

Fort Hunt Oral History
National Park Service
Interview with Alfred Bomberg
by Brandon Bies and Vincent Santucci
February 11, 2008

BRANDON BIES: I'm going to get started here. Each time we get started, I'm going to give a very brief introduction, and then we'll jump right in. Let me ask you one question before we do start. You said 45; that's what I thought.

ALFRED BOMBERG: That's [unintelligible].

[talking simultaneously]

BB: -- according to the records.

AB: You're absolutely correct.

BB: Fantastic.

AB: Yeah, because I spent a year and several months in that whole thing.

BB: Yeah, super. Okay, well, we'll go ahead and get started. This is an interview as part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project by the National Park Service. Today is February 11, 2008. We are here interviewing Mr. Alfred Bomberg at his home in San Marcos, California. This is National Park Service Historian, Brandon Bies, as well as George Washington Memorial Parkway Chief Ranger Vincent Santucci. We're going to go ahead and get started, Mr. Bomberg. If you wouldn't mind starting us off, just a little bit about your own background and, perhaps more importantly [01:00], your family's background, including if you could tell us, at some point, when and where you were born.

AB: Oh, yes, I can start with that. I was born in Oak Park, Illinois, and that was July 9, 1919. My parents met in the Chicago area. My father came from Germany. Actually, the town was called Oofhoven [spelled phonetically], but it is in the vicinity of Gotha [01:38], G-O-T-H-A, or Lininsalsa [spelled phonetically]. My mother came from Alsace-Lorraine,

which is, of course, right near the Black Forest and right by the Rhine River. They both came to Chicago at a very young age, around 16, 17 years old. They met and were married a number of years later [02:00] and, of course, I just mentioned I was born. My dad and mother were in the bakery business, which was what my father was trained in when he was back in Europe, a very successful operation. They worked very hard. We had two other members in our family, my sister Mary Louise and my brother Otto. From there I went to the basic schools and so forth. I was drafted and stayed in Kalamazoo College until I was in my third year, and I was drafted then --

BB: I apologize. If I could just interrupt a little bit prior to you being drafted.

AB: No, please. Please do.

BB: First, you were born in the United States. Did your parents still speak German in the home?

AB: Yes, we spoke -- actually, there's a very interesting background there [03:00]. My entire childhood was spent, in fact, speaking several languages. Well, when I say several, Alsatian and what we refer to the Bunish Prafa [spelled phonetically], which means the stage type of German or regular German. Alsatian is a contractionist, like being down south, you know, something of that nature. There are idioms and various types of -- but my parents -- my mother always spoke it. I had two aunts whom I practically was raised with because we had a fairly good-size home in those days, and they were brought over here because they wanted to. It's like, in those days, why, we had a lot of different types of people coming over from Europe. There were Swedes, Polish, Jewish, all types, all kinds, from every walk of life, and they all made their homes in -- and actually Chicago is sort of a vortex, you might [04:00] say, in the entire area. So we all got along. But

there's a very interesting thing, and I'm going to mention this. We spoke English when we were in the business establishments. We never, ever -- that was -- we were very proud of the fact that we were citizens of this country. My father was probably one of the finest flag-wavers in the country when it came to that. So was my mother, and all of our relatives were very much in that vein. I never experienced anything other than the normal feelings that probably anyone has as a -- but I did learn my Alsatian very well. In fact, I was very good at it. I was better in Alsatian than I was [05:00], actually, in German until I went to Germany, and then when I went to school, I took it up. But I had a good background and, of course, I also lived over there for about eight months of my life when I was about 11 years old, so that reestablished many things. Interesting note about that. When I was a youngster of about 6 years old -- I'm going to go back to my schooling -- the nun called my mother and said, "Mrs. Bomberg, I'm concerned about Alfred." "Well, what did he do?" Well, I was sort of a little dopnicks [spelled phonetically], you know, good-for-nothing, sometimes. And she said, "Oh, no." She said, "He needs help in speaking the English language." You see, my playmates -- really, I was sort of taken care of by these older people all the time and so those are the background -- that's sort of the background [06:00] I had. But then I -- going further on, I -- after my schooling, I was drafted then into the service, and I was drafted into the Cs [06:15]. I had ROTC in background. I had gone to a preparatory school for boys run by the Jesuits in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, no longer in existence. We used to have about five, 600 young guys from Chicago areas and other areas, for that matter, all over. So it was rather interesting for me, and it was also a -- I got to know things about other people at a very young age, which most people don't have that. I remember my daughter said,

“Why, Dad, you mean you went away from home at 12 years old?” I said, “Well, that was the way it was done.” I mean, I never quite -- I was excited about going away to school. I was [07:00] curious about everything, and I was about Europe, too. I traveled with my mother a lot. We saw a lot. Mother was one of these people that we went to every place we could go to. And we were -- I don't mean to say that we were -- had outstanding monies to do all this with, but we just saved, I suppose, whatever it was to go away and to do these things. My mother wanted to see her parents and her sisters. She had some sisters over there, who we also were, of course, very curious about. But that's interesting. In the '30s, which was when this took place, we already noticed what the Nazis -- when we traveled into Germany, it was an altogether different picture, and I can recall my mother -- I never will forget it -- she went into the back, and this guy said, “Heil Hitler [07:57].” My mother looked at him, and, of course, she was half [08:00] French and German both, and she couldn't hack that. She says, “Good morning,” in German in her best [unintelligible], but she said it in French too, in Alsatian, I think she said. Anyway, to let him know that she was by no means -- but we had no reason -- I'm not Jewish or anything of this nature. I have many Jewish friends, for that matter, but I never -- it never occurred to me that much. I really almost didn't believe these things until after I saw some of that and whatever. But I went through the service then, about a year and a half. And I asked if I -- well, they said, “Would you like to go to OCS [08:51] [Officers' Candidate School]?” I says, “Yes, I would.” Of course, I had put in an application. So I got there. I went to Miami Beach, which was the first four-month class, graduated in [09:00] the 1937 Class H. I'll never forget them.

BB: Not the year of 1937.

AB: No, no. I'm sorry. Did I say '37?

BB: I think you said 1937 Class H.

AB: No, no. No, no, no. I'm sorry; 1943, 1943. Thank you for correcting me.

BB: Sure, sure. And if we could back up just a little bit. And the other thing I might do real quick, and don't you worry. I'm just going to slide the microphone back out there, and it should pick you up a little bit better, probably. So were you drafted, or did you volunteer?

AB: I was drafted, and there was a reason for that. I wanted to get in, but I couldn't get into the V-7 because I had some eye problems and that. I was qualified from other standpoints, but because of that, so I went to the Dean of Men, and they spoke to me and they said, [10:00] "Why don't you just wait until it happens?" And I thought, okay, that's fine because I thought that was the best advice. I still had some months to go because I knew my number was coming in, and I was ready for the draft. So then that's why that happened.

BB: Do you remember about when, what year it was when you were drafted?

AB: Yeah, I do, '42.

BB: Okay. So the war had already started.

AB: The war had already started. War was declared December 8. And we went -- and of course, we were all -- you know how all young guys -- it was something else. We were very enthusiastic. We were also very proud. We also had a great feeling for our country, which some of the things which are transpiring these days, I don't even understand. I don't [11:00] even -- I don't even want to understand. I can see why things are questioned, but over and above that, I have no great problem with that. I have just a problem myself.

VS: Just one thing. There's some light that when your head is a certain direction, there's a beam of light right there.

AB: Oh, right there.

VS: Yeah.

AB: The blind over there is doing that. Why don't you shut that? Please. I'm not trying to give you --

VS: No, thank you for --

AB: [laughs] Yeah, you can adjust it. Yeah, just take the rods and straight -- that's it.

VS: I think I just fixed it.

AB: Did you?

VS: I did.

AB: There's one over here. May I call you Vince?

VS: Oh, absolutely.

BB: Brandon.

AB: Brandon. You got it. Great. So anyway, going back. Where were we?

BB: We were talking about -- so [12:00] you were drafted in '42.

AB: In '42.

BB: And if you want to tell briefly because I think it's an important question to address. In a few words, what do you remember about Pearl Harbor [12:12] and the United States entering the war? Did the U.S. entering the war come as a surprise? Did Pearl Harbor [12:18] come as a surprise?

