [15:07] and you went to Tracy [15:07]?

LN: Well, I transferred right away to Tracy [15:24] in a matter of two or three days I think from the time we graduated.

INT: Do you know what month that may have occurred?

LN: Oh, boy.

INT: Approximately. It would be helpful because then we would be able to determine where we were in the war in the Pacific [15:51]. Brandon might be able to help with this [16:00].

LN: I really don't remember what month it was.

INT: So, you know, we came prepared and we actually have some information and I'd like to leave some of this information with you. We have a roster of the officers and enlisted intelligence personnel that were at Camp Tracy [16:27]. And it has you listed as arriving on March 30th, 1945. And now, it may or may not be correct.

LN: No, I'd say that's about right.

INT: It even has your serial number, if you remember that.

LN: I don't remember that.

INT: 0931389.

LN: [laughs] I don't remember it but that's about right timewise [17:00].

INT: Okay. So it was about the time of Iwo Jima [17:05]?

LN: Yes.

INT: And Okinawa [17:09] would be [unintelligible] the next day.

LN: Yeah. An interesting thing sort of, I got a list, and I don't know which one of you it came from, of -- the one that had the map of Tracy [17:32], and it had a list of interrogators and the prisoners that were interrogated, and when it was, and what room and so forth. And I did not remember at all being known as Nelson [17:50] instead of using our own name. Nelson was the one that appeared most of the time.

INT: We also found I think, Fontaine [18:00] [phonetic].

LN: Now the funny thing about Fontaine is I don't know where in the world that came from, but I was a very close friend of Joan Fontaine's [18:17] and if her sister, Olivia de Havilland [18:21] got to be famous in Hollywood, and then Joan [18:29] went back-- Joan's father was married to a Japanese [18:33] woman, and he was a pretty miserable guy; and Joan [18:39] -- he had no use for Joan at all and she was at the American school in Japan [18:46] and lived there; and then, as Olivia [19:00] became famous they called for Joan [19:03] to come back to California [19:07] and that was about the time too when I was going back to Europe in Switzerland [19:13] with my dad and mother. And I think we may very well have married if that hadn't split us up at the time, but the funny part about that is I was looking at it and I'd get Nelson [19:30], Nelson, Nelson and all of a sudden Fontaine [19:35] and where that name came from I have no idea because I hadn't talked about it to anybody about Fontaine and [unintelligible] I don't know where it came from.

INT: Is there a chance that they could have just assigned that to you?

LN: Yes, because I don't even remember Nelson [19:50].

INT: Okay. It is interesting looking through the list that you're speaking about [20:00], they seem to sometimes -- sometimes they seemed to pick a name that is similar to that person's original name. Certainly for the Japanese Americans [20:14] who were there, they are always again keeping Japanese American [20:19] names but just a different Japanese American name.

LN: [affirmative]

INT: So there seems to be some thought put into it, whether it was done by you or done by a commanding officer somewhere.

LN: I don't remember that at all, being referred to as Nelson [20:34].

INT: And we have some documents relating to Tracy [20:38] and whatnot that we'd like to share with you as we go along, maybe even during this next break. So you shipped straight from Snelling [20:50] to Camp Tracy [20:51]?

LN: Right.

INT: Okay. Were you briefed ahead of time or did you just say, "You got orders. You're transferred to this place [21:00]." And did you know what that place was?

LN: I didn't know what the place was, no.

INT: Okay. So you had never been briefed at Snelling [21:12] about the interrogation centers?

LN: No.

INT: Okay. Had you -- even your final months at Snelling had you been trained in interrogation?

LN: Not really, no.

INT: Okay.



LN: No.

INT: Did you ever have any training in interrogation?

LN: Not really.

INT: Just pretty much on the job?

LN: Right.

INT: Did they give you any reading materials or any sort of --

LN: You mean at Snelling [21:43]?

INT: Or when you were at Tracy [21:46]?

LN: At Tracy, basically we were told what it they would like -- what we would like to know and what to ask -- the questions that they ask and, of course, you had the Nisei [22:00] that correlated that into an actual question because there was no way I could talk to a Japanese [22:11] prisoner really.

INT: Were you in the room during the interrogations?

LN: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah.

INT: Did you have a supervisor making sure the questions --

LN: Oh, yeah.

INT: Would you ask questions and they would translate?

LN: Right. There were always two of us. The Nisei [22:26] and one of us. Incidentally, there was another person that I was a roommate with there by the name of Laffin [22:42], L-A-F-F-I-N, who was also born in Japan [22:51] and might have also had some Japanese [22:51] blood. He spoke it absolutely fluently too.

INT: And he was at Tracy [23:00]?

LN: Yeah. He and I were roommates.

INT: Do you remember his first name?

LN: His last name was Laffin [23:15], L-A-F-F-I-N and his first name I don't remember right now.

INT: Was he an officer?

INT: He was an officer as well?

LN: I'm not sure if he was an officer. If he was an officer he was in the Navy, not Army, but --

INT: Do you remember if he could have been in the Navy?

LN: He might have been.

INT: Because just peeking at this list, there is no one by that name [24:00] on the Army list. We do not have a --

LN: No, as a matter of fact, he was not in the Army, and come to think of it I don't know if he was a civilian or -- I don't remember.

INT: So, were there civilians there at Tracy [24:25] that you worked with?

LN: Most of them were Army, there were a few Navy, a few Air Force. One of the Air Force people was a captain -- oh, I can't remember his name right now [25:00]. He was from Dallas [25:07] and when we went back to New York [phonetic] we drove through Dallas and he had us at the country club with his family for dinner; an awfully nice fellow and I can't remember his name right now. But he was in the Air Force and there were a few people in the Navy and there were civilians too. And maybe Laffin [25:45] was one of the civilians.

INT: Okay. So you remember he was your roommate?

LN: Yeah.

INT: Did you live in the hotel structure?

LN: Right. Right.

INT: Do you remember which floor [26:00]?

LN: I believe there were two floors. We were on the second floor. Maybe there were three floors. I think that's right. I think there were three floors. We were on the second floor and I think the prisoners were up on the top floor.

INT: Did you know the site as Byron Hot Springs [26:28] or Camp Tracy [26:28]?

LN: Byron Hot Springs.

INT: Did you know the P.O. Box?

LN: No.

INT: 651 [26:33]?

LN: No.

INT: So you knew it as Byron Hot Springs [26:36]?

LN: Knew it as Byron Hot Springs, right.

INT: The name Camp Tracy [26:42], was that also used by you?

LN: Not used.

INT: Since we're describing the facility a little bit, we'll maybe talk about that a little bit more. You mentioned that you remember living on the second floor [27:00] and you think the prisoners were on the third floor. Were there any prisoners anywhere else or were they pretty much all up on that third floor?

LN: No, they were pretty much all up on there, and the food -- a lot the food was prepared by the Nisei [27:18], Japanese [27:19] food, and a lot of these prisoners I'm sure thought it was a hell of a fine place to come to where people were fairly very nice to them and the

food -- they could enjoy the food. And there were a number of them that couldn't answer any questions, they didn't know the answers. And they'd be sent back to wherever they came from, local camps, and then a couple of days later we'd get notified that they had thought of something that they remembered to tell us, so they came back [28:00].

[laughter]

There was a number of those things that happened.

INT: Where were they sent? Do you remember?

LN: Well, you see, actually Camp Tracy [28:15] is in Byron Hot Springs [28:17]. It's not in Tracy [28:17], and down in Tracy there was a camp there for them, and then, of course, Angel Island [28:27].

INT: [affirmative] Okay.

LN: [unintelligible]

INT: They were being sent to Angel Island when you were done with them?

LN: Yes. Yeah. Well, I think mostly Angel Island [28:44], some of them to Tracy [28:45]. There was a big camp down there in Tracy.

INT: Do you remember where they were coming from? Were they coming from a distribution center or were they coming direct from the Pacific [29:00]?

LN: Well, they were coming direct from the Pacific. Now, what part of the Pacific and where they came from I don't know. Once we questioned them we tried to find out where they came from but actually where they came from I don't know.

INT: Did they come through Angel Island [29:22]?

LN: Yes.

INT: To Byron [29:25].

LN: Right.

INT: The first impressions in terms of coming to the camp and when did you learn what the camp was?

INT: What Vince was saying is when did you -- were you ever briefed when you arrived, this is what this place is and this is what we're doing, or was it very apparent immediately?

LN: Well, it was apparent immediately but we were briefed on what it was all about. And having [30:00] learned from the guy -- from the fellow that got me into it, I mean I knew what it was all about before I got there, but they briefed us on what it was all about once we got there. And there was a -- I don't know, he could have been a colonel, Swift [30:25]?

INT: Yes. Well, yes, David Swift [30:32], it has him as a major.

LN: Major, Major Swift.

INT: Major Swift.

LN: Now, he was another one who was very good at Japanese [30:45] and I had known him in Japan [30:46].

INT: Oh, you knew him before the war?

LN: Yeah.

INT: Interesting. Do you think that that had any bearing on you winding up at Byron [30:55]?

LN: Possibly. Possibly [31:00]. You know, it's hard to know how those things happen but that's very possible that somebody like that said something about we could use him here or something like that.

INT: When you were told -- when we received orders to go to Byron Hot Springs [31:25] you just indicated that you knew it was an interrogation facility. Was that common

knowledge before you got the orders or was that --

LN: Well, we knew that we were going to someplace that was an interrogation center, and, of course, at the time we didn't know [32:00] if we might be going to Hawaii [32:03] or the Philippines [32:04] or anything. Truthfully, we didn't know about Tracy [32:15] or 1142 [32:15] at that time.

INT: Right. Okay. And when you got to Tracy [32:22] and before you got orders to Fort Hunt [32:23] did you know that there was a parallel program going on?

LN: Yes.

INT: You did know that?

LN: Yes.

INT: We only have a couple minutes before this tape ends. You made the comment what went on at Byron Hot Springs [32:39]. Can you say in your own words what happened at Byron Hot Springs?

LN: You mean as to what my personal job was or --

INT: What was Byron Hot Springs [32:57] set up to do?

LN: Well, it was set up to interrogate [33:00] prisoners that returned for further information, to the mainland here. And we were required to get the information from them that was requested.

INT: Were these only Japanese [33:19] prisoners?

LN: Only Japanese prisoners, right.

INT: When the time that you were at Camp Tracy [33:28] you don't recall there being any German [33:29] prisoners?

LN: No, there were none.

INT: Okay. Was it only interrogation or did you use any other techniques to obtain information?

LN: Only interrogation.

INT: Did you do any monitoring?

LN: Yes.

INT: You listened?

LN: Yes.

INT: Okay. We'll probably want to talk in detail about that.

LN: Okay.

INT: And was there any looking at captured documents?

LN: No, there were no documents [34:00] to my knowledge that we saw, and the monitoring was done basically by the Nisei [34:20] listening into the conversations.

INT: So you never -- do you recall going into the [unintelligible]?

LN: No, I never did it.

INT: So, looks like we have about two minutes. When you drove, I assume you drove, to Byron Hot Springs [34:38].

LN: Right.

INT: When you came to the gate for the first time what did you see? Was there a gate?

LN: There was a closed gate. At the time it was a wonderful place for the camp because you couldn't see anything from the road. It was a lightly traveled area anyway [35:00] and there was a hill that hid the whole camp itself. And there was just a gate there that you had to clear before you could get in there.

INT: I think we'll go ahead and call it quits right now.

LN: Okay.

INT: Take a little break and then we'll pick back up with that in a few minutes.