AB: No, war did not come as a surprise, because many of us were talking about it. You know, we were at an age where we realized what kind of an impact -- we also had -- some of our

guys had already left, so we knew what was going on. In fact, one or two of them met death in the battlefield already, and we were -- so we were made very aware of all of this. And of course, trying to think back, you're concerned about it. In fact, my wife and I were [13:00] dating each other, and I realized -- we said right away it's a possibility. So, yes, we did. Pearl Harbor [13:10], I don't know that much other than what I saw. You know, we didn't have instant newsworthy -- I don't even know. Did we? We didn't even have television, I don't think. We didn't have television. No, now that I think and bring back, it was all newspaper and radio. All newspaper and radio. And we used to, of course -- and also what we heard, what we -- it was nothing like it is today. Isn't it funny that I never thought about it, the fact of TV? Anyway, we heard enough in that respect, and [14:00] of course, we saw many of them come back in their uniforms, and we felt very sorry that we're not in it and all that kind of business, but I -- yes?

BB: So at this time, you were in school? You were in college at this time?

AB: Yes, yes. Yeah, I was. I was thinking in terms of getting into business, like most guys were, although the smarter guys were going to be chemists and physicists. I remember some of these guys. We had a very unusual good school that I went to, and we had some outstanding students who did a marvelous job.

BB: But you were drafted prior to finishing your college degree?

AB: Yes, I was. Yeah. I never did finish it either. I did a lot of things to supplement it as I went along afterwards [15:00], but it was something that I wished I would have done. In fact, I still think about it today, that I've done various things in that direction, but then all of a sudden I thought, well, that's one of those things. When I got in, as I mentioned, I was there. I was made a corporal and then a sergeant, and when you're in ROTC -- I was

a drill instructor, too, by the way, and one of the reasons why I was a drill instructor is because of the fact that I had a fairly good voice, I suppose, and also knowledge of the mechanics of military life, to a certain degree, only in the high school end of it, never in college. We didn't have it at Kalamazoo College, where I attended. It was very, very -- I was very [16:00] pleased that I had it, let's put it that way. Also, it does another thing for you: it gives you the ability to stand in front of people and, if you're good at it, to develop a rapport between the ones you are handling, you're working with. I enjoyed it and I wanted to actually stay in the military. I was so enthusiastic about it.

BB: You were in the Air Force [16:32]?

AB: Yes, yes, I was in the Air Force. We had visions of doing various things when I was in at first, and then when I went to OCS [16:39], I thought, oh, boy. So I graduated in 43H, as I mentioned, which was October.

BB: You went to Miami, you said?

AB: Yes, Miami Beach OCS [16:50], and it was a -- in the first four-month class. All were three-month wonders. We were four-month wonders [17:00]. It was rather interesting to me because we were upperclassmen for two months, so we took over assisting our professors who taught us, or whatever we did, and we didn't know where we were going to go. On the day of our graduation, it was announced -- we were announced; there were six of us. No, there were three of us, three of us, but the other guys I didn't know. They weren't from my class. There were three of us that were announced that we were going to Yale University, and I was astounded. I thought, well, what am I going to do there? I was told the reasons for it. Because of the military background and so forth, they needed tactical officers just like they do at [United States Military Academy at] West Point

[17:58], which I was familiar with [18:00]. So I did that and it was very interesting. Those were the days where Glenn Miller was, and Bob Bouchet [spelled phonetically] was the choreographer for the New York Rockets or Rockettes. Bob Bouchet was about my age and, of course, Glenn Miller, I never got to know him personally or anything like that. We knew him and said hello to him and so forth. Here's a guy that went to college and listened to his tunes, and never did I dream that I would march up and down in front of my -- we used to take our -- every evening we had -- the whole town would come out to listen and to watch. It was rather impressive because it was -- if you're familiar with -- New Haven, Connecticut, and I don't know it, there's a camp; there's a religious type -- well, it's a church. I don't know which order it is. There are several of them that are located in that Quad, and it's [19:00] fairly large, in a big field, and we used to march down and around and so forth. It took us every bit of probably three-quarters of an hour to do that. The entire town came out, and I'll tell you, it was really worthwhile. A rather interesting thing, I still have a picture of it somewhere in my background, where the Duke of Windsor [19:19] visited us, and I have a picture. There were eleven of us guys that were represented in this. Captain Joe McNally [spelled phonetically] was the man who was head of us. It was a rather interesting setup. Then that whole thing sort of faded away. We realized -- we knew that we were starting to make quite a bit of inroads and so forth. After all, it was '44, going into '45, so many of us -- yes.

BB: I'm sorry to interrupt. What specifically were you being [20:00] trained in at Yale [20:02] that was different from your --

AB: We were tactical officers. What we did, they were cadets in this particular group. These cadets were training in radio work and things of this nature, and what we did is to see to it

that they were given a background in a military life and that they understood, because they were going to become second lieutenants upon graduation. Many of these youngsters, young fellows, as some were younger, some were older, were going to go and become military men, but never really had any training or background, so we tried to supplement that with classes and things of this nature and indoctrinations, and I believe and felt we did a very good job. Colonel Reeves [spelled phonetically] at that time was [21:00] head of the entire thing, and I would say, in an overall picture, we were all very pleased to be a part of this whole thing. It worked out really well. It was a big step for me in many different ways, trying to work this out, understanding what I had to do to -- responsibilities and so forth. So anyway, we did this for approximately a year or so, and after that, many of us were beginning to be concerned about what was going to happen to us now because we still hadn't won the war yet. I went to personnel then and sat down with them, and I said, "I want to know what I'm qualified for. What could I do?" [22:00] So I had a very interesting guy who was a staff sergeant, had been in the service for quite some time, but a very savvy guy. So he'd ask me a lot of questions about my schooling and background and blah, blah, blah, blah, and we went through the whole thing. I told him about my language, and that's when he picked up, "Oh, you do?" I said, "Yeah." So then he went through that a little bit and checked some things, I guess. He called me then about a week later, and he said, "You've been accepted to go to Combat Intelligence School [22:38] down at Orlando," which was a school that I wanted to go to. This was a school that taught people that wanted to go to there and were qualified to work with airmen and actually fly with them and go -- and some -- and interrogate them when they came back [23:00]. We didn't go on flights all the time, but we would go on flights at

certain times to check on things ourselves. That's what we had to do, is map reading and so forth. It was a very thorough, very wonderful course. Of course, I met a lot of very interesting -- in fact, my classmates were all West Point [23:24] people. I think there were two of us, my memory, and we were the only two people that weren't West Point [23:32] people. So I didn't understand quite well why this decision is made. I had never asked, and that's the way it worked.

BB: So you were being trained at this point to, essentially, debrief airmen who were coming back from --

[talking simultaneously]

AB: To debrief that were coming back from -- you know, they'd go on a mission, go and say, okay, now, we set up these targets. [24:00] I didn't set them up; they were set up. But we had to understand what they were going to do. So we went through all these things with them, and so that's exactly what we were supposed to do. But you have to go and get into it in order to really get the feel of what you want to do and how it's supposed to be done. So I was ready to go, and I was assigned to the China, Burma, India theater, and my graduating class was ready to do this, and we were all -- and incidentally, Jean [spelled phonetically], at that time, and I, we had been married. We were married, and it was sort of a nice setup for the two of us, whatever that might mean.

BB: She was down there in Orlando with you?

AB: Yeah, she was with me. Yeah. We had a little place. Lucky guy. I was a lucky guy. I guess I've been lucky all my life [25:00]. I happened to talk to this woman, and she had a nice apartment there. It was right on the lake, and it was just beautiful. We never had a car. I don't even know how we got there and how we got back. I swear I don't. I never

had a car. We got around all -- to whatever we did. Then after the second or third day, we were getting all our gear ready. See, you have to keep an eye on shots. The final day came, which was about three days afterwards. My name was called over the loudspeaker, and I thought, [unintelligible], hey, what did you do, Bomberg? Business. And I was sort of wondering myself. I couldn't figure it out. I thought [26:00], well, something has gone awry, something. So I walked in; it was sort of a fairly good-sized room. I saluted both of these officers. One was a -- I think one was a colonel, and I'm not sure if the other one was a brigadier general or not. I'm almost positive he was, or there were two colonels. I don't know. I was so taken back because of what they said to me. They said, "Well, sit down." So they wanted to know things just like you do. The one spoke German to me to sort of get a feel of whether or not I was for real or if I was, you know -- lead someone on. I have -- if I speak German, you feel that I was reared there because of the way it was done. That's because I was a youngster when I learned it [27:00], not because I'm brilliant. Doesn't mean a damn thing. So anyway, they outlined; they said, "We'd like you to think about going to Washington, D.C." And I said, "Good Lord, to do what?" And they said, "Interrogation work." They didn't mention P.O. Box 1142 [27:22], incidentally. I didn't even know. They said okay; they said -- they asked me if I had any objections because, you see, they knew I had cousins, aunts, uncles. I said, "None whatsoever." I says, "They know what's going on." I said, "If they're on the German side, I could care less."

BB: You had relatives in Germany.

AB: Yeah, yeah, I have relatives in Germany. I'm not going to abandon my feelings just because of that. I'm in it because I believe what I'm doing. I was a very positive person

in those days, I guess. Still am to a certain extent [28:00]. But they said, "Proceed," so I took a train. I'm traveling into Washington, D.C. and I'm thinking to myself, "Good Lord, what is this all about?" I arrived and I went into the Pentagon [28:20]. It was the first day I had ever seen the Pentagon. I'd been in Washington, D.C. before, but I never saw this. I was in awe when I saw it and, of course, hundreds of military people around. I don't have to tell you guys. You know it. You're right on top of it. I walked into this place, and I showed them my orders, which were ordinary. "Oh, yeah." And they said, "Well, wait down in the foyer, and they'll pick you up." Still didn't know what was going on [29:00]. All I knew -- I realized that this was that type of work. Anyway, they took me there, and I was ushered in for the first day, and it was rather interesting to me. It took me a little -- a few weeks to understand. But my work, which was rather interesting to me now more so than ever before, was really not interrogation work; it was the public relations work for the U.S. -- for the rocketry people. That's where they needed me, I believe, and I didn't realize that until I got into it. I did some interrogation work because, you know, interrogation work takes a lot of training. You don't interrogate people, -- I couldn't imagine trying to interrogate a general myself without the proper knowledge [30:00], so I don't want to make any pretense, since I want to give it to you just cold, hard facts, and I then was introduced -- are you okay?

BB: We're going to have to switch our tape in about three minutes.

AB: Okay. So then I was introduced to a lot of these guys, Wernher von Braun [30:24], and all of these scientists. Incidentally, I used to go to New York sometimes, or Hershey, Pennsylvania, to pick up some people that we wanted and I would escort them back, but they were not prisoners of war. These people were hired by us under a per-diem-type

situation. I -- by whatever bodies did this. It was interesting to us, too, because we felt that -- we hoped that we weren't too late because [31:00] Russia got -- they shouldn't have had anything, and we were sort of foolish. We left things out of hand, I believe, and I don't know enough about that to make a comment either, but I felt that we sort of gave the -- just because Russia had no reason for us. I never trusted Russia, and I still don't trust them today. Isn't that amazing? I've called it from the day I first knew it, and a lot of us did. Anyway, it was the most interesting thing I -- because I also met unusual people who were in the same, let's say, work that I was and performing in some functions, and that was the other part that -- what do they call that? M.Y.? Is that what they call it?

BB: MIS-X [32:00], the MIS-X program, the escape and evasion program.

AB: Yes, escape and evasion [32:05]. I had, as I mentioned, several excellent friends that we developed and saw one or two of them after the war. But they're both gone now.

(End of Tape 1A)

(Beginning of Tape 1B)

BB: Sure. If you ask, [unintelligible], sure. When you were trained to do debriefing, was it for specific branch of the service, or was it across the board? Did it include Army, Air Corps [00:16], and Marine flyers?

AB: Well, I can't answer that in full, but I was an Air Force [00:24] member at the time. I was in the Air Forces. I wore the Air Force patch. I was in Air Force. In fact, I wasn't MIS [00:32] until I had been in MIS for about six months, and an order came out, and they said, "You're now an MIS member." And I thought, "Gee, I'm proud to be an Air Force guy." I wanted to be identified in that. I don't know if you can understand it, but that's the way I felt. So, to answer that question, I [01:00] met a lot of fellow officers.

We had some women there, too, incidentally, if I recall correctly, but they were in the evasion part of it. I don't know, very interesting about this evasion tactics or whatever it's called. Art Harris [spelled phonetically], who is now deceased, he was a captured airman, and he received packages from 1142 [01:25], and when I mentioned 1142, he says, "I know where it's at." I said, "So do I." [laughs] This was many years later.

BB: This was a personal friend of yours?

AB: Yes, he became a personal friend of mine, Art Harris. I mean, we were -- in fact, he was president of the Kiwanis Club. I was in the Kiwanis Board of Directors, et cetera, et cetera, you know, like most people. This happened to come out in a conversation one time, and I said, "Were you in" -- he said, "Yes, I was captured," and so forth, and he says -- and that's how that came out. So I never realized how far-reaching [02:00] a hand P.O. Box 1142 [02:05], which was -- as you all know. These people in the Air Forces -- not Air Forces, I mean in the Rocketry Division were rather unusual. They were, of course, much older than we were in most instances. They were scientists; they were physicists, chemical and so forth, so we had a lot of things in common. They looked upon me as just exactly what I was. Many of them were very eager to do this. Some were not. We also made observations and we -- notations, and they would ask us about it. I'd say, "This guy's a Nazi. I don't care what you do, shake him inside and out," and I says, "He's a Nazi." [03:00] This is a -- now, incidentally, being a Nazi doesn't necessarily mean the hatred for the Jewish. At least that's what we felt at that particular time. That came in a different -- that was like a bombshell to me. I couldn't believe that. In fact, my parents were highly questionable about that. They said, "Well, that's impossible."

BB: You mean the camps?

AB: Yes. Dachau [03:32] and all the others when we learned about it. And I had one uncle who refused to believe it. He just said, "Oh, that's impossible. I don't believe it." He came from Odenbault [spelled phonetically], great guy, good American. In fact, his son is a very -- he has the best American family you ever -- but that's the way it was. But that was a very [04:00] interesting part of my work. I used to take these guys then downtown, see to it that they would -- sometimes they went to buy some things for themselves or buy things for their, I imagine, their wives or children or whatever they had. They were -- they had the ability -- they had some money that was available to them, and I think that they were given some money also in this direction to help rehabilitate them, and so that they would work with us and make it easy for them to become -- in fact, most of them became U.S. citizens, as you probably know. I think many of them were sent to White Sands, New Mexico. Some were sent to Huntsville.

BB: Did you use the term "Operation Paperclip [04:56]?" Are you familiar with that term?

AB: You were the [05:00] first people that ever told me about that. That's when I -- and that Paperclip was up in Boston, is what you're saying?

BB: Well, it was all over. It was a larger operation involving folks at Boston, 1142 [05:15], and other sites, but much of what you're describing, from our knowledge, falls under what we would consider Operation Paperclip [05:24]. I'd like you to keep going, but I want to try to hash out a little bit later, is there something different? Was there rocket folks -- was this phase of the rocket folks somehow separate or pre-Paperclip?

VINCENT SANTUCCI: When we first came in before you were on tape, you mentioned the word "Alsace."

AB: Yes.

BB: And maybe we could talk a little bit about both of those things.

AB: Okay, sure.

BB: Why don't we keep on going? I don't want to interrupt. This is fantastic, and, frankly, what you're doing right now is you're actually providing Vince and I with a kajillion follow-up questions [06:00] we want to ask. But this is very helpful.

AB: These -- they also -- incidentally, these gentlemen that were in our employ -- and I, again, must emphasize they were not our enemies; they were people that wanted to help us -- they made the decision in Germany, "Yes, we want to further the cause of the United States in the rocketry business," or aviation and so forth. I got to know some of them, looked forward to meeting and seeing them, looked forward to being with them. It was a great pastime for me, after all. Then all of a sudden, I realized that this was going to be coming to an end, and so they discussed something [07:00], and I still had -- I was one of the few people that had -- I don't know exactly if I had expressed it. I wasn't anxious to get out, and I wasn't asked to get out, and I never even thought of getting out. I mean, I just thought I was still a part of it, even though armistice was declared and [unintelligible] and that's when I was transferred into Boston, and I told Jean, I said, "We can find a place in this." That's where this Bob Bouchet, whom I mentioned over at Yale University [07:34], he had a professor whom he knew, and he said, "Well, they've got an apartment on the Charles River. You can go over there. It was a great place for us." Jean, during the week, would do all the things that people in Boston do, I suppose, if you haven't been in Boston, and she was a great historian like you are, Brandon, and possibly you, too, Vince, wanting to know all about this, wanting to know all about that [08:00].

Of course, I went, and where I went, I was thunderstruck where this was. Here we took a tug or whatever it was, a small little craft and we'd tug over there, and there was a 30 foot -- and I'm almost positive I'm right -- difference in tides sometimes from the morning to night. I couldn't believe it. I was used to be icy and everything else. We had to climb down the ladder and hang on for dear life. All those guys in there were German prisoners of war. In many cases, you probably know more about them than I do. We didn't get to know -- they were -- obviously, had helped us in many different ways, and we wanted to see to it that they got back [09:00], and we tried to make their life as comfortable as possible in that short interim of space of time, and there was always a constant rotation. In some ways when I look back at it, I can't [unintelligible]. It was awfully cold up there. I don't know if you've ever been up there. What was it called, Fort?