LN: All right. Would you --

[End of Tape 1B]

[Beginning of Tape 2A]

INT: The second in a series of interviews for the Fort Hunt Oral History Project. This is for the National Park Service. Today is February 17th, 2008. We are here at the home of Mr. Louis Al Nipkow at his home in Walnut Creek, California [00:25]. This is Brandon Bies with the National Park Service as well as Vincent Santucci. We are also joined by Colonel Steven Kleinman. With that, we talked a little with Mr. Nipkow on the last tape about what you remembered about Camp Tracy [00:44]. I'd like to follow up with some more of that. One of the things that we had talked a little bit about during the break amongst ourselves was if there's any more information you might remember about the room monitoring that was going on. You had concluded [01:00] before by saying you did not do any room monitoring yourself. It was mostly the Nisei [01:07] who were doing that.

LN: Right. Now, I personally didn't do any monitoring but I'm not sure that some of the others didn't.

INT: Do you remember ever being briefed in what the purpose of the monitoring was, or did you know what the purpose of the monitoring was?

LN: Well, we were briefed as to what we wanted to find out and then we took it from there.

INT: Was the focus of the monitoring on the monitoring of the actual interrogations or the monitoring of the individual rooms where the prisoners [02:00] stayed in between



interrogations?

LN: Well, it was general information that we thought we get from that particular prisoner.

INT: Did you focus on the monitoring that took place when conversations among two prisoners when they were alone in their rooms? Or, were their rooms bugged?

LN: All the rooms were bugged, yes.

INT: And how do you know that?

LN: Well, I was told they were bugged. I didn't know that personally but I was told they were bugged.

INT: Did you ever see any of the bugs or microphones or anything?

LN: No. No.

INT: Any idea where they may have been hidden?

LN: No, I don't.

INT: Was there a room where the monitors were located in Byron Hot Springs [02:57]?

LN: No, I was told that [03:00] all of the rooms were bugged, but not where the bugs were, but each room apparently was bugged.

INT: And for those people that were listening, the Nisei [03:13] that were monitoring, would they be in a specific location to listen, a quiet room or --

LN: Well, I believe there was a room where they went to listen, one central room.

INT: Do you remember where that was?

LN: No, I don't.

INT: Was there a specific interrogation room that you used?

LN: No, we went to certain rooms that -- well, they may have been. We were directed to a certain room on certain days. I don't think it was the same room though [04:00].

INT: But they weren't interrogated in their prison cells?

LN: No.

INT: So there was a certain room?

[talking simultaneously]

LN: Right.

INT: In a typical interrogation, would have been an Anglo officer, a Nisei [04:16], and a prisoner?

LN: Correct.

INT: Were the prisoners in a room by themselves or did they share a room.

LN: I believe there were two to a room.

INT: Did you get to see transcripts of the monitoring?

LN: No.

INT: You never saw them?

LN: No.

INT: Do you remember if the Nisei [04:42] who were doing the monitoring would ever report back to you about something that maybe they heard in a room conversation?

LN: No. See, I think that -- I don't know [05:00] about the rest of the places or the rest of them but I think the Nisei [05:06] that we had there were pretty truthful, dedicated people. I think they reported everything and asked everything that they were required to do.

INT: Do you know, was there an officer that was assigned to supervise the activity of monitoring and the Nisei [05:29]?

LN: Well, I think that Colonel or Major Swift [05:35] was in charge of that.

INT: I think we know the answer but I'll ask it. When you arrived at Byron Hot Springs [05:50] there were already prisoners there, there were already staff there?

LN: Right.

INT: Do you have any recollections in terms [06:00] of the numbers of about, first let's talk about the American staff who was there. Can you recall ballpark how many people were there?

LN: No, I really -- I would be guessing. I wouldn't know how many there were, but -- you mean excluding the Nisei [06:35]?

INT: You could certainly -- if you can remember a distinction that would be great. Just anything whatsoever you might remember about numbers of people there.

LN: Well, all I remember is when we used to sit down for a meal I guess most of us sat down together [07:00] and I guess there were 30 or 40. Now that's not including the Nisei [07:15], but I would say the everyday number of people were probably, when we sat down to eat, were probably 30 or so, and that's just a guess.

INT: Did you associate whatsoever with the guards who were there?

LN: No.

INT: Do you remember there being guards there?

LN: There were guards there.

INT: Did they essentially serve as the whole support staff? You mentioned earlier the Nisei [07:55] were doing all the cooking.

LN: [affirmative]

INT: So do you remember [08:00] if there were -- what the non-intelligence personnel, the people who were not interrogators or Nisei [08:09], what they were doing. Was that just

guarding and that was about it?

LN: They were guarding really.

FEMALE SPEAKER: I came in to see what you're doing in here.

INT: Absolutely.

FS: Behaving yourself.

[laughter]

INT: That's right.

FS: I'm going to go out and feed my deer. [unintelligible]

LN: All right. Okay. Just keep the dog closed up there.

FS: Oh yeah, he is.

INT: Excellent tea.

FS: Do you want some more?

INT: It's wonderful. I'm okay.

[talking simultaneously]

INT: No, I'm fine. Thank you though. Thank you very much.

LN: I'm all right.

FS: [unintelligible]

LN: I'm all right and if I need your help I'll holler because there's three guests

[unintelligible].

INT: It's worth asking while you're here, did your husband ever share with you after the war what he did [09:00]?

FS: Oh, yeah. We talked about it.

INT: Okay.

FS: But it's so long ago I can't -- you know I'm old now and I can't remember anything.

LN: Well, you see, when I was out there I did have leave to come home some weekends.

FS: Yeah, I remember that.

LN: We did see each other. Would you want to do something with him before he comes in?

FS: I took him for a walk.

LN: I know you did. Shut him in one of the bedrooms so we don't have to listen to him.

FS: Does anybody need more tea or anything?

LN: No.

INT: No, thank you.

LN: We're all right.

INT: Thank you very much.

LN: We're being monitored here, so --

FS: [unintelligible] you do me a favor?

LN: Sweetheart, we've [unintelligible] but we're being monitored here.

FS: Oh. All right.

[talking simultaneously]

LN: You're going to have to obliterate that somehow.

[laughter] [10:00]

LN: I'm sorry.

INT: Oh, that's quite all right. No problem whatsoever.

INT: Along that same line, did you ever go down -- whatever the downtown Byron [10:11]

looked like at the time, did you ever go off base for meals or --

LN: Yes, occasionally we did.

INT: Did you encounter locals?

LN: Yes.

INT: Did they ask you what you did?

LN: No. You know, at that time Byron [10:24] and the area there was just virgin territory. I mean, I think there was one roadside restaurant and, of course, at that time if they saw a Japanese [10:43] or a Nisei [10:44], they freaked out, you know. So the Nisei didn't go anywhere but we did go out to dinner once in a while locally, but there was very little going on there.

INT: Did they inquire as to what you were doing [11:00]?

LN: No.

INT: Did they seem to have any problem [unintelligible]

LN: They probably knew. I'm sure they knew but there were no questions asked.

INT: How were the Japanese [11:16] prisoners brought there?

LN: Trucked in.

INT: Like for instance at Fort Hunt [11:23] when they were brought down from Pinegrove Furnace [11:26] they had buses and the windows were tinted out so they couldn't see out and people couldn't see in.

LN: It was the same.

INT: Same thing?

LN: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

LN: So they'd see a bus go by so --

INT: Yeah. Did you have actual MPs at Byron [11:42] or were they just guards?

LN: I think they were just guards.

INT: Were they armed?

LN: No, not that I know of. Not that I remember. I mean, they were -- I don't remember them looking like they were armed.

INT: Was there anybody stationed at the entrance [12:00]?

LN: Oh, yes. Yes, yeah.

INT: And, let's see, did they ever use dogs?

LN: No.

INT: Horses?

LN: No.

INT: With the MPs, who moved the prisoners around? Was it -- if you were going to interrogate someone, did you go and get the prisoner or did the MP go and --

LN: No. Somebody brought them down to the room. I don't remember whether it was an MP or not, but they were brought to the room and then taken back.

INT: And likewise, when they were going to and from Camp Tracy [12:42] to or from Angel Island [12:44], would any interrogators or Nisei [12:48] or anyone accompany them or would it just be the MPs?

LN: It would just be them.

INT: Okay. Did you [13:00] -- obviously, the MPs knew what was going on. They obviously could tell, but did they ever sit in on any of the questioning or interrogations?

LN: No.

INT: Do you get the sense of the MPs were from the local area?

LN: No, I don't think they were.

INT: Okay.

LN: I'm sure they weren't. Well, besides which, like I say, that was just absolutely virgin territory there. There was no place to -- nobody to hire there so they were definitely from the outside.

INT: Do you remember how were the prisoners contained? What would have kept a prisoner from trying to escape? Was it simply the fact that they were Japanese [13:53] and would have stood out like a sore thumb?

LN: No, they were locked in. There was no way they could get out. I mean their rooms were locked [14:00].

INT: Were the windows closed off or did they have -- could they see out of their room?

LN: I don't remember that, but I do know that they were locked in. I don't know about the windows.

INT: Do you know about how long the average stay was for a Japanese [14:22] prisoner at the facility?

LN: Well, it wasn't terribly long. Of course, it depended a little bit on what they might have to say or what we thought they might have to say; but I would say probably not more than a week or 10 days.

INT: Okay.

INT: That's very similar to Fort Hunt [14:50].

INT: And -- I'm sorry.

INT: Oh, that's all right. You sure?

INT: I'm really fascinated to find out what percentage [15:00] or how would you characterize the prisoners in terms of their resistance to interrogation?



LN: I would say that the ones that we had were very easy people to deal with. I mean, I don't remember any of them being belligerent or hard to talk to, not that we got what we were supposed to get from them, but I mean they were pleasant people.

INT: Did any of them ever resist answering questions, specific questions?

LN: Oh, yeah.

INT: How would they resist?

LN: Well, they would say they didn't know. I mean, they didn't resist to the point where they were belligerent about it, but they'd say they didn't know or they couldn't tell you they didn't know mainly but there was very little [16:00] tough questioning. Mostly as I recall it seemed like they answered what they could.

INT: How would you then characterize the strategies that were used to ask questions? Since you didn't have interrogation training, how did you know about how to approach these people?

LN: Right. I think that's where we lacked what we should have had. We didn't have that training, but we were told what we were trying to find out. That's the best we could do was ask them what we were told to find out. But we really lacked training on that phase of what we did.

INT: Did you have instances where you felt you were being lied to [17:00]?

LN: Well, of course, you don't know when they say they don't know, it's --

INT: Right.

LN: You being trained in it you probably have a way of going about it, but if you're not trained and they say they don't know, unless you torture them I don't know how you find out.

INT: Were there ever instances of what anybody might describe as coercion?

LN: No.

INT: How about any tricks? Any tricks that you would use to try to entrap them?

LN: Well, you see, that's another phase where we weren't trained in that, so really the best we could do -- it's surprising, a lot of that was just [18:00] like you're trying to find out about now. We were -- we really didn't know either, you know. We were told what to ask and try to get it, but I mean we weren't really trained in the fine art of finding out what you wanted.

INT: Would there be cases that you could reward them with cigarettes or a shot of whiskey or something that if they [unintelligible].

LN: Their main pleasure was getting their food and being well treated which I think was a hell of a note when you think about what they went through before they got here. I mean, they were well treated at the end of the line.

INT: It's a pretty comfortable setting, right?

LN: Oh, yeah.

INT: We might get [19:00] to that later but the layout of the rooms that the prisoners were in, how they were furnished to what kind of bedding, that sort of thing.

LN: Well, I didn't see the rooms but I'm sure they were double bunk because there were two to a room as far as I remember, and so I don't remember anything more than they both had beds but I don't know much more about it than that.