BB: Fort Strong.

AB: Fort Strong. Terribly cold. The place was so damn cold, I couldn't believe it. Too cold out there. We had a great German cook, and we had a captain who ran that part of it, who was sort of a character. I won't go into it.

BB: Do you remember his name, or would you rather not share his name?

AB: It was a Polish name, and I can't think of it. He was a nice guy, but it was typical; he was a captain; I was a lieutenant, first lieutenant, old-time military, but he had also been an enlisted [10:00] man, and I'm telling you, he sometimes just made my life miserable in some ways, just of the way he went about things. I had nothing to do with the man to begin with. Oh, I know what I had to do. He provided the food, saw to it that we got good [unintelligible], and I had to talk to the guy that was the kitchen, who ran the chef. He was the chef, and the chef, he's a funny fellow, but he was good. He knew it. He

made wonderful soup. He could take a piece of meat and make it taste like something out of heaven. That's the reason why he was a cook. So, of course, he had all these delicacies that he would do with the little bit that he got, and I know some of the things that he got, but good food. Nothing gourmet, but he made it. He made it. His presentation was gourmet.

BB: I have to ask, because we've heard some [11:00] veterans mention this, whether it was at 1142 [11:05] or at Fort Strong [11:06], did you ever have Baked Alaska?

AB: Yes, but I'm trying to think -- yes, we did.

BB: A number of veterans remember very fondly.

AB: We did. And you know something? I don't recall, being in the bakery business, probably, huh, so what?

[laughter]

Because I just made something for my wife this afternoon, which turned out the taste was very good, but it didn't turn out exactly the way I wanted it to, and Jean very politely informed me; she says, "You know, you should leave it, go. The other crust was much better." So I was told all about that. By the way, gentlemen, we'd be more than happy to take you out for dinner if you like. There's a very nice, excellent place [12:00] to eat not very far from here. It's a fish house, or we could have Mexican food, whichever way you wish to go, and I'd be more than happy to take both of you out for dinner, Jean and I both, whatever your plans are.

BB: If --

AB: We appreciate your time. Are you -- would that be a minimal due?

BB: That would be fantastic. Our --

[audio break]

BB: We've got about 15 minutes or so left on this particular tape. Tons of questions that we would like to hash out, so maybe it would be best for now to keep -- to just keep going and round things out, and then we'll come back and really hash out details. First, at 1142 and then to Boston, but if you want to kind of keep talking --

JEAN BOMBERG: Are you talking about Fort Strong?

AB: That's what we were --

BB: Yeah, we just talking about that a little bit.

JB: Because I remember it so well.

BB: [laughs] We may have to interview [13:00] you as well.

JB: Well, I remember what I heard about Pearl Harbor [13:09] because I was in college. My sophomore year, I remember walking up a -- up into a house or something, and somebody told me about it, and I knew that you would be going.

AB: We all knew it. Yeah, well, I guess it wasn't a surprise to those people that were in the military life. I just invited these gentlemen.

JB: Oh, but I heard them say they were away or --

BB: Oh, don't you worry about us. We'll be fine. We just want to make sure that we --

AB: They have things they wanted to -- they've got a lot of things they want to accomplish yet, Jean.

JB: Okay.

AB: So just take your time.

JB: Okay.

AB: All right, so --

BB: We just -- and Mr. Bomberg was saying that he'd rather probably finish the interview and then go and get something to eat [14:00].

AB: Yeah.

BB: And Vince and I have about a million questions we'd still like to ask.

JB: [unintelligible] Do you ever eat Mexican?

BB: Whatever you want is fine. That's easy for us.

JB: [unintelligible] sort of a nice Mexican.

AB: We have a good Mexican restaurant. We've used it. I mean, can't --

BB: Fantastic.

AB: Yeah.

BB: Great. Thank you.

AB: Okay.

BB: And to talk a little more -- just a little bit before with Boston, so you were at Boston. Did you then return to 1142 [14:30] after being at Boston?

AB: No. Wait a minute. Where did go? No, I didn't. No, I did not; 1142 was over with.

BB: So you were just at 1142 once.

AB: Yes, I went -- I believe it was -- I went to the Pentagon [14:46], and that's why I became very interested in it because, at that time, I was ready to [15:00] -- I wanted to go into -- stay in the service, and I had mentioned -- and they needed certain people, and they said, "Why don't you go to" -- I had an opportunity to go, I think, to Staff and Command School. At least that's what I had in mind. I didn't know what that meant, and I don't even know what that is all about to this very day. But I always wanted to get ahead, and they were interested in having me stay. I said this to my wife, and she said, "I don't want

stay in the military for the rest of my life.” So I said okay. It has many benefits. I don’t have to go into it. But I didn’t do that then. I was then made a captain at that particular time, and then I turned around and several months later, I [16:00] told them that I wanted to resign, which I did. So then I went back home.

BB: So this would have been a year or two after the war ended then?

AB: I got out about -- in late '46, yes. I got out in late '46. I think it was October, somewhere in there. I had some time coming, just like people do that accrue leave in civil service jobs, and it’s very similar with the military personnel. I think I had something like, whatever it was, I don’t recall, but impressive when you don’t have -- ain’t got money for doing nothing. I was no different than anyone else. Went back home and then started into my father’s business.

BB: Okay, I think, just to wrap this up, I’d like to run through off the top of my head to make sure I get this general chronology correct [17:00], and then we’ll go back and ask some more specific questions. So you were drafted, and we’re talking back at the beginning here.

AB: Yes.

BB: You were drafted as an enlisted man in 1942.

AB: Correct. Yes.

BB: Were a corporal, and then did you make sergeant?

AB: No, I was just an enlisted man. Yes, I made -- I was a private, then I became a corporal, and then I became a sergeant.

BB: And then you applied for --

AB: Then I applied for OCS [17:29].

BB: And were accepted to OCS, which was --

AB: At OCS I was accepted, about a week later, I got my orders, said, "You're ready for the 1943 H Class."

BB: And that was Miami.

AB: Yes, Miami Beach.

BB: And you were then -- went from Miami with a select group up to Yale [17:47].

AB: That's correct.

BB: Okay, and you were in Yale for -- you mentioned you were in Yale for quite some time, it sounds like.

AB: Yes, I was at Yale for almost about a year and some-odd months. It was a [18:00] -- it was a plum assignment, you know. A lot of my friends said, "Who did you know?" I said I didn't know anyone.

BB: So from Yale, that's when you started --

AB: I went into Combat Intelligence School [18:15].

BB: You mentioned [unintelligible]; he got you down to Orlando.

AB: Right. I went to Combat Intelligence School in Orlando, and that was called AFTTC, Air Force Tactical Training Center [18:26].

BB: Super, great. And that was a four-month course?

AB: Yes, four months.

BB: Okay. Then you thought you were going to the China Burma India Theater.

AB: Correct.

BB: But all of a sudden --

AB: All of a sudden, the orders -- well, they came in, as I mentioned to you, and then was

interviewed by these people and asked if I had any objections. In fact, I became a little bit upset, and they said, "We don't mean to infer that your parents" -- I said [19:00], "I've been" -- truth, and so forth. They said, "We understand." And they interjected that, because I knew my parents and I knew all about my parents. We had some people that we knew, for example, who had some sons and decided to go back to Germany and went back into the service for Germany. Most unusual. Most unusual. And the parents stayed here. That was up in Milwaukee that happened.

BB: When you were called into the setting, were you at all upset that you were not going into the China Burma India Theater?

AB: Yes, I was. I was very disappointed.

BB: I imagine, on one hand, you probably --

[talking simultaneously]

AB: I was so excited -- well, here I was, all [20:00] to go with these -- most of the West Point [20:04] guys who didn't want to recognize us as being in the same planet as they are -- understandable -- and we made inroads. They liked us. They had to, you know. [laughs] Some of them were pilots. Some were others -- had other aspects in the Air Force and so forth, but we all had a -- yes, I was so upset when I first -- when they first told me about this, and I said, "Well, I really want to go." But then I said, and I said it in this manner. I said, "Well, but, I mean, if you feel it's that worthwhile to you have me go where I am," and they said, "Yes, we are." I said, "Okay, that's it." So I felt [21:00] -- you see, authority has a lot to do with your military life, and I don't -- if I'm hurt or if I feel that there's a reason for me to get upset, I'll let them know. I don't care who it is. But in this particular thing, I thought, "Gee whiz, I'm doing something that they want me to

contribute.”