INT: Do you remember if there were -- did they have bathrooms in their rooms or was there a latrine somewhere?

LN: Well, see, that I don't remember.

INT: Did you have a bathroom in your room?

LN: Yes.

INT: Okay. Did you ever go to the third floor?

LN: No, wait a minute. We didn't have a bathroom in the room. I think we had a sink [20:00] but we had to go out down the hall to the bathroom.

INT: Did you ever go to the third floor?

LN: No. No.

INT: What prohibited you from going up besides being told not to perhaps?

LN: Well, I don't know that there was anything stopped us but we certainly never went to the prisoners' rooms, that's for sure.

INT: During your time in Japan [20:40], you spent a long period, did you feel like you understood the culture pretty well, the highly ritualistic nature of Japanese?

LN: Well, you see back in those days we lived up in what they called the Bluff [20:52] which was Tokyo Bay [20:52]. It was up high off the Bay there and we really [21:00] -- there were all foreigners that lived up there.

INT: [affirmative]

LN: And we really didn't associate much with the Japanese [21:08]. I mean, we went shopping or something, yes, but the country club was Americans, French, Britishers and those were the people we associated more than we did with the Japanese [21:24].

INT: Okay. Did you understand the tradition of bushido [21:32] and [unintelligible]?

LN: No.

INT: Okay. Would it be possible for you to run us through a typical interrogation? Just how -- anything else that you might remember about how an interrogation would go.

LN: No, Swift [21:54] would tell us what they wanted to know and find out what you can find out and we were always briefed [22:00] on what to ask which we relayed to the Nisei [22:05] which was parlayed to the prisoner. But, that's about it. We were just -- it was pretty lax, you know? There wasn't anything that was cut and dried about it.

INT: [affirmative]

LN: I think today it would be different but it was, I guess by today's standard it was almost a parlor game. [laughs] It wasn't really cut and dried.

INT: Did you feel you were effective in getting information?

LN: Well, I think we tried to get what we could. We couldn't get everything, but we certainly tried and I think some of it [23:00] was effective, yes.

INT: Do you know what happened to the information when you concluded?

LN: No. No. No. Swift [23:17] is dead, isn't he?

INT: We haven't found him. Unfortunately, the way we're going about doing this, people with more common names are very difficult to find. You have a more distinctive name. That's how we found you.

LN: Because Major Swift [23:32] could answer all those questions they asked me precisely. He was in charge of all that.

INT: Do you remember if he was older than you?

LN: Oh, yeah. I knew him as an old man out there and I'm sure he's probably not around anymore, but I'd say at the time he was probably -- well, I thought he was an old man. He was probably fifties then [24:00], so I imagine he's gone. But there's the man that could have answered all these questions precisely.

INT: Do you remember writing up a report after you were done with a prisoner, did you type

something up or a briefing statement?

LN: No, no. I think like Swift [24:30] ended up with the Nisei [24:31] to find out [phonetic]. Now, he spoke Japanese [24:35] fluently. I mean he was very fluent both ways and I'm sure he, if there were further questions, he asked them.

INT: So you think Swift [24:49] himself asked questions of the prisoners, or he asked them of you?

LN: No, he didn't talk to the prisoners. I'm sure he talked to the Nisei [24:56].

INT: Okay.

LN: He was in charge of the Nisei [25:00] and it's just a shame that he's not available.

INT: Were you told that your -- were your interrogations, your actual interrogation sessions also monitored?

LN: Yes.

INT: Okay.

LN: Well, we didn't know it at the time --

INT: What, they didn't tell you that?

LN: -- but obviously I got a list of the prisoner's name and how long, what room, and how long it lasted, but we were not told that they were monitored but I assume they were.

INT: Was that what you just referred to, did Major Corbin [25:40] [phonetic], did he send you that?

LN: I just got it a couple of days ago.

INT: Are you describing, was this a transcript of the interrogation? Or was it just --

LN: No, it was a transcript. That's where I got the Fontaine [26:00] name. [unintelligible] I wonder who that was from?

INT: We do have some information with the Fontaine [26:11] on it, but it's a listing, if you will. It's just a running list of -- it's the name of the prisoner, the name of the interrogator, the alias, room number --

LN: Right.

INT: Okay. So not necessarily a monitoring sheet?

LN: No.

INT: So they described him with the alias of Fontaine [26:33]?

INT: Yeah, he had Fontaine and what was the other one we were discussing?

LN: Nelson.

INT: Nelson, yeah.

LN: But the Fontaine one absolutely baffles me.

INT: Were you a Nelson Eddy fan back then by chance? Nelson Eddy?

LN: No.

INT: Is that what we were speaking of? You may have to flip it over a page or two in [27:00], the part of that one got cut off. But, you'll see your name is underlined a couple of places there.

LN: Yeah, [unintelligible] Fontaine [27:11]. Well, the one I got had -- this one was filled out with the room number.

INT: If you flip another page or two, I believe it gets to some that are like that.

LN: Yeah. Do you want me to get it? I've got --

INT: No, that's okay and you can keep that copy. We don't want to overload you with paperwork but you can keep that as well. But do you remember ever filling something like that out?

LN: No. It's a funny thing, this is not regarding Tracy [27:54] but when I say Fontaine [27:57] and I were very close and I still call her every birthday [28:00], and I guess she's 91 or something now, but I called the other night just -- you know, I was waiting for dinner and I thought I'm going to call somebody and talk to somebody, and I called Joan [28:20], and so I called her and she was very fond of all of us in the family and it was a strange thing because what made me think of it was I saw my Fontaine [28:34] there. Where it came from I have no idea because I didn't even know I was referred to as Nelson [28:41], but I called her and she -- it was very funny because she always says, "Oh, you dear boy" when I call her, but she said, and this came right after I called her, she said, "You know, it's very funny that you should call because I had a dream last night [29:00]." She came to say goodbye to us, my family, and my grandmother the day she left Japan [29:10] and she said, "I had a dream last night about your grandmother." And isn't that funny that I should open that the day before and see Fontaine [29:19] and call her and she had a dream about it?

[laughter]

LN: It was weird.

INT: That was really interesting.

INT: And so, again, with the interrogations, would you be working with the same prisoner over the course of a number of days?

LN: I think it changed every time. I don't think we [30:00] -- I don't remember interrogating the same prisoner twice.

INT: So, do you think other staff at Tracy [30:10] interrogated the same prisoner as you did?

LN: They may have rotated. I don't know. But I don't remember. It may have been but I

don't remember duplicating interrogation.

INT: Did you ever see transcripts or write-ups of somebody else's effort to interrogate somebody before you went in and interrogated that same prisoner?

LN: No. As I recall, the prisoners were not there very long. I mean, they were questioned and then sent back, but if they called to say they had something more to say, then we brought them back and interrogated. That way there might have [31:00] been a duplicate question session. I don't know. I don't remember.

INT: About how long do you remember a typical interrogation going for?

LN: I think it was like a half hour, maybe 40 minutes, something like that. It wasn't that long.

INT: So, we're not talking about all night or five or six hours?

LN: No, no. It was an hour -- I think an hour tops.

INT: How many interrogations might you conduct in a single day?

LN: Oh, not more than a couple. I don't remember, see, how many people interrogated along with me. I don't remember that, but there were quite a few of us. And I don't remember doing more than maybe two, three at the most a day [32:00].

INT: Did you have additional duties besides your interrogation responsibilities?

LN: No, that was basically it. It was really a very pleasant place to be during the service. We had lots of free time and people were very pleasant, but I don't imagine that's the way it would be today. I think we're going way back when things were a lot easier. I think today it would be a lot tougher.

INT: Were you ever allowed to take a prisoner outside of the building --

LN: No, no.

INT: -- for a walk or anything?



LN: No. They were strictly down from their rooms, questioned, and taken back up to their room [33:00]. They didn't go out. They were brought there and when they left they went back to where they were from. But there was no associating with them at all other than questioning.

INT: Were they fed up there on the same floor?

LN: They were fed in their room.

INT: In their room. Okay. They didn't get any opportunity to get out and walk around and exercise for 15 minutes or --

LN: No. But like I said, I don't think they were there more than a week or 10 days, but not that I know of. I don't think they were allowed out. I never saw any of them let out or heard that they were let out, but come to think of it, I don't know if they weren't because they couldn't be shut up. Well, maybe for a week. As I say, I don't think they were there for more than a week or 10 days [34:00] at the outside. But they were not allowed out as far as I know.

INT: Do you know of directly or heard any rumors of any attempts to escape?

LN: No, no, none that I know of.

INT: Sounds like if they did, they'd try to get back in for the food. [laughs]

LN: Well, that's right. See, I came from a pretty quiet family and our life was pretty quiet, and as I look back now, life in the military, when I got there to Camp Tracy [34:44], was really very pleasant and I'm sure these prisoners went through holy hell before they got there and they thought this was a pretty nice place. So I don't think there was any desire [35:00] on their part to escape, there anyway.

INT: Probably about a minute.

INT: Are there any particular prisoners, any specific prisoners that you remember back --

[End of Tape 2A]

[Beginning of Tape 2B]

INT: -- [unintelligible] was made up.

LN: No, was just trying to joke.

INT: Got you. So no other -- no specific names of prisoners?

LN: No.

INT: Okay.

INT: Along those lines, do you recall if these were any particular types of prisoners, that they had strategic information or certain jobs in the military that may be of importance?

LN: No, that we didn't do, and as I say, I didn't know -- I'm really not helpful on that at all, but see, I don't know, there were prisoners taken from all different parts. It wasn't just one part, and then they were questioned and I think eventually they returned to Hawaii and were segregated there; and the ones that they thought had further information were sent back here [01:00]. So, where they came from, whether it was Japanese Navy [01:06] or Japanese Air Force [01:07] or what, they were mixed up I'm sure. But I'm sure they were mostly army.

INT: But you don't remember that you had a Japanese [01:18] prisoner from Iwo Jima [01:20] or from the Aleutians [01:21]?

LN: No. No. I obviously knew where they were but I don't remember any specific places that they came from.

INT: What about branches of the service?

LN: They were mostly army.

INT: Would you ever work with a naval prisoner?

LN: Yeah, there were some navy. I'm sure navy. I don't think any air force, but mostly army and I think there were some navy.

INT: You interrogated both enlisted men and officers?

LN: [affirmative]

INT: And any particular ranks that you can recall?

LN: Well, I don't recall [02:00] anything above like the majors or colonels, but mostly if they were, I'd say captains. I don't remember any --

INT: No generals or anything like that?

INT: At Byron [02:16] did you interrogate anybody who was non-military?

LN: No.

INT: So at 1142 [02:24] you did work with the Diplomatic Corps [02:25]?

LN: It was all the Diplomatic Corps.

INT: But not at Tracy [02:28]?

LN: Not at Tracy.

INT: Not at Tracy. They were all military officers.

LN: [affirmative] All military.

INT: Okay. Do you remember in terms of the questioning and the information you were trying to get, was it more of a strategic value in terms of information about the Japanese [02:47] military or was any of it related to technology, like weapons development or anything like that?

LN: No, it was mostly weapons. I mean if there are any.

INT: Okay.

LN: And the military part of it.

INT: Do you know if there [03:00] were interrogators at Tracy [03:05] who specialized in certain areas?

LN: No, my feeling is, and maybe you probably know more about that than I do, I think the bulk of the investigations were done -- interrogations were done in Hawaii [03:18], weren't they? Brought to Hawaii and then they were sent back here, but I don't recall. It may have been, but I don't recall anything like a colonel or higher; I mean maybe captains, but I think probably anything like generals or anything major was taken care of in Hawaii [03:54].

INT: There weren't very many flag officers.

LN: I guess not [04:00].

INT: But the mission, from what I read in the archives, the mission of this umbrella program under the Military Intelligence Service [04:10] at Camp Tracy [04:12] and Fort Hunt [04:12] was conducted with what they called special interrogation. What that meant was that carefully selected prisoners who had very specific information which is why he's asking the questions about -- Fort Hunt [04:26] had a lot of technical assignments [phonetic].

LN: Yeah, it was all military -- the questions were military, not armaments or science or anything like that in what was coming up in their secret archives or weapons, nothing like that.

INT: Did you ask anything about life back in Japan [04:50]; for example, trying to gain understanding of the effects that the Allied bombing campaign was having. Did you ever ask about their wives, their children or how often they could write [05:00], anything like

that?

LN: Well, it was pretty pleasant, yes, probably some questions like that, just to not be too abrupt or trying to warm them up a little bit, a few questions like that and then that ended the questioning proper.

INT: So, was that typical to try to warm them up, per se?

LN: Well, it was on my part because I'd lived out there and, you know, if you live in a country and you get more or less accustomed to the people and what they think or feel, and so I'm sure the ones of us that were questioning that had lived out there probably approached in the same manner.

INT: Did you ever tell prisoners that you had lived in Japan [05:53]?

LN: No.

INT: Oh yeah, [unintelligible] too. Did any of the prisoners ever ask -- I mean, did they look at you really closely and ask if you had any Japanese [06:00] background?

LN: No, not that I recall.

INT: Okay. Did the prisoners you interrogated sustain wounds while they were in combat requiring medical care, and was there medical care at Tracy [06:20]?

LN: There was no medical care -- well, there may have been medical care but if there were any medical problems they were taken care of before they came to Tracy [06:28]. So that was not a real problem at Tracy because they were all taken care of before they got to Tracy which made it simpler.

INT: Yeah, the reason I asked my question, you mentioned going out to the armament plant and somebody saying, "Aren't you registered? Don't you need to check with the immigration?" And that's an American but the Japanese [06:56] didn't see anything.

That's funny.

LN: No, no [07:00]. Well, I guess to a certain extent they were under real stress when they got to Tracy [07:13] and I think they thought more about themselves than the person questioning them. I think they were pretty uptight and afraid. But they certainly enjoyed it there so they loosened up some I think, which was helpful if you wanted to get something from them rather than to be brutally mean and have them shut up completely.

INT: Did you hear any of the prisoners ever make any -- or did the Nisei [07:44] translators ever share with you something they heard from the prisoners where the prisoners were asking about the status of these apparent Japanese [07:53] in American uniforms. Did they challenge them where their allegiance were, or were they surprised [08:00] that they had so many Japanese Americans [08:03]? Any comments at all from the prisoners?

LN: Well, I think the prisoners were very surprised that there were Japanese [08:17], to them they were Japanese, not Nisei [08:19]; and I think they were very surprised to have a Japanese question them and they didn't realize that they were really Americans. And I think it's a hand to the Nisei [08:42]; you know, I think it was totally unfair that they were all rounded up and sent to camps. And when you think about it, the 442nd Regiment [08:57] that was -- I mean, they were all from the camps [09:00] that volunteered. So the prisoners themselves had no knowledge that they were going to be questioned by what they thought was Japanese [09:11] who was essentially American. So I think they probably were surprised but they probably were happy that to them it was a Japanese [09:23] talking to them, their language and everything.

INT: Do you recall an occasion where you interrogated a Japanese prisoner who spoke English?

LN: No, never one. Maybe if they did they didn't let on that they did, but none of them ever spoke to me in English. Not a word.

INT: Was there ever a security investigation or security concerns about any of the Nisei [09:48] translators?

LN: Well, I'm sure there was. Now, Swift [09:57] would, if he were around he would be able to answer that because I'm sure there was [10:00], but I was not part of it or aware of it.

INT: Do you remember if the Nisei [10:08] lived in the main building with you or if they lived outside --

LN: No, I think they lived outside. No, they lived outside for sure. There were a lot of buildings there like the map that I got which are undoubtedly no longer there, but there were a lot of barracks there and they had their own barracks I'm sure.

INT: Do you remember there being more Nisei [10:33] than interrogators or about the same number or just a handful of Nisei?

LN: No, they were all interrogators that were there.

INT: I'm sorry. In terms of the numbers of people, was there one Nisei [10:49] for every Anglo interrogator, or were there more Nisei --

LN: No, I think there were less Nisei.

INT: Okay.

LN: Yeah [11:00]. I think less Nisei [11:02].

INT: Were any of them commissioned officers?

LN: No. None of the Nisei were in the military that were questioning [phonetic]. They were all civilians.

INT: Really?

LN: Now, I don't make a flat statement about that but as I recall they were civilians.

INT: Did they wear a uniform?

LN: No, I think they were dressed as civilians as I recall.

INT: Do you know if they attended any sort of training prior to this?

LN: Oh, I'm sure they did. Not at Tracy [11:46]. I think wherever they came from.

INT: You don't know where --

LN: No. Possibly whatever the name of the camp was that was in Tracy [11:58]. It was a big one [12:00], not necessarily for Japanese [12:02] prisoners but I think that was bigger than I think when they originally landed, that was on the bay here, Angel Island [12:15], but a lot of them went back to Tracy [12:18] I think when they were returned.

INT: During an interrogation, would you wear your rank?

LN: Probably.

INT: Would you ever change your rank?

LN: No.

INT: Okay. So, even if you were interrogating a Japanese [12:43] officer of a higher rank?

LN: As I recall, we were in our same uniform all the time, and as I recall, I would say [13:00] 80 or 90 percent were not a very high rank in the Japanese [13:10] military.

INT: Ever any concerns about prisoners taking their own lives?

LN: No. I do think that they saw new life out there. I don't think they were -- I think they were delighted there was a place where they were treated fairly nicely. There was never any question that I knew about anybody wanting to take their life.

INT: Any conversations regarding family at home?

LN: No.



INT: Any discussions about their inability to return home [14:00] because of becoming a prisoner of war?

LN: Well, I'm sure they had that worry but there was no way to talk about it.

INT: In terms of, and you may not know this, but in terms of the capacity of that second floor, was it always full? Did you ever come to a situation --

INT: Third floor?

INT: -- third floor. Did you ever come upon a situation to where you had more Japanese [14:26] prisoners than could fit?

LN: No.

INT: Never used another facility?

LN: No.

INT: You were limited to what amount of prisoners would fit on the third floor?

LN: I don't know how many; probably if there were 10 rooms, probably no more than 20 at a time. And I say that [15:00] with I don't think they were there longer than a week or 10 days.

INT: But you're pretty confident they didn't use another building to house --

LN: The Nisei [15:09]?

INT: Yeah. No, but --

LN: No, I don't think they did. I'm sure they didn't.

INT: I have a few specific questions. These are questions that Major Corbin [15:27] who has been speaking on the phone as well. Since he couldn't be here, he sent me a list of questions. He wanted to make sure we addressed them. These might be a little bit out of our current order, and some of them we've already addressed so you may have to bear

with me.

LN: Give me the number. The number of the question.

INT: What? Did he send you --

LN: Yeah. I've written notes on this.

INT: I have question number one as being the interrogation log that he said you mentioned that some of the interrogation rooms were numbered 201 through 206. Were these rooms located on the second floor [16:00]?

LN: Well, see, some of them may have been on the second floor.

INT: The interrogation rooms?

LN: May have been.

INT: Okay.

LN: I didn't think they were, but they may have been.

INT: Does my question number one coincide with his question number one?

LN: No, my question number one from him was my background, where I was born and that.

INT: Okay. He has some fairly specific questions here.

LN: Okay.

INT: But we probably make sure we -- do you feel like you've addressed most of the questions that he's -- okay. He's made me some additional ones.

LN: Why don't you [unintelligible].

INT: Sure. So again, he's saying rooms 201 through 206 and we'd seemed to agree that there were probably some interrogation rooms on the second floor. There were none on the third floor.

LN: [affirmative]

INT: He also notes that on the interrogation log, that list of all the names where we found Fontaine [16:55], that it notes an interrogation room that was labeled [17:00] with the letters LGH, and he wanted to know if you had any recollection of what LGH meant. As opposed to a room number, it just said LGH.

LN: No, I don't. That must be a different list from this one. No, I don't have any recollection of that at all.

INT: It could have been something outside or in a different living area or something like that. Apparently all the rest of them were noted with a specific room number.

LN: I don't recall that at all.

INT: He also notes he's interested a lot in the numbering system that was used for room numbers, almost like it was still a hotel, with the -- he notes that the interrogation log also mentions interrogation rooms that were numbered 12 and 23 [18:00], kind of two-digit numbers like that, and he wanted to know were any interrogations conducted in the prisoner living quarters area up on the third floor; because, likewise, the numbers for the prisoners on the third floor, their rooms were just these single or double-digit, they were numbered rooms one through 23. And he notes there being interrogations in room 23 so, again, I think he's wondering, and we've addressed this a bit, if there were any interrogations conducted in the prisoners' rooms.

LN: To my knowledge, no, there weren't any.

INT: We've covered this a little bit already, the second floor, he was wondering if the second floor was devoted to interrogation rooms completely. You had said earlier you felt that you lived on the second floor.

LN: [affirmative]

INT: So, do you remember if there were living quarters and interrogations rooms [19:00] on the same level?

LN: Well, I know my room was on the second floor, and the reason I said before that I thought there were two floors is because I knew I lived on the second floor, but see, there had to be, there had to have been a third floor for the prisoners, and there may have been some interrogation rooms on two besides the living quarters. I'm not clear on that.

INT: So that you know, we don't want to bias you anymore, but we were there yesterday. The way it is laid out is there are three main floors, a first, second and third floor.

LN: Is that building still standing?

INT: Yes, that building is still standing and most of the rooms you can still make out the rooms, and again [20:00], maybe during the next break I have some photographs I can show you that we took just yesterday. In addition to -- the first and second floors have one large open area in them. Really, it's on the first floor but it expands through two stories.

LN: Right. Right.

INT: And then there are additional rooms on the rest of the first floor, on the rest of the second floor and then the entire third floor is nothing but rooms. In addition, there's a basement under a cellar underneath it.

LN: That's where we worked most of the time.

INT: Downstairs in that --

LN: Downstairs, that's right.

INT: Okay.

LN: And the main entrance there was basically where we all ate.

INT: Okay. That large with the double [unintelligible] stories there?

LN: Right. And all the activity was in the basement, I mean as far as -- the interrogation was separate but as far as we were concerned [21:00], the basement was the main area.

INT: Did you have -- were there offices down there?

LN: Offices?

INT: Yeah, did you have an office that you worked in, a working area?

LN: Well, we had a desk. There was no specific area. It was -- I don't know if you went down in the basement --

INT: We did.

LN: -- I don't know what it's like now but it was a wide-open area where we all worked down there.

INT: What did you do down there? What type of work?

LN: Well, basically it was getting preparation for an interrogation. We didn't do any monitoring as far as listening in, and you know, that's a good question. I mean, we were down there and boy, I don't recall [22:00] a lot of the stuff that we did other than getting ready to interrogate and what we were trying to find out. You know, it wasn't that long a period that we were there really that I was there, for instance. It was a pretty short period so what happened before me and after me, I don't even know when it closed.

INT: Again, not wanting to bias your memory but in that basement area do you remember a room that was closed off, that might have served as a monitoring room where the guys actually sat with headphones?

LN: Yeah, I think so.

INT: Do you remember where that might have been?