BB: Do you recall -- you mentioned you were going to go to the China Burma India Theater?

AB: Yes.

BB: Were you trained at all prior to this in anything related to escape and evasion [21:40], or did you only learn about that later through other contacts at 1142 [21:45]?

AB: I only learned about that later. In our work, I'm sure that that was touched on, being in the Air Forces [21:56], because we were no -- we were well informed. We knew what happened in the prisoner-of-war camps. We knew, when a guy was shot down, what -- that was touch and go, whether or not he would get out or not. Regardless of the type of imprisonment that you have, you're imprisoned. It's an uncertain. It obviously must be a very, very harsh thing that happens to an individual.

BB: What you were being -- what you were supposed to go to China for was to, not assist airmen who had been shot down, but to debrief them?

AB: To debrief them was really the main point. What we did -- what we were trying -- our main objective was to -- we'd have a target, and they want to blow it [23:00] up. That's what we did. That was our mission, and our mission was to see to it that those planes would get the best information that we were able to get through photographs, through when we -- when a guy would come back, tell us what was going on. Those were the things that we were trained in. I imagine, once I would have gone over there, it would have taken me at least probably anywhere from three, to six, to maybe a year to put it all together the way it should be, like anything else.

BB: This is great. Just so you know, the reason that we're asking these questions is there is a whole connection with P.O. Box 1142 [23:49] to the China Burma India Theater that

we're just now beginning to uncover.

AB: Oh, really?

BB: Yes, where they were training people at 1142 [23:58] in escape and [24:00] evasion, specifically for the China Burma India Theater.

AB: No doubt that's how they got a hold of me then. I didn't know that. In other words, when they went through records and so forth, they said, "Oh, this guy knows German. Why don't we put him here? We need somebody here probably more so than we need him there."

BB: It could be possible.

AB: Because I don't know how they looked at it. I don't know who made these decisions, but in that time of life, they took a lot of people and had to compress everything, and you had to push and shove, and not everything was perfect. I don't know. Okay.

BB: Prior to arriving at P.O. Box 1142 [24:50], did you receive any German language training at all, or was the extent of your German language training that five-minute test with the colonel [25:00] to make sure that you could speak German?

AB: Obviously, that must -- they must have known something about me that I didn't know that they knew. No, I didn't have any educational-type thing, any preparation to do, anything like that. That's why I believe what they had in mind -- they must have realized that I was able to understand and to speak and to establish myself as a person in there with them, which I had done, of course, in Europe. So they were at ease with that. But I think they must have known that I was not one of these guys that had any special knowledge or anything. Let me say this. To be an interrogator, as I said before, is their - the terminologies [26:00], I never heard them before. It's just like you're going in to

study electrical engineering. You learn about different parts of mechanical products and so forth and put them to work. That's just about exactly the way we had to do it. I don't know if that makes sense.

VS: Brandon, it's flashing. There's something that just came on. It's a little, yellow --

BB: That just means the tape's going to run out. That's okay. It's just [unintelligible]. So to follow up on that, Mr. Bomberg, with relation to interrogation, realizing that certainly all you did was not just interrogation -- you did much more than that -- did you receive formal interrogation training, or was that something that, again, you picked up, on-the-job training, per se?

AB: It was on-the-job training. There were some [27:00] -- probably, if I recall correctly, there would be some briefing that we would have from officers who were -- had done this work or who had been involved in it or told us what to expect. But, really, no, there wasn't, Brandon. I never had anything like that.

BB: It would be good to get it on tape. You did not go to Camp Ritchie [27:23], but you were aware of it, based on others that had gone.

AB: No, I never went to Camp Ritchie. I never had any background in that whatsoever. I knew about it, but no.

BB: Okay. But you knew other Army Air Corps [27:43] officers who had gone through Ritchie?

AB: Not really. Not really.

VS: How did you know about it? Could you recall?

AB: Well, obviously, probably being in [28:00] the work that I was in, it would be a common -- not a common, but would be some of the things which we would discuss. How did I

know about Camp Ritchie [28:10]? It was never really -- I recognized it right away as soon as you said it.

BB: So you know a lot of the people who went through 1142 did go to Camp Ritchie?

AB: Yes, yes.

BB: So certainly not wanting to put words in your mouth, but it could be possible that maybe you ran into a lot of people from [unintelligible]?

AB: I'm sure that was it. I think Camp Ritchie [28:36] was for a certain group of people; they were highly specialized guys, I'm sure, in whatever they did. To this very day, I don't know what they did, but I do know that it was highly -- what would I say -- well set up. I knew that [29:00] it was worthwhile work to be engaged in, but I had no, obviously, qualifications in that direction. So no one came to me and said, "Hey, we think you should go there."

BB: Last final question before we stop the tape. Were you told in any way prior to your arrival at P.O. Box 1142 [29:21] what you were going to be doing?

AB: Vaguely, by those two gentlemen that said -- they said interrogation work. They never went into any specifics whatsoever. They just told me that it would be interrogation work, prisoners of war.

BB: No mention of rocket programs or anything like that?

AB: No, nothing. I had no -- I had no previous knowledge of it. I had no idea until I got there, and when I got there, we were curious. In fact, we didn't believe half of the stuff that they told us. You know what I'm saying? Well, we went through some of the interrogations [30:00], now that you mention it, and this guy said they're going 1,500 miles an hour. We said, "Come on. He's in la-la land [laughs]. He doesn't know what

he's talking about." Then we slowly sifted it for infrared ray. Something was mentioned to me about infrared ray. When I listened to this one gentleman at P.O. Box 1142 [30:27], that was one of the outstanding things, I think, that was discovered by us. Also --

BB: I hate to cut you off, but we're just about to run out of tape, and this would be a good spot to pick back up, so we're going to go ahead --

(End of Tape 1B)

(Beginning of Tape 2A)

BB: -- again. This is the second in a series of interviews for the Fort Hunt Oral History Project. Today is February 11, 2008. This is an interview with Fort Hunt veteran Mr. Albert Bomberg --

AB: Alfred.

BB: Alfred. Excuse me. Mr. Alfred Bomberg, at his home. That's what I get for not having my notepad right in front of me. We're filming impromptu here.

AB: Don't worry about it.

BB: We're here at his home in San Marcos, California, and we are actually here looking at his reading machine, looking at some photographs. This is Brandon Bies of the National Park Service, as well as Vincent Santucci. Let's pick right back up where we were. Mr. Bomberg, we were just going through this photograph, in which we think we've made some interesting discoveries. So I don't know if you would mind summarizing some of those discoveries for us.

VS: Who's the gentleman you're looking at?

AB: The gentleman I'm looking at is -- when I first looked at the picture, I recognized immediately the [01:00] CC camp where we were located and what we were a part of. I

also recognized myself, I thought. I wasn't sure, but I'm almost positive. I would say I'm 98, 99 percent sure of it because I -- of the way I look. Of course, my wife said, "That's you." [laughs] I said, "Well, okay." I think that's exactly -- what's interesting to me is I think I knew who this gentleman was. I also question this, although I didn't know him personally, but I was obviously aware of him. But these two people I knew, and as soon as I hit this one, this guy, I couldn't believe it, is -- when they mentioned Arndt. And I says, "Yes, I knew him."

MALE SPEAKER: [unintelligible].

AB: Herb Arndt [01:52], even at that time, I knew that he was working for both sides, but [02:00] he was very well thought of and was given a lot of credence and a lot of respect for what he had done and help that he had given us. He gave us many, many things, which I'm sure -- I'm sure he had also reasons for doing it. After all, your own preservation might have a little to do with it, too, but you have to separate the two, and I think he did a tremendous job. He went with me. When I say with me, he was transferred to Boston. His mission in Boston was somewhat different than -- and my -- we were very close, you might say, at Fort Hunt [02:53], whatever that meant. I mean, we traded informations and things of that nature, but [03:00] he became somewhat distant when he became a part of Fort Strong [03:09], and I imagine the reason for that was he was going home and, as he told me, he said he was almost -- he was in fear of going home, and I can understand because if people say, "Oh, you were a traitor," well, you know, that's -- and don't think for one minute that that information doesn't go out. It does, fortunately or unfortunately. But I never heard from him since. I wanted to get in touch with him, but I didn't know how. My burning question is, you don't know

anything about him now?

BB: No. Unfortunately, only you and one or two other veterans remember Arndt [03:55].

AB: I can tell you this. Somewhere around [04:00] Fort Hunt, this man was a very important guy in Fort Hunt. I know that. And somewhere around -- he had another guy; he had a companion. I didn't know him so well at all, but I knew this man, and he and I became very -- we became personal friends, you might say. He was a very, very unusual guy in a lot of different ways.