LN: Well, I think it was -- if you go into the main building, down in the basement it would be in the back of the basement [23:00]. I think there was a room back there that was for monitoring.

INT: Do you remember the elevator?

LN: No, I don't.

INT: Okay.

INT: It may not have been running.

LN: Was there an elevator?

INT: There is an elevator and the discussion we were having yesterday was would they have even used it, but there was an elevator and shaft that ran all the way up, all the way through the whole building.

LN: We never used it to my knowledge. Whether they used it for the prisoners, I don't know how they got the prisoners up there.

INT: There are steps that go all the way up.

LN: On the outside or on the inside?

INT: On the inside.

LN: On the inside.

INT: Do you remember there's a marble staircase kind of, looked like fairly opulent. I don't know if I --

LN: Yeah. Yeah. I doubt if the elevator was used. I know I never used it [24:00] and I don't remember them using it [phonetic]. In fact, I don't remember that there was an elevator.

INT: And they may have closed it off.

INT: Anything else in the basement that you remember? Was there any recreational areas?

LN: No recreational area, no. There was a -- the only recreational area really was there was a tennis court that was used. I was a big tennis player in my younger years and we had the chance to play quite a bit of tennis there. But other than that I don't think -- there was no -- other than the -- see, the hot springs were not used. They were closed by the time I got there and that captain I'm thinking of, that was a very nice captain from Dallas. His name was Howard Keys [25:00] --

INT: Okay. Yes, got it right here. Howard Key [25:08] --

LN: Howard Key.

INT: -- yeah, came in as a first lieutenant and left as a captain.

LN: That's it.

INT: Left about on the same - - very similar to when you left actually.

LN: And he one day went down to that hot springs which I say was a devastated area except for this broken down wooden building, but the marble baths were still there which they used in the 1850s I guess, and he went down the stairs I remember, to the hot springs and about two feet down from the top of the hot springs there was a wooden platform. And I tell you, if you put your hand six inches down into the water you couldn't even see it there the water was so murky; and I remember him [26:00] putting his feet down in there and it was warm water. Now, what it is now I don't know if it's still there or not. I guess it is, but not the building I'm sure.

INT: Oh, down in that basement area were there any subject area specialists that were supporting your interrogations? People who could answer questions or fill you in with what was known about Japanese [26:32] order of battle at the time?

LN: Well, I would say the only one that I recall was Major Swift [26:45]. He was really sort

of the key to this whole thing there. I don't remember the name of the -- was it a colonel [27:00] who was in charge of the operation there?

INT: There was but he looks like he may have left prior to you being there. The first colonel was a Daniel Kent [27:16] who actually later came back to 1142 [27:17]. He looks like he was probably replaced, let's see, by Zenas Bliss [27:27].

LN: No, but as I recall, he had nothing much more than basic running of the camp and the other guy, the one we were talking about --

INT: We were talking about Swift [27:46]. The one in intelligence.

LN: -- he was actually the fellow that ran the intelligence.

INT: So again, to summarize, there was a colonel in charge of the post --

LN: Right.

INT: -- but that was the entire post as a whole.

LN: That's right.

INT: Okay [28:00]. All right. We've got just literally about two minutes left on this tape. A couple last questions from Major Corbin [28:15]. The one -- and, again, we talked a little bit, you do remember there being some naval personnel?

LN: Yes.

INT: Do you remember if they also had offices down in the basement?

LN: No, they were not -- the ones that were there for the Navy [28:37] were -- the one that I remember distinctly was a lieutenant I think in the Navy and he had some kind of physical damage I think in the war and he was there [29:00]. I don't think there were more than maybe two Navy [29:04] personnel at most.

INT: Okay. Did they wear their naval uniforms?



LN: This one did. The one that I remember. And I don't remember what the name was, but a very nice fellow.

INT: We've got about a minute. Any other Camp Tracy [29:26] related questions?

INT: Any civilians involved in the interrogation?

LN: No, other than the Nisei [29:33].

INT: Okay. Did you ever receive any high-level visits, general officers or other colonels coming to inspect or visit or just look around [phonetic]?

LN: Not that I'm aware of. Now, see, like I say, I wasn't there that long. It's possible a month or two months before I was there, there might have been somebody, but not when I was there that I'm aware of. I'm sure there probably was contact [30:00]. There might have been somebody there but not to my knowledge.

INT: Okay. I think we asked, but at this point were you aware of P.O. Box 1142 [30:12]?

LN: No.

INT: No? Okay.

INT: Do you remember the switchboard on the main floor?

LN: No.

INT: Do you know if there was anybody that communicated with the Pentagon [30:28]?

LN: Not personally, no, I don't know who was in touch. I'm sure they were. Although, you know it surprises me that there are so many questions that you people don't know. I'm sure there was a lack of communication; must have been because there's so much that they really ought to have knowledge of, but anyway, like I've forgotten. So much time [31:00] has passed, it's a shame that this didn't happen a year or two earlier where like that Swift [31:09] could have answered these questions so easily.

INT: See, part of the problem is General Strong, Major General Strong [31:19] who was the senior intelligence officer at the Army at the time, after the war was over he was so concerned that this information, the way we went about interrogations and some other programs was so sensitive that they couldn't risk it ever getting out to the enemy --

[End of Tape 2B]

[Beginning of Tape 3A]

INT: This is the third in a series of interviews for the Fort Hunt Oral History Project for the National Park Service. Today is February 17th, 2008. We are here in Walnut Creek, California [00:17] interviewing Mr. Al Nipkow at his home in Walnut Creek. This is Brandon Bies of the National Park Service as well as Vincent Santucci, and we're going to go ahead and get started here on our third tape. And, right now, Mr. Nipkow, since you've had a chance to look at it for a few minutes, do any of the names on that list ring any bells or remind you of anything?

LN: Well, the first one is Lieutenant Colonel Bliss [00:47]. I remember him distinctly. As far as I remember, he was [01:00] the head man there at that time when I was there. And then this Howard Key [01:10] I remember distinctly.

INT: Those next two pages are all enlisted men. So that first page would have been the officers.

LN: Okay. Well, Bliss [01:42] is the only one but I don't see -- who is it we were talking about?

INT: We had mentioned, not Swift [01:53].

LN: Swift.

INT: Swift should be on there.

LN: Maybe it's --

INT: There's a little black spot down there.

LN: Yeah, oh David Swift [02:00], I see. He, I knew him very well. Now, some of these I may have known but I don't recall the names.

INT: Sure.

LN: And on the second page as well, enlisted personnel. You see a lot of these are Nisei [02:30]. See, I'm going to have to correct myself. They were the interrogators and they were in the Army. Because I thought a lot of them were --

INT: You mentioned they might be civilians.

LN: -- civilians. They did right after [unintelligible].

INT: Yeah, some of those names are pretty obvious Japanese [02:53] names.

LN: Yeah. And then I don't recall any of these other names [03:00] but they were probably both in guarding the place and interrogators and so forth. Yeah.

INT: Okay. And that's actually yours to keep.

LN: Oh, okay, thanks.

INT: Yeah, absolutely. And then we were just discussing a little bit right now during the break we were going through some of the photographs that we took yesterday [unintelligible] at Byron Hot Springs [03:28] to Camp Tracy [03:28], that is. And if you could kind of repeat again a little bit of what we were saying before we were recording, which we were showing you some pictures of the basement and the acoustic tiles -- could you just mention again what your conclusions were from that?

LN: Well, as far as whether they might have been listening in on conversations, I do remember that there was a room in the back of the basement that was closed off [04:00],

and I would guess that that is where they were monitoring the conversations upstairs; and I think on top of it if you have those wires coming out of there, that makes sense that that's what that was and where it was.

INT: And then finally, and this comes care of Major Corbin [04:26], this is a document that is believe it or not meant to represent a floor plan, we believe, of the third floor. You see, there's individual rooms listed one, two, three, four and all the way on down with two prisoners in each room.

LN: [affirmative]

INT: Interestingly, a lot of them appear to have been civilians on this particular date but then there's also a lot with military ranks on them. There's a slot listed for the Captain of the Guard as well as for the stairs where you would have walked up [05:00], so this almost was treated as kind of a rough floor plan, if you will. Some of the rooms appear to be empty, but it would appear by this numbering system 1 through 23 that there were 23 rooms --

LN: I think so. I think that's about it.

INT: -- on the third floor. Yeah. Okay. And you keep that as well, by all means. Everything we hand to you, you can keep. The least we can do is give you copies of some of this material.

LN: Okay.

INT: Anything else related to Tracy [05:45] whatsoever?

INT: I think that covers it.

INT: So now that we've grilled you a great deal on Tracy I think we will shift a little bit to talking about you happen to remember about P.O. Box 1142 [05:57]. Could you first tell

us, you mentioned earlier [06:00] that you had never heard of P.O. Box 1142 in Washington [06:05].

LN: Right.

INT: How did your transfer come about? Was it kind of all of a sudden?

LN: Well, all of a sudden I was called into the office of, Colonel --

INT: Is it Bliss [06:22]?

LN: -- Bliss.

INT: Okay.

LN: And he said that seven of us were being transferred immediately to, I don't think he mentioned 1142 [06:35] but to the Washington [06:38] area, and I think we had to depart in a day or two. And that's where I got the information and then that's what happened.

INT: Do you remember about when this was? We're relatively certain because we have the dates [07:00] on the list, but I just wanted to see if you off the top of your head remembered about when it might be.

LN: Well, when you told me that it was something like March, was it?

INT: March is when you arrived.

LN: There?

INT: Arrived at Tracy [07:19], yes.

LN: All right.

INT: The end of March.

LN: Then I really don't remember the date.

INT: All right.

LN: It could have been June or July.

INT: Okay, and then I believe that list has it shown as late July.

LN: All right. That makes sense.

INT: That makes sense in your head?

LN: Yeah.

INT: Okay. And you said there a group of you, a group of seven.

LN: Seven of us.

INT: Do you remember if any of the Nisei [07:46] or any other enlisted men were being transferred?

LN: There were no Nisei and they only one I remember by name was this captain [08:00] -- well, the name doesn't come to me, but he was a captain in the Army and he was one of the ones that was transferred.

INT: Was he transferred with you?

LN: Yeah, with me. And --

INT: And he was of Japanese [08:25] language. Did he speak Japanese as well? Was he an interrogator?

LN: Well, he was an interrogator but I don't remember him living in Japan [08:32] or anything.

INT: Okay.

LN: And the others, I don't remember their names.

INT: Okay. We can probably surmise who they were from that list because they all -- I believe you all departed on the same day. The list actually lists the day you departed.

LN: Oh, okay.

INT: On July 28th.

LN: Well, there would have been seven of us and we were all together.

INT: Okay. And were you at the impression at this point that Camp Tracy [09:00] was being shut down?

LN: No.

INT: No? Okay. So you were just being transferred but everybody else was going to be staying there.

LN: Right. And I have no idea when it was closed down.

INT: Okay. You then relayed earlier a little bit about your trip to Washington [09:26] and that was that air trip you weren't so thrilled about.

LN: Right.

INT: Do you remember where flew into in Washington. Did you fly right into Washington, D.C.?

LN: Yes, we flew into Washington, D.C. [09:42]. I think we had to transfer at Chicago. I think we had to change planes, but we flew into Washington, D.C. and were greeted there at the airport, but that's really about all I remember [10:00] of the trip.

INT: [affirmative] And so then did you go from the airport to Fort Hunt [10:08]?

LN: Right.

INT: And were you briefed at all prior, or just when you got there you kind of figured out what this location was for?

LN: No, we were told -- as far as I remember, I was told by Colonel Swift [10:30] -- or, what was his name?

INT: Bliss [10:33].

LN: Bliss that the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [10:40] was there and that we were going to be

interrogating them, but we were told nothing about -- the only thing I do remember about Camp Tracy [11:00] is that that was the rear echelon interrogation center for the top German [11:12] prisoners before it was only for the Japanese [11:14].

INT: So you mean P.O. Box 1142 [11:18] was?

LN: No.

INT: Oh, Camp Tracy [11:19] was.

LN: Camp Tracy was. I remember that --

INT: Okay.

LN: -- which had sort of an association with 1142 [11:26], but that was the rear echelon interrogation headquarters of the German [11:34] prisoners before the Japanese [11:35] got there.

INT: So you remember knowing that Tracy [11:39] had at one time German prisoners?

LN: Right.

INT: But when you were at Tracy --

LN: There were none.

INT: -- it was just Japanese. Okay. Meanwhile, when you arrived at 1142 [11:50] did you, again, we had this discussion a little bit. Camp Tracy [11:57] you said you called it just Byron Hot Springs [11:58]?

LN: [affirmative]

INT: What did you call 1142 [12:00]?

LN: Well, we didn't call it anything. Now, what's the name of the place it's located at?

INT: It's actually called Fort Hunt [12:13].

LN: No, but what's the, is there --



INT: It's Alexandria [12:18].

LN: Alexandria is all we were told.

INT: Okay. Okay.

LN: Nothing was mentioned about 1142 [12:24]. In fact, I never heard of 1142 until I got out the badge and everything.

INT: Oh really? So you arrived there with this group of seven other officers. Do you have any recollections of what was going on at the post when you got there? Did it seem to already be established?

LN: Well, it was already established and the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [12:51] had been there -- they hadn't been there too long, but they were there and it was the same deal [13:00] as Tracy [13:04]. They were all booked, on what floor I don't remember of that building, but they were all housed on the same floor; and all the rooms were bugged. As I say, I think I remember distinctly about it was the first bomb that was dropped in Hiroshima [13:28], the ones that were listening in, the Japanese [13:38] Ambassador immediately called the military attaché to find out what this bomb was that had been dropped, and, of course, it was a great big deal of excitement. And, of course, to be honest with you, I mean, we didn't know any more about that bomb than they did so it was a very fascinating and interesting time.

INT: So you definitely remember you were at [14:00] -- in Alexandria [14:03] when the bombs were dropped.

LN: Right there.

INT: All right. And the Diplomatic Corps [14:10], the person you were dealing with -- that's okay, no, that's all right

LN: They're talking like moderators for a minute.

INT: The Diplomatic Corps [14:27], do you remember where specifically they were from?

LN: Probably Berlin [14:35]. I'm sure Berlin.

INT: So this was the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [14:40] to the Germans [14:42].

LN: To the Germans, right.

INT: Got you.

LN: As the whole group, and I've forgotten his name now, and I can't remember if he was, if his life was taken when he got back to Japan [14:58] or not, the Ambassador [15:00].

INT: We actually have a few documents to show you that we uncovered of interrogations that you did at 1142 [15:11] with the Diplomatic Corps [15:16] and I'm just trying to get through this and see if I have them here or if they're in my other bag. If they're in my other bag I'll grab it. Oh, here they are. Just wanted to see if any of these ring any bells. And then obviously, we'll get back on track here in a moment, but since we're on this right now -- if any of those look familiar. Those are three examples of interrogations or reports that had your name attached to them from 1142 [15:56].

LN: These were what? Interrogations [16:00]?

INT: It would appear from looking at those that the folks that these ones are for, I believe, a couple of them were actually from the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [16:11] and they were captured in Rome [16:16].

LN: Well, what? They were from the Japanese [16:22]?

INT: They were Japanese. I believe it even says Japanese diplomat but they were to the Germans [16:29]. These ones in particular though may have been captured in Rome [16:32] as opposed to in Berlin [16:33].

LN: But what has this got to do with me?

INT: You, I believe, wrote those. Your name -- we have it flipped over because it was covered, but here for example you can see this one here, POW's name, there's the interrogator which has Nipkow.

LN: I see [17:00].

INT: But I just wondered if those forms -- does that look familiar at all? Does that look like something that you may have prepared or that somebody else might have prepared?

LN: Well, I don't know. It doesn't ring a bell to me.

INT: Okay.

LN: I can't say it rings a bell to me.

INT: Okay.

LN: But it's got my name on it, probably, you know --

INT: That's okay. I certainly hope that 60 years from now somebody doesn't hand me a piece of paper that I wrote and ask me to say if it seems familiar. And again, you can hold on to those, but those are just, you know, we saw your name [18:00] attached to them so we wanted to bring them for you.

LN: Well, I definitely did some interrogation and it was the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [18:14] and so it probably was.

INT: And so, again, you were briefed that your job there in Alexandria [18:29] was going to be working with the Diplomatic Corps [18:32] as opposed to Tracy [18:35] had been with actual military prisoners.

LN: Right. Right.

INT: Do you remember if there were Japanese [18:40] military prisoners in Alexandria

[18:42]?

LN: Well, there was -- yes, there must have been a few. There was one that was quite an artist [19:00] and he wanted to draw some pictures which he did. You know the Japanese [19:09] things of like the sex life in Japan [19:13] in the early days. He did some beautiful things on handkerchiefs that I had for a long time and then all of my friends wanted them and they got them. But he was a Japanese [19:34] prisoner for sure, so there were some there.

INT: So this was just created by a prisoner in Alexandria [19:41]?

LN: Yes, in Alexandria and he was not in the main building.

INT: Okay.

LN: It seemed to me like he was in a separate place, a separate room, and he kept asking for handkerchiefs so he could do these drawings [20:00]. I wish I had one to show you but they're all gone. My friends all liked them so much they took them to frame.

INT: Oh.

LN: So there must have been some but not a lot. The main thing was the Diplomatic Corps [20:15].

INT: Okay.

INT: Did he make those to give to you or did you confiscate them?

LN: No, he did them for anybody who wanted them done.

INT: Are you still friends with these people who have them, that you could get a photograph of them.

LN: No, the main one that got most of them was my closest friend, Tad Van Brundt [20:38] and he's gone. But he took a lot of that stuff because he was all into Japanese [20:45]

culture and --

INT: Is his family still around?

LN: No, they're all gone. Even his older brother who was big in the FBI, they're all gone. The thing is this goes back so many years [21:00], it's just amazing that to me it's not that many years but when I think of the people that have come and gone in my life, it's just amazing.

INT: And so, you mentioned this one Japanese [21:18] prisoner who was making the drawings, he was in a different location. Any chance that he could have been not in a compound but in more of like a cottage or cabin or something?

LN: I think so. It doesn't seem to me like he had any guards or anything as far as I remember and now he may not have been in the military. That I'm not sure about, but I think he was. I'm almost sure he was, but I don't remember any guards being there, and it wasn't like in a hotel room or with another prisoner. He was alone in that room.

INT: Do you remember -- I want to throw one name out there because we know that the Japanese [22:00] Ambassador to Berlin [22:04] was there in Alexandria [22:07] and I believe his name was Hiroshi Oshima [22:08].

LN: Oshima?

INT: Oshima.

LN: Well, if he was an ambassador to Berlin [22:20] --

INT: Germany. Yeah, to Germany.

LN: -- he was definitely the one. Now, he's the one -- he was a very strong person, and I don't remember when they were sent back to Japan [22:34] I don't remember if he was one that was -- I don't think he -- well, he wasn't pardoned, but I don't know if he was

put to death or not.

INT: If we showed you a picture of him do you think you'd recognize him?

LN: Yeah.

INT: Can I pause that real quick?

LN: I think so. I think that --

INT: -- all for you. And also, of course, if you don't want them, we'll take them back, but if you'd like records that have your name on them [23:00] --

LN: I might like to see.

INT: Sure. Just during the quick break right now we showed Mr. Nipkow a photo of Ambassador Oshima [23:13] and Mr. Nipkow did just verify that indeed he definitely recalls him being --

LN: Right. He was the man.

INT: But you in particular did not --

LN: I did not interrogate him, no.

INT: Do you know if he was questioned at all, if he would have been questioned in Japanese [23:27] or in German [23:30] because after all, he would have spoken German as well.

LN: Japanese.

INT: Okay. As a whole, do you remember what sort of information they were after from the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [23:41]?

LN: Well, I would guess that the main concern was to know what involvement Japan [23:51] and how close Japan was to Germany [23:55] in the war, and what connections were there, but I have no idea [24:00] what they questioned him about.

INT: Do you remember at all any of the interrogations that you did, what sorts of questions

you were asking, or what information you were after?

LN: Well, no, I don't, but, you know, some of the interrogation stopped. As I say, we were there I think 10 days when the first bomb was dropped and right after that I believe I remember that a lot of the interrogations didn't go on. I mean, I think they stopped some of the interrogations because when those things were dropped, the war stopped right shortly after that, and then the interrogations pretty well stopped I think.

INT: Okay [25:00]. And could you venture any guess your time in Alexandria [25:05] how many different people you spoke with or interviewed, interrogated?

LN: Not very many. No, I don't know how many but it was very few because as I say, we weren't there that long before the thing was over.

INT: Did the interrogations in Alexandria [25:28] work the same way they had in Byron Hot Springs [25:32] with the Nisei [25:33] working with you?

LN: Well, I would say yes. Of course, it would depend on who was in charge of the interrogation and what was asked I suppose. But, basically the same thing. The Nisei [25:46] were certainly important in the interrogations.

INT: Do you remember if there were already Nisei in Alexandria [25:56] or some of them may have come from Byron [26:00].

LN: No, I'm sure they all -- whether they came from Byron I don't know but they weren't locally there.

INT: Okay. Do you recall while your work was going on, do you remember if there were German [26:15] that were there at --

LN: I don't believe there were any. I was not aware of any.

INT: So you remember Alexandria [26:24] being when you were there devoted entirely to

Japanese [26:28] prisoners?

LN: Correct.

INT: Do you remember if there were other Japanese there who were not in the Diplomatic Corps [26:34]? Any military prisoners whatsoever?

LN: Well, the only one I remember is the one I was talking about that did the work, the artist. That's the only one. I don't think there were any. There may have been a few. I'm sure there wasn't just one. There must have been a few, but there was not a whole corps of them at all [27:00]. There were pretty well gone I think.

INT: Do you remember in terms of the monitoring, just like in Byron Hot Springs [27:16] was everything bugged at this location as well?

LN: Yes.

INT: Do you ever remember seeing any of the monitoring facilities in Alexandria [27:29]?

LN: No.

INT: Okay. Again, to the best that you can, could you try to describe where the prisoners were kept in Alexandria [27:40] and how they might have differed from Byron Hot Springs [27:43].

LN: Well, they were -- I believe they were all on one floor, whatever floor that was, and I think it was the same situation as it was in Byron [28:00] but I'm not sure that they were separated like the military would be. It was the Diplomatic Corps [28:17] so they were a little more lenient with how they were spread out and how they lived.

INT: But even though they were diplomats they were still monitored?

LN: Oh, yes. Yeah.

INT: Any methods used any differently by you to try to obtain information from the diplomats



as opposed to from the military prisoners?

LN: No.

INT: Okay. So you used the same basic tactics that you had before?

LN: Right.

INT: Okay. Do you remember any of the commanding staff in Alexandria [28:58]? Did they seem to be some of the same [29:00] as were in Byron [29:02] or was there a new command system?

LN: No, it was a new command system.

INT: Okay.

LN: I don't think there were any of the -- see, I don't remember when Byron [29:11] closed but there weren't any of the Byron people that I knew that were at Washington [29:16] when I was there.