BB: You said he was important. What do you mean by that?

AB: I believe that he must have done some interrogation work, plus the fact that he knew -- I don't know too much of his background in Europe, but I think in Germany, he must have done some outstanding or had some information that was very important to us [05:00] when he got into the United States. So otherwise he wouldn't have been over here. But then he worked both -- as I said, when you -- I would like to ask the definition of a double agent from you people. What is your experience, Brandon and Vince?

BB: Well, that is a term that I'm borrowing from one of the other interviews that we conducted. I'll tell you what we heard, and I'd really like it if you could correct that or not.

AB: Okay. Why don't you tell me what you heard?

BB: Our understanding was that this gentleman, Rolf Arndt [05:33], had been a -- literally had been a German spy spying on the Americans --

AB: Yes.

BB: -- and that something took place. The one story that we heard has something to do with the effect that his wife had been killed. He had been married. He'd had a wife who'd

been killed either by -- I believe by the Germans. I don't know that we learned any of the details -- and that that may have had [06:00] some impact on his decision instead to basically switch sides and spy upon the Americans, but that he essentially led two lives, had two identities. And that's one of the questions we would have. You knew him as Arndt. Did he have another name that he went by?

AB: No, I didn't know him under any other name. Herb [06:24] and I treated each other with respect in the fact that he was working for us, and I accepted him in that vein, and he was doing a job for us, and I never questioned it because it wasn't up to me to question it. I had a higher authority who placed this gentleman in our midst, and so I judged him only on what he did, his reaction to what I said. I never knew any other name than Herb Arndt [06:57]. I never [07:00] knew anything about his private life. He never discussed it with me. I didn't -- I did not push in that direction. I didn't feel it was an -- I -- it would have been just because of curiosity on my part, not from the standpoint of, "Hey, you got a mission. Find out what this guy's doing." That was not my quest. My wife got to know him fairly well, too.

BB: Really?

AB: Yeah. He spoke to her quite a bit. I don't know if she remembers anything in that direction. My wife played -- this was after the war was over. My wife would come over on the weekends to Fort Strong, and then we -- they enjoyed that, having her. She was probably the only woman they saw, I imagine, and my gal was a rather courageous woman. She does a lot of different things.

BB: So Arndt had a role at 1142 [07:57] and at Fort Strong [07:59]?

AB: Well [08:00], it was really not as important as it was at Fort Hunt [08:07]. Let me say

this. At one time in his life, the first part of it that he was there, he was an important guy, and he was treated as such. He had no insignia on his -- as you noticed, there was nothing on his shirt, nothing on his sleeve. He dressed as a military man, and that was it. Of course, he had an accent. I mean, everybody knew that. I mean, they'd have to be dead between the ears, but that happens, too, incidentally.

BB: So he spoke some English then?

AB: Oh, he spoke beautiful English. Oh, yeah. He was very -- he was very -- I don't know if he was very well educated, but he knew the English language. Incidentally, if he knew the English language in those days -- take back -- this is back in the '40s. He had to have some kind of a responsible job [09:00] over in Europe, I would imagine, because not many people knew English. That was not the -- English was a language, sort of a universal language, even in those days, but not spoken by many, and not -- it's different. Let's put it this way. So I know him and, as I say, I'm almost dead positive that that's me on the right-hand side. I know this guy here, but I can't give you his name. He was a -- what rank did he have? First lieutenant or a captain? No, first lieutenant.

BB: It looks like a single bar.

AB: Yeah. I don't know. He just looks familiar to me. We had a lot of guys going in and out, too. That was one of the things which we -- I had to laugh. The articles of that [10:00] woman in The Washington Post, where she got her information, obviously, is from you people, but also from probably things which she read. She did an excellent job. She made me feel as though she had a personal knowledge of them, which is rather hard to do sometime. But this guy here, I knew him well.

BB: Could you try to summarize for us what exactly his -- you mentioned that he was

extremely important. Do you know what exactly Arndt [10:33] did at 1142 [10:36]?

AB: I don't know what he did at 1142. I can't answer that question really. And he never -- one reason why I respected Herb Arndt, he didn't divulge information. Neither did I. I would have him -- I said, "Herb, I've got something that I think that you could be helpful answering." And he says, "Okay, Lieutenant, [unintelligible]." So we take this guy. I said, "What do you think of this guy?" [11:00] He says, "Exactly what you think." I said, "Okay, fine." I said, "I just wanted confirmation." He was that type of a person. He was very, very careful about everything he did. He never became a part of the group. He was helpful in every way that he could be, and he was careful also who he befriended, as far as the officers were concerned because some officers didn't care to have anything to do with him, frankly.

BB: Did he accompany scientists in for dinners?

AB: Yeah, he would do that with me. I don't know if he did that on his own, and I don't think he probably did, but if I would ask him, he went downtown with me sometimes. That was rather interesting, sitting at a table. We'd discuss things in German [unintelligible] weren't paying any attention to [12:00] what he did. I never had anyone question me. Of course, I was the only -- sometimes I was the only guy there that had a uniform on. Of course, I could have stolen the uniform, too, for that matter.

BB: Did Arndt ever go to the Pentagon [12:14]?

AB: No, not to my -- not with me anyway. I would imagine that they would be very careful as to where this gentleman went, and he had to account for his life and so forth. He had a sort of a restricted situation. Don't misunderstand me. He was free to a certain extent, but he knew -- he knew -- that's what made him good; he knew how far he could go, and

he knew when to cease and desist.

BB: This is kind of out there, but because of his German language skills, did he ever pretend that he was another prisoner --

AB: No, not with me.

BB: -- to get information from other German prisoners?

AB: Oh, I [13:00] -- yes. I'm sure that that's what he had to do. I'm sure what happened there was that he probably was putting [unintelligible]. See, they put these guys together and then they talk, and that's where they get a lot of information. They lived together practically for maybe a week, two weeks. This is what this man did. I know that he would, I'm sure -- and it was excellent because, if you're with him, he had that kind of a personality. My wife, as I've said, knew Herb Arndt [13:37] quite well.

VS: [unintelligible]

BB: I think we're all sold on the fact that that's you in the photograph.

AB: Oh, are you finding something?

BB: We're finding dozens of photographs in here --

AB: You're verifying.

BB: -- that look exactly like this gentleman. So if we could -- if Vince doesn't have to hold the lamp for the rest of the evening -- keep holding it for now, though.

[laughter]

[14:00] I wanted to just finish up with this photo. Would you mind moving around and looking at the rest of this photo?

AB: No, not at all.

BB: See if there's anyone else on here that you might recognize.

AB: Yeah, I will. I will. I will. I will.

BB: Again, these -- and can actually identify -- we actually know who all of these gentlemen in the back row are.

AB: Who's this guy?

BB: That is Erich Kramer.

AB: Doesn't mean very much to me. And these two?

BB: Okay, Peter Weiss [spelled phonetically] and George Mandel.

AB: This guy looks -- Mandel looks familiar to me, but I don't know.

BB: And almost everyone in this photo who we've identified had very similar experiences to yours, although they're enlisted men. They were all NCOs. They all went to 1142, and they also all went to Boston.

AB: Oh, really?

BB: Yes, so all of those gentlemen we just showed you there, all were at [15:00] 1142 and Boston, and they all worked with the German rocket.

AB: So you know who they are, more or less?

BB: Yes. And this -- to Vince and I, this is a huge revelation, the fact that you -- and I don't want you to think even for a second that we don't believe what you're saying. We believe you 100 percent. This substantiates greatly because we have interviewed this gentleman, this gentleman, this gentleman, this gentleman, and spoken to this gentleman, and they all have similar stories. And you are sitting two feet from them, and you have the officer's perspective, but you have a similar story.

AB: Well, the amazing thing was, when I looked at the picture, I didn't even -- just the way I have --

BB: It's amazing that [unintelligible] are still alive.

AB: Yeah [laughs]. Yeah, I was a lean guy in those days.

BB: The photo of you walking, you look like you must have had about a 26-inch waist.

AB: I did. You know what? I was about a 28 or 29, and I couldn't gain any weight. I can always remember it. I only weigh about 170 now, which is fine, they tell me. And I don't -- I love good food. I'm very partial to that. I'm a good cook, too. But anyway, gentlemen, I think you got what [unintelligible].

BB: That's great. This gentleman here, he looks like an older gentleman.

AB: Well, I looked at him, and there must be a reason that he and I are together because we must know each other or knew each other because I would have a feeling -- I don't know why the picture was taken for any particular -- maybe they just said, "Let's get a picture." You know, sometimes guys want to have memories. We might have been splitting up at that time. I don't know [17:00].