INT: Okay. When you were in Alexandria [29:23], do you remember where you lived? Did you live on post there?

LN: Yes, we were -- we were in a barracks of some kind, but I don't really remember exactly where or how it was. I do remember to this day that we laugh in the family about my wife [30:00] likes to make apple pies and whenever we have pie, I refer to it as a "pa pa" [phonetic] because that Howard Key [30:12] that Captain Key that I referred to was there and another southern lieutenant, I've forgotten his name, and when we used to have lunch together they would argue about whose pie it was and the southerner would say, "It's ma pa [phonetic]," and Howard [30:30], "That's ma pa."

INT: [laughs]

LN: And so from where we lived I don't remember it. We weren't there that long so

[unintelligible].

INT: Do you remember if you were at Alexandria [30:42] longer or about the same amount of time or less than you were at Tracy [30:47]?

LN: Less, much less.

INT: Okay. So would it be safe to say that you remember Tracy better than you remember --

LN: Yes. Much better.

INT: Okay [31:00]. Again, the Nisei [31:02] you were working with, did they also live on the post there at Alexandria [31:11]?

LN: Oh yes, everybody lived on the post.

INT: Okay. All right. Do you recall if the Japanese [31:21] prisoners were given any additional freedoms or anything like that in Alexandria [31:26]? You mentioned how at Tracy [31:29] they were all -- they didn't leave their rooms ever.

LN: Right. No, they weren't allowed out. Not at all.

INT: Okay. Do you remember if there were any naval personnel in Alexandria [31:45]?

LN: Not to my knowledge.

INT: Okay. But you do remember them at Tracy [31:51]?

LN: Well, a very few. It was mostly Army.

INT: Okay. Do you remember any civilians [32:00], American civilians at Alexandria [32:06]?

LN: Well, I'm sure there were. I wasn't aware of any, but I'm sure there were civilians there.

INT: Okay. [unintelligible]

LN: No, I was never in touch with any of them.

INT: Okay. We'll pause real quick here so we can flip the tape.

[End of Tape 3A]

[Beginning of Tape 3B]

INT: Do you recall the end of the war in Europe and, if so, do you remember where you were?

LN: I really don't.

INT: Do you think you were at Tracy [00:51] at that time? Was there any celebration or anything [01:00] that you recall?

LN: I really can't put that together as to where I was when the war ended.

INT: Of course, the war in Europe might not have been as big a deal to you as the war in Japan [01:21].

LN: Well, see, I must have been at Camp Tracy [01:32] because the reason that I was transferred to 1142 [01:39] was that the war with Germany [01:40] was over and the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [01:43] was immediately flown over here. So that must have coincided with -- I must have been at Camp Tracy [01:51] when the war ended.

INT: You mentioned a little bit about the timing of the bomb and learning about that, so do you recall hearing [02:00] about the end of the war in the Pacific while you were at 1142 [02:05]?

LN: No, I was at --

INT: You mentioned earlier that you remembered the atomic bomb.

LN: Yes. So that was when I was at --

INT: In Alexandria [02:30].

LN: In Alexandria, yeah.

INT: Probably people were happy. There may have been a celebration.

LN: Well, there's no doubt about that. It's just a question of exactly where I was at the time.

INT: And, Brandon, you're pretty sure of the dates and departure. Think about the discussions we had regarding U-234 [02:50]. And I'm thinking maybe the transfer of Japanese [02:55] interrogators to 1142 [02:58] after the war in Europe [03:00] was over was tied to really specifically trying to coordinate what intelligence between the German [03:06] and the Japanese [03:08] was occurring; because if the war in the Pacific was still going on, it was probably advantageous to stay in closer proximity. I'm wondering if there's a possibility that may be part of why they shut down Tracy [03:23] and sent people to 1142 [03:24].

INT: To work with the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [03:27].

LN: Correct.

INT: And that's the reason why Tracy [03:31] was ultimately shut down right about that time.

LN: Yeah.

INT: They tried to coordinate the intelligence regarding the communication between the Germans [03:38] and the Japanese [03:38].

LN: No, I think that's right. Because undoubtedly we wanted to know what the connections were between Japan [03:50] and Germany [03:52].

INT: Can you tell us more about that? I mean, was that specifically asked of you to look for that intelligence?

LN: No, it wasn't. Not to me personally, no.

INT: Okay [04:00]. But how did you come to that conclusion?

LN: Well, Germany [04:07] -- of course, Italy didn't enter it that much but Germany and Japan [04:12] were really close in the war so obviously if one goes down you want to know what connection they had with the other one, so I'm sure there must have been a

connection in going back there. And like I say, I don't remember when Tracy [04:35] was closed down but I'm sure it was shortly after the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [04:40] got there.

INT: We actually think it was -- we actually think it was shut down very shortly after you left.

LN: I think so.

INT: Within a matter of a few weeks probably.

LN: Well, see, there was no reason really for it to be open after Japan [05:00] fell and the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [04:46] was found in Germany [05:04].

INT: What we're trying to figure out is if the records are correct, it actually looks like Tracy [05:11] shut down before the atomic bombs were dropped.

LN: Well, see, when we got back there, I recall it was like about 10 days after we got there that the bomb was dropped. So they had to close down right after I left if that's the case.

INT: That's what it looks like. It looks like they did close down --

LN: I never thought of asking and I never heard when they closed down.

INT: Yeah.

LN: But there was no reason for them to be open at that point I don't think.

INT: I guess what we're struggling with is trying to figure out, since the bomb hadn't been dropped, I'm assuming you probably presumed this war was going to go on, the invasion of Japan [06:00] was going to happen, presumably large numbers of prisoners, Japanese [06:08] prisoners would be captured, so it seems like there would be a reason to keep Camp Tracy [06:15] open if they were expecting more Japanese prisoners and yet they closed it -- again, if the dates are correct, they actually closed it a week or two before the bombs were dropped, about a week before, right about when you arrived and stepped in

the door at Alexandria [06:30] they shut everything down at Camp Tracy [06:33].

LN: Well, it's quite possible -- you know, all that happened rather suddenly.

INT: Yes.

LN: I mean the Germany folding and stuff and it's quite possible that when the seven of us were transferred that that was the beginning of the closing. I mean, they perhaps knew they were closing and they just wanted the seven of us to go back there first [07:00] to get started which would be faster than closing the place and moving the whole troop back there.

INT: True. This is a lot of later discussion for us, but Brandon could probably briefly tell you about U-234 [07:27] and what we found out about the communication between Japanese [07:24] and Germans [07:26] regarding defense technologies that Germany [07:30] was sharing with Japan [07:30]. And I'm wondering if American intelligence was saying we're worried about the subs that may have gotten through that we haven't captured and maybe influenced the day of the dropping of the bomb based on concerns that the Japanese [07:45] may have sophisticated defense equipment that was shared between Germany [07:49] and Japan [07:50].

INT: The U-234 [07:56] -- I'll make this as brief as possible, was a German [07:59] submarine, huge submarine [08:00]. It was a minelaying submarine and within about three weeks of the end of the war, before the war ended --

INT: Europe.

INT: -- the war in Europe, excuse me, before the Germans [08:12] capitulated, they filled up an entire U-boat full of all of their latest technology, disassembling jet fighters, V-1 rocket, V-2 rocket, tons of documents, 560 kilograms of uranium, about a dozen of Germany's

[08:31] top scientists, military advisors, radar technology, microwave technology, anti-aircraft technology and put all these people on this U-boat and sent it to Japan [08:47] --

LN: Oh.

INT: -- with the intent of trying to transfer all of this technology, jet fighters, uranium and scientists to Japan [08:55]. Well, within a few weeks the war ended, the submarine was still in the Atlantic Ocean [09:00]. You know, it took a long time to get to Japan so it surfaced and surrendered to the Americans because the German [09:07] crew said to heck with this. We don't want to have anything to do -- this is a suicide mission. So they surrendered and that entire U-boat came to the United States and every single person and scientist and possibly some of the scientific devices all came to Alexandria [09:23].

INT: Except for two.

INT: Yeah. Excuse me, I'm sorry, except that there were two people on the boat, there were two Japanese [09:34] naval officers on the boat. They were in Germany [09:38]. They would have been part of the military liaisons to Germany. These Japanese naval officers were on the boat, committed suicide when they found out that they were going to be surrendering, and then the rest of the boat went. So a clearer link between the Japanese [09:54] --

LN: The rest of the boat went where?

INT: The boat went to the United States. It's actually [unintelligible]

LN: Yeah [10:00].

INT: So, with that background, here's our question. Okay, you were at Tracy [10:08]. The war in Europe came to an end. The U-234 [10:12] surrendered, intelligence came to 1142 [10:17] indicating that there was communication regarding defense technologies

being shared between the Germans [10:24] and the Japanese [10:24], the Diplomatic Corps [10:27] from Japan [10:19] was captured. You came, Tracy [10:31] was closed, then Hiroshima [10:34] occurred. Think about that chronology. The question that we have is why did they close Tracy [10:40] when the war was still going on in the Pacific, Hiroshima [10:45] wasn't dropped, very top secret, they closed Tracy, shifted you and other personnel to 1142 [10:53]. Why? One hypothesis was the Americans [11:00] now were very afraid of the fact that perhaps the Germans [11:01] had sent other subs to Japan [11:04] and maybe there's some technology exchange that may accelerate this war. Or is it as simple as wanting you to be there to interrogate the Diplomatic Corps [11:16]?  
That's just a --

LN: But Japan [11:20] hadn't surrendered at that time?

INT: No. No. Any thoughts about that, does that bring up any conversation that you may have had with other intelligence personnel at 1142 [11:30]?

LN: Well, was that -- what was it, U-234 [11:44]?

INT: U-234.

LN: Was that public knowledge?

INT: Not at the time it wasn't all that public.

LN: Yeah, because I vaguely remember hearing something about it, it was probably in the papers or something, the news. I don't think I knew anything about it at the time [12:00].

INT: You didn't know anything about it?

LN: No. But you see, that's what I was saying about the Japanese Diplomatic Corps [12:13] being in this country. I'm sure the intelligence wanted to know what the connection was between Germany [12:25] and Japan [12:28] and what just passed back and forth and



what was still being passed back and forth maybe. It's such a fine line there, the time; it's hard to know exactly what happened when. But I'm sure we were very much interested in what the connection was between Japan [12:53] and Germany [12:54]. Obviously [13:00].

INT: Shifting back a little bit to some more specific questions about the interrogations and your work in Alexandria [13:08], do you remember, like they were at Tracy [13:14], were your interrogations monitored or do you know if you --

LN: I don't know if they were monitored or not. I have suspicion they were.

INT: The rooms you said were monitored, but you're not sure about interrogations.

LN: No, I think they were monitored.

INT: Okay. Do you remember where they took place? Again, was it in prisoners' rooms or was there a specific [unintelligible] room.

LN: Specific room.

INT: Okay. Do you remember if that was in the same building?

LN: Same building

INT: The prisoners weren't taken outside or something like that?

LN: No.

INT: Okay. Do you remember anything at all about the layout [14:00] of the facility at Alexandria [14:04]?

LN: No, I remember very little about it really, except where the Diplomatic Corps [14:16] was housed, and where -- their rooms were monitored, and if we interrogated it was all in the same building there. I don't remember what kind of building it was, but I don't think it was a hotel or anything like that.

INT: Right.

LN: I don't remember the building.

INT: It was a one-story building. Unlike Camp Tracy [14:43] much of 1142 [14:46] was built specifically for the purpose of being an interrogation center, so there would have been probably more temporary Army-style buildings.

LN: That's what I remember.

INT: Do you think if we showed you [15:00] -- we actually have with us a map much like Major Corbin [15:03] sent to you, a map of the layout of the Alexandria [15:07] facility. Do you think that would be beneficial to look at, or do you think it would be --

LN: I wouldn't remember really. You know, I wasn't there very long, and some of the big things happened like the bomb being dropped and then the thing was over right after that so I don't remember too much except the building that they were housed in and the dorm that we lived in and where we ate, but other than that I don't remember a whole lot about it.

INT: The building they were housed in, was it, again, would they put prisoners together?

LN: As far as I remember, it was like a closed hotel. I mean they had their own rooms. I don't think they were separated or anything. They were all housed together [16:00].

INT: Okay. Anything else specific to interrogation at Fort Hunt [16:08]?

INT: Do you remember any scientific discussions there? Any scientists whatsoever?

LN: No.

INT: Likewise, this is right outside of Washington, D.C. [16:22]. Any visits by bigwigs in the military?

LN: No, not that I'm aware of. As I say, it was such a short period, so --

INT: Sure. And forgive us for asking all these questions.

LN: Oh no, no, no, no. Hey, that's what I'm here for.

INT: Did you ever go to the Pentagon [16:46]?

LN: Yes.

INT: For work related to?

LN: And got lost.

[laughter]

INT: Oh, really? Would you mind telling us about that or what you remember about that incident?

LN: Let's see, why did we go to the Pentagon [17:00]? We had to go there to be briefed I believe, on some of the questions we were supposed to ask. I remember I was there two or three times, but I really have forgotten the specifics why, who I saw, or why I went there. It was a short trip and I remember the blacks sat in the back of the trucks. The buses, you know.

INT: Oh, really? So you remember it being segregated like that?

LN: Yeah, going one way or the other. I mean they sat in the back.

INT: Were there any African Americans who were in the military?

LN: No.

INT: So, these were just civilians, locals?

LN: Right.

INT: Okay.

LN: Weird to think back to that [18:00].

INT: That was probably right on the Parkway.

INT: Do you remember the way you would have gone, north, south up against the river. It's part of the park. It's the park that we work for. It was known at the time as the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway [18:19]. It was kind of a scenic winding road. The river would have been right there along the side, and that would have essentially taken you right up through Alexandria [18:27] because 1142 [18:30] was just south of Alexandria near Mount Vernon [18:32]. And this route would have taken you up through Alexandria and actually right past the Pentagon [18:37].

LN: Yup.

INT: Do you think it is -- does that sound like the route that you would have gone on?

LN: Yeah. Yes.

INT: Okay. Did you just go to the Pentagon [18:47] that one instance?

LN: I think I was there about three times.

INT: Oh, really?

INT: That's interesting; if you were only there for about 10 or 12 days and you went to the Pentagon three times.

LN: Well, maybe it wasn't three times. As I say, I remember getting lost in there so I must have been there twice [19:00]. But I really don't remember what I went there for.

INT: Were you with a group or was it you by yourself?

LN: It wasn't a group. It was either me and another one, or me alone.

INT: Okay. Back at Alexandria [19:33] do you remember any women on the post? Any WACs or women civilians.

LN: Don't remember them, no.

INT: Okay.

LN: I normally remember women if they're good looking, but [unintelligible]  
[laughter]

INT: And again, Colonel Kleinman asked earlier, you don't remember any visits at that time  
by the OSS [19:58]?

LN: No.

INT: Okay [20:00]. All right. But you mentioned you were recruited by them later at the end  
of the war or late in the war?

LN: I was told I could join them, yes.

INT: And was that kind of by somebody [unintelligible] for the CIA [19:58]?

LN: Yeah, CIA, right.

INT: Okay. Were you contacted while you were in Washington [20:25] or had you already  
left?

LN: No, I was in Washington but I was contacted by the major I told you I knew who was out  
in Japan [20:36] who managed the, I think it was the National City Bank [20:39] out  
there at the time.

INT: Was it Swift [20:44]?

LN: No, it wasn't Swift. But I think he may have put an order in for me. I think he told me  
that it would be a nice thing for you to do if you feel like you wanted to do it [21:00].

INT: Any knowledge about FBI [21:03] presence or interest in what was going on at 1142  
[21:09]?

LN: No.

INT: Do you remember the Alexandria [21:13] facility as being bigger or smaller than Byron  
Hot Springs [21:19]? Or were they the same size?

FS: No, stop it.

LN: No, it was different in the nature of the thing. It was more lax in Virginia [21:43]. Like I say, the entrance to Tracy [21:47] you had to really know how to get in there and out and there were guards right out there. It wasn't quite the same thing, I don't think, that I remember at 1142 [22:00].

INT: Do you remember, can you talk at all about the military protocol of both locations. You mentioned that Byron Hot Springs [22:10] was a little lax. Were you saluting the flag each day? Were you saluting other officers?

LN: Well, we had all of that, yeah. I don't remember as much in Virginia [22:22] as I do at -- Camp Tracy [22:26] was pretty much that way, yes. That's when I first started wearing glasses was when I entered this -- thing I was in at Ann Arbor, Michigan [22:45], I didn't salute an officer because I couldn't quite see. That's when I started wearing glasses.  
[laughter]

INT: In Alexandria [23:00] do you remember much about the security of the camp?

LN: I don't remember the thing terribly secure. I don't remember it like going into Tracy [23:12].

INT: Do you remember Tracy being --

LN: I lived there, of course, in the camp so --

INT: Do you remember Tracy being more secure than Alexandria [23:19]?

LN: I think so. But, of course, see in Alexandria the short time I was there we lived there. I didn't have to drive in and out so I didn't see that part of the -- in Tracy [23:33] they were very strict about that.

INT: But do you remember if there were MPs in Alexandria [23:40] and guards?

LN: No, I'm sure there were, but I don't remember them.

INT: Remember anything about the food in Alexandria? You raved about the food in Camp Tracy [23:51]. Do you remember if it was any good?

LN: Well, the food was pretty good. The Army food is Army food or was anyway. I don't know what it is today [24:00]. I'm sure it's a lot better than it was then. It was all right.

INT: [affirmative]

LN: You're a young guy you don't think too much about that.

INT: [affirmative] Is there anything else specific to --

INT: No, I think that covers it.

INT: -- Fort Hunt [24:16].

INT: Do you remember how you came to find out you were leaving Alexandria [24:23]?

Obviously, the war had ended recently. Had you concluded your work with the Diplomatic Corps [24:29]? Were they taken away or were they still there when you left?

LN: They were still there. I think they were about to leave.

INT: Okay. Do you know what was going to happen to them?

LN: What was going to happen to them?

INT: Yeah.

LN: Well, we were pretty sure that the Ambassador would be in trouble when he got to Japan [24:52] more so than the others.

INT: You mean in terms of war crimes, or just --

LN: Well, war crimes [25:00] in the sense that they were very closely related to the Germans [25:04] and to Hitler [25:04] so I think they were very anxious that there wasn't a real -- what the connection was there.

INT: Do you remember how your transfer out of Alexandria [25:17] came about?

LN: No. The war obviously ended on both sides so that was the end of that.

INT: Were you out of the military at that point or did you go somewhere else after?

LN: No, I was through when I got out of there.

INT: So, did you muster out of the service in Alexandria [25:39] or were you [unintelligible]

LN: Alexandria.

INT: Okay. And then took the train home.

LN: Yeah.

INT: Okay. Do you remember about when that would have been? Was it still 1945?

LN: I think it was 1945, yeah.

INT: Does that make sense? Do you remember if he was home by Christmas 1945?

FS: Probably, probably. [laughs] If he could, he'd be there [26:00].

LN: Yeah, I think that's about right.

INT: [affirmative] Did the two of you communicate at all while --

FS: Oh, yeah.

INT: -- he was at Byron Hot Springs [26:10]? Did you mail letters?

LN: No, I got home. See, I was given leave on weekends once in a while so I just drove. It's just a short trip to come home. So I saw her while I was at Tracy [26:24]. Not before that, but at Tracy I was able to come home once in a while on weekends.

FS: Johnny [phonetic] says he hasn't see you all day and he wants to [unintelligible].

INT: Let's do that. We've got about five minutes left and then we're all set. The tapes run out in about five minutes and then we're all done.

INT: Do you recall if the Red Cross [26:43] ever came to inspect either of the camps?



LN: No.

INT: What do you remember, if anything, about the camps and adherence to the Geneva Convention [26:53]? Were you briefed on the Geneva Convention? The do's and don't's.

LN: Well, I knew roughly about them [27:00] but we were at -- no, we weren't briefed on it. I imagine if we stepped over the line there, we'd be told about it, but no, we weren't briefed about it at all.

INT: Do you remember hearing at either location of any incidents involving people that had used physical coercion or anything that wasn't by the books?

LN: No. I'm hearing more about it now than I did then.

INT: So that wasn't taught, wasn't encouraged?

LN: No, it really wasn't talked about. Of course, I'm not just talking about Camp Tracy [27:46] which was -- I'm sure it was done out in the field, but at Camp Tracy it was not discussed with -- it wasn't a possibility really. I don't think we would have done anything like that there [28:00].

INT: Just seeing if these names mean anything. Did you ever hear of Camp Ritchie [28:07]?

LN: I think I've heard of Ritchie, but I'm not sure. I don't know anything about it.

INT: Pinegrove Furnace [28:13] prisoner of war camp?

LN: No.

INT: Pinegrove Furnace was a camp in Pennsylvania that was kind of a holding area where prisoners were -- it may have been similar to say, Angel Island [28:27] where prisoners were kind of sorted through and then sent to 1142 [28:32]. In this case, many of them were German [28:35] prisoners, but we also think there were some link between Tracy

[28:39], Byron Hot Springs [28:42] and Pinegrove Furnace [28:43] where, again, it may have been a holding area, prisoners may have been sent there but we're still trying to figure that out.

LN: I doubt that.

INT: Because you were dealing with Pacific prisoners. You had mentioned Honolulu [28:58], Pearl Harbor [28:59] as a place [29:00] where some prisoners came. Do you understand what their operation was at Pearl Harbor [29:07] in terms of dealing with prisoners and how that may have been the same or different from what you did?

LN: No. No, I'm just assuming what I assume as far as -- but, no, I have no knowledge of that.

INT: So, briefly, so the war ended, you got home around Christmas of '45 and did you ever go back into the military or were you called back during the Korean Crisis [29:37]?

LN: No.

INT: Okay.

LN: No.

INT: And so then you returned to California [29:43] and you've been here ever since?

LN: I was getting up in years too when the Korean War [29:51] came about. Yeah.

INT: And so for 65 years until you received a package in the mail, you haven't thought much about 1142 [29:59] or Tracy [30:00]?

LN: Well, I've got to tell you that I was totally unprepared and totally surprised at the first connection I had with you people. It came as such a surprise after 65 years; all of a sudden I was very much impressed with what you -- think you said and the communication. You people are so pleasant; it's really a pleasure to talk to you.

INT: We really appreciate it.

LN: Well, I wish I were more knowledgeable.

INT: You have been very helpful. You really have. And the story you told us about the hat.

LN: Yeah.

INT: Can you tell that to the tape?

LN: Well, I walk the dog up in the park every day and every day I put my little cap on that's got the little pin up there [31:00], Army pin, and people ask me, "Oh, were you in the Army?" And then, of course, I have to go into a long song and dance about why and who and you're coming out to interview me. You know I try to build myself up as a big shot.  
[laughter]

So, no, it's been very, very pleasing to me that after you've sort of forgotten for 65 years, not that I thought I should be remembered, but all of a sudden 65 years later you're all of a sudden here.

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