BB: Well, this is super. We can -- if you want now, we can move back to the other room.

AB: Okay. All right.

BB: Great, thanks.

AB: Sure.

BB: Great, thank you. We'll just turn this off, answer some questions.

AB: Sure, yeah.

BB: Okay, well, we'll pick up where we were. Sorry for that interruption, but I think it was probably worthwhile for everyone. Let's talk now a little bit more, I guess, in specifics about 1142 [17:38]. When you first arrived at 1142, this was, I imagine, still all rather hush-hush and secretive?

AB: Yes, it was. It was. Everything that we did, we didn't divulge any information. We didn't discuss it. But it was not [18:00] -- as time went on, it became less. But I'm sure, you know, after all, my wife knew where I was, and I think the people downtown, but a lot of people don't care. A lot of people don't -- were not aware. They don't care. That's the way it is. And you either have that interest, or you don't have the interest. It's just -- so -- but we did -- I was very impressed with the different kinds of personalities and people that I met there, both from Europe and ours. But as I said, I was young.

BB: I hate to interrupt, but I have found the additional photographs [19:00] that it would be worth having you and your wife look at, at some point, and it unmistakably is you.

AB: Really?

BB: Absolutely. In fact, an image of you guys clowning around a little bit, if you will, so we'll -- I'm going to see if I can zoom in on this to let you see it a little bit better. But while I'm trying to do that, if you want to talk a little bit more, when you arrived at 1142 [19:30], were you briefed on what your specific job was going to be?

AB: Yes. I'm trying to think of the -- there was a full colonel who was running that thing. It started with a Z, I think. I don't know. Zweig [spelled phonetically] or something like that. I don't know what his --

BB: One gentleman's name was Zennas Bliss.

AB: No.

BB: And also John Walker.

AB: No.

BB: There's another interrogator named Thomas Van Cleve [spelled phonetically].

AB: No.

BB: Okay. Those were some of the higher [20:00] ranking folks who were there. But you remember being briefed by a higher --

AB: Yes. When we got there, you know, we were asked -- told and so forth about various things that were transpiring, what the nature of it was. We also were shown around and told us -- given information in that direction. We didn't know exactly -- it wasn't outlined exactly what our work would be, and I believe that they were rather uncertain at that point, maybe, also because there was a transition being made. So anyway, that's about the best way I can express that.

BB: Okay, and were -- did you -- when you first got there [21:00], were you working with the German rocket folks right off the bat, or did that come later?

AB: No, not right away. Not right away, but it was in the offing, and I picked up quite a big group at Hershey, Pennsylvania, I believe it was.

BB: And these were rocket --

AB: These were rocket people, I believe.

BB: Do you have any recollection and --

AB: I don't know.

BB: Does the name Pine Grove Forest [21:35] ring a bell to you at all?

AB: Not really. Where'd -- you know, it fascinates me. I --

BB: There's two things about Hershey. Are you sure it was Hershey? You sure it wasn't just close to Hershey? There's the Reading Military Air Field and then there's the Harrisburg Airport.

AB: Harrisburg.

BB: Harrisburg Airport? Did you go to the airport [22:00], or where did you pick them up?

AB: You know, I'm trying to think. That was the first time I ever had shrimp and beer.

[laughter]

BB: Make a note of that.

AB: And that was a guy from -- it's very, very cloudy to me, and it wasn't because of the beer either, as far as that was concerned, but it was very cloudy to me as to what I did and why I did it, but I was asked to go up there. I wasn't in charge. I was just a part of it, and so, therefore, I didn't play any particular role. There were some things that I paid attention to because I had to. Sometimes I was alone. Most of the time I knew exactly what was going on, but they say, "Okay, do this," and that's what we did.

BB: So you left 1142 [22:55] with a group of others.

AB: Yes.

BB: What type of vehicle [23:00]?

AB: Oh, you mean how did I get back and forth, you mean?

BB: Yeah. Were there multiple vehicles or one vehicle?

AB: I didn't leave Fort Hunt [23:11] very often. I stayed there. I lived there. I lived in the CC camp. It was the coldest barracks I ever had in life. We had all these German guys fire up at 4:00 in the morning. I could have hit them on the head, and why the hell didn't you leave it all night? I'll tell you it was cold as cold could be. Those barracks were just wooden sheds. That's what they were. But it was a good life. I mean, in mirrors, you couldn't see. It was aluminum. I don't know if you ever -- did you ever try to shave in an aluminum mirror? Rather unusual. Good food. Everything was fine. I had no complaints at all of the way it was run. I had no -- I accepted everything the way it was [24:00] run.

BB: So most of your work was there, but you said there was an occasion that you drove to Pennsylvania.

AB: Yes. I also went to New York one time to pick them off the boat, off the ship.

BB: So was there a group of you that went out?

AB: No -- yes. I believe what was done, the group was already selected. What we did was go up there and escort these people back down. That's what really our function was.

BB: Small groups?

AB: Done by bus, probably. If I recall correctly, most of it was done by bus. We just took an Army bus and put these guys in there. And we were there, and the driver, and away we'd go. I went up there twice. For what specific reasons, I have no idea.

BB: New York twice?

AB: New York once.

BB: New York once.

AB: Now, wait a minute. Once? No, New York twice.

BB: New York twice [25:00]. Pennsylvania?

AB: No, not to my recollection, not to my way of thinking, not to my knowledge. No, I would -- why do I think of Pennsylvania? I don't know why.

BB: You mentioned Hershey.

AB: Well, yeah, Hershey. I'm sorry. Yes. Hershey was the one that I thought of. Yes, that was the only -- the only -- when I said Pennsylvania, that was the only state -- I mean, that was the only place that I recall doing anything with and so on, and then, of course, Fort Strong [25:37]. So that's about where we're at.

BB: When you were at 1142 [25:45] -- and again, if you can, in your mind, try to separate

1142 from your time in Boston. When you were at 1142, you mentioned earlier you did a little bit of interrogating. Was any of that at 1142?

AB: Yes [26:00].

BB: And do you remember what types of folks those were that you were -- were these scientists?

AB: No, no. These were just ordinary prisoners of war, some of them --

BB: So military prisoners?

AB: Yeah, they were military prisoners. I think what was done at that particular time, they probably wanted to keep me busy, too, and understand why I'm there. And they said, "Well, put him in here and see," because, after all, it was all monitored. So I had to ask the questions, just like you're asking me, and so I prepared myself in that respect. But I didn't -- I only think I did that probably two or three times, and then, all of a sudden, this whole aspect of what I was to do changed, and then we got into what I said; I think the real purpose of my being there was sort of an escort, public relations guy, make it comfortable for these people [27:00].

BB: What -- and again, I'm hesitant to do this because I don't want to put words in your mouth, but one phrase we've heard you use before was "morale officer."

AB: Yeah.

BB: Is that along the lines of --

AB: I wouldn't call that my job, no. I wasn't a morale officer. I would say morale officer has a specific -- I never, even in those days, never really thought much about that. No. I would say more or less these people gave us information, too, so we would have to -- we wanted to know -- we wanted to know what their field was. We were given a background

on these people whom we befriended, whom we knew. We, in most cases [28:00], had a pretty good dossier of information on each one of them. You know, they were guys just like Herb Arndt, probably, you know, same thing. In fact, I would say we were very similar. We befriended people, got the information, what we wanted to know. Actually, what we tried to do is make their life, also, to a certain extent, feasible, so that they would feel comfortable. I didn't -- we were told that they were not prisoners of war and, therefore, should not be looked upon or acted upon or thought of as prisoners of war. They were actually in our employ. In fact, they were on a per diem per day, whatever that per diem was, and this was a -- the German people knew this, too, I mean the scientists involved. And in most instances, I would say about 75 to 85 percent of these people were gung-ho to work for the United States [29:00] and wanted to be -- and wanted to make their life in the United States, incidentally, which sort of impressed me to a certain extent because I knew a lot of German people. Germany is a beautiful place in many ways. You go to Switzerland, I could live there. I could live there for six months and relax. In fact, I've done that a couple times.

BB: Realizing that you didn't -- and I know we're not -- I want to cover a little bit more of the interrogation before we really pick it up with some of these rocket folks. Realizing you only did a few interrogations, could you still try to run us through what maybe a -- is there such a thing as a typical interrogation? Was it a setting like we're having right now, where you'd sit down at a table? Would you try to intimidate somebody?

AB: Usually, it was an -- they were not in their own rooms or anything like that. It was in an interrogation [30:00] setup, a cell or whatever you want to call it.

BB: Was it one-on-one?

AB: Yes.

BB: One person, so there would be one American and one --

AB: Always one-on-one with me, anyway. Anything I ever did was a one-on-one person.

BB: Did you ever use an alias, or did you introduce yourself as, "I'm Lieutenant Bomberg?"

AB: Nothing like that. No, I never really introduced myself in most cases. I didn't bother about that. I didn't think -- we treated them as it's none of their damn business [laughs]. That's the way we looked at it. I mean, I had some feelings, too, thinking that perhaps, goodness knows what -- for example, my father never wanted to go back; he never wanted to go back and visit his hometown because my brother had a very unpleasant experience. Not my brother, but his brother, his youngest brother, Hugo. And the bad part of that was Hugo probably deserved every minute of it because he was sort of on the braggadocio side [31:00], big time. This was during the Nazi regime, and that's when he should have kept his mouth shut, but he didn't. But my father said, "Look," he says, "I left that place, and there was only one reason why I left it, because I wanted to go to the United States." And he says, "I wanted to make a better living, and I have, and I have a good family." And he says, "That's all I need." He went back there once when I was 11 years old, and that was, of course, at the time, too -- that was in -- whenever that was, '33, which was still -- and he never went to his home. He stayed in France, and he made very sure he stayed in France. My mother was much more -- my mother was the type of person, nobody could touch her.

BB: And so these interrogations, the handful that you did conduct, they were [32:00] with military prisoners?

AB: Yes.

BB: Do you know, were they recorded? Did the [unintelligible] listen in?

AB: No, they didn't have -- I'm sure that they were smart enough to know that this had to be -
- after all, that's why I say a lot of this is --

(End of Tape 2A)

(Beginning of Tape 2B)

AB: Where were we?

BB: We were talking about if they were monitored and the --

AB: Yes, they were monitored, and they obviously must have known whatever reasons they were there for. After all, they're prisoners of war, and they probably were frightened to a certain extent and wondering if they were go -- after all, they realized how far away from home they were. So all of these things go through their mind, and, of course, we also know that, and we play upon that. Sometimes we would let them know, "Say, look, if you don't tell us the truth, we'll just give you over to the Russians," and that's all you had to say, practically. In fact, I remember towards the end of the time of my service in 1142 [00:44], they asked us if we were interested in Russian. I said, "Well, I want to go to Europe once." I said, "I have no interest in Russia, nor studying Russian." I was very adamant about it, I guess. You know, I didn't [01:00] -- I didn't make a fuss about it, but I just said, "No, I'm not -- I don't want to. I don't care to do it." So -- but those people -- my interrogation was of really relatively very little value to the outcome of what happened in this country of ours, believe me, but I feel that the -- and I think the predecessors, the people that were ahead of me in the 42 did a heck of a job because of one of the things I know and some of the things that I was made aware of and people I met. So I would say their jobs were very important. My job was of much more of a

menial-type presence that I had there. The rocketry people, my contributions -- after all, I was a very young man, and [02:00] I had experience as a military man, but I didn't have experience as a -- in any of the rocketry background. So I was intelligent enough, obviously, to talk to them. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been selected to do it, and I did it. I enjoyed what I did, I want to tell you. I liked it, and I was good at it, so that's about the only thing I can tell you.

BB: Could you expand a little bit more? You just mentioned a statement I want to come back to, and that's that you understood from other people you spoke with and whatnot that there were some real successes with the interrogations at 1142 [02:43].

AB: Well, you have to remember, or you have to know, that many of the things we read off of some of the interrogation work. So that established what was done, and very impressive. Some of them were -- but I imagine most of the work was done [03:00] with -- I think this is the way I understood it, at least. When you're captured in the lines and so forth, that's a harrowing experience to begin with, whether you're German, Russian, or whoever. So you're placed in the American camp and then you're confronted, and, of course, you're also questioned. If you're of high rank, you're going to be questioned very severely, and you're also going to be treated in a completely different way than if you were just an ordinary person running through at any importance. Depending upon the interrogation of the person whom they interrogated, if this guy was willing to give us information, then he said, "Hey, look, we're thinking of possibly sending you over to the United States. How would that appeal to you?" "Yeah, sure." So some people are looking for opportunities. The world makes people, and people make the world [04:00], and there are people that are opportunists. So I'm sure some of that worked in that

direction, in that way, and I think that others were reluctant to give, but then did because they felt, possibly, they wanted to get back home, if that was possible. They're all things that go through your mind, I'm sure. Those people that I became close to in the rocketry group, the scientists, were of a different complexion. The war was more or less over with, and we looked at it in a completely different way, or they looked at it in a completely -- "We're going to go ahead with what we're doing." That was one of the reasons why they came over here, I guess. I'm sure it was. We made a mistake, and [05:00] we were aware of that. We that worked in intelligence knew that the Soviet Russians shouldn't have had one of them. They got some very excellent guys, and they should have never had them. We were very aware of that.

BB: With the rocket folks at 1142 [05:26] -- well, actually, let me back up and finish a little bit more, touching upon interrogation, and then we'll switch to talk more about rockets. We talked a little bit how everything was monitored. You were -- you were aware that they were monitoring facilities there.

AB: Yes.

BB: Did you ever go into the monitoring facilities?

AB: Yes, I was in them. I mean, when I say was, I -- yes, I did see them. We saw how they operated, yes. We also know that they were very important in their work because they listened to everything that transpired, and I think that's where they got [06:00] some of the most valuable information. Now, you want to --

BB: No, they were just sending a video clip.

AB: Oh.

BB: I'd never done that before.

AB: Oh, I see. We were saying about --

BB: The monitoring. You went through the monitoring facilities.

AB: I went in there. I saw what they did, but let's put it this way, Brandon, I didn't know much about that type of equipment. I wasn't a sound engineer or anything of that nature. I did get to know these people. But there was a -- this guy was a, in many instances, corporal, private, sergeants. We were always very civil to one another, but we didn't eat with them. We ate with officers. That's the way it was. It was a different -- there was a chosen group, if you want to call it that.

BB: Do you remember [07:00] hearing if there were successes of the monitoring program, if they uncovered information that you, as someone who was speaking face-to-face with the prisoners, was not able to get?

AB: Say that again.

BB: Did you ever remember hearing if the monitors made any great successes, maybe something that, as opposed to an interrogation, maybe the monitor heard something?

AB: I believe that the monitors -- I believe that the monitors did a tremendous job. I believe that their successes were -- I wouldn't know. I wouldn't have a measuring stick for that, but I would say that they should be given a great deal of credit. And incidentally, the remark I made about officers and enlisted men, don't think for one minute -- I have eaten with enlisted men all my life. I mean, that doesn't bother me at all, but I'm just saying that wasn't done there. I mean, the guys from that [08:00] -- I always forget the other part of that group that --

BB: The MIS-X program [08:06], the escape and evasion.

AB: Yeah, [unintelligible]. We were together a lot. There were some women there, too,

which was rather fascinating to me. In most instances, I don't know exactly what their functions were.

BB: Let's talk for a couple of minutes on that, what you remember hearing about that escape and evasion [08:24] program. Do you remember, did you interact with the officers of that program at all?

AB: I didn't. That was a different group, and they had their mission and so forth. In fact, Keith Ball [spelled phonetically] [08:37] is a very good friend of mine, a personal friend of mine, and we really were personal, in fact, knew each other many years later. To answer your question, no, I didn't know what they did. I really didn't. I got more information sometimes years later when I read things or, as I [09:00] mentioned about the Art Harris exchange, I said, "You know, 1142." And he said, "Oh, yeah, I got a package from you guys." And I says, "Yeah, I'm sure." I didn't have anything to do with it, but our group did. So anyway, that's where we're at.

BB: A couple quick questions. Do you recall, the scientists, did they stay in a separate area from the military prisoners?

AB: Yes, they did. They were not -- that was completely separate, believe me.

BB: Can you describe what you remember?

AB: I can't. I can't do that because I don't really know, so I would have to fabricate it.

BB: But you do recall that they were separate.

AB: I do recall. You see, that wouldn't have worked. That wouldn't have worked, and I'll tell you the reason why it wouldn't work. You're just as, probably, well-informed as I am. They were hired by us as a [10:00] special group of people to do this interrogation work, and in no way -- in no way would they want to have that -- disturb that thing. They

were an echelon of people that we thought well of. German people want you to know that they're the master of everything, the master [unintelligible]. It's a little overdone.

BB: When we had talked on the phone, you had mentioned that these shopping trips into D.C. were important because the wives couldn't get things in Germany. It was [unintelligible].

AB: That is correct.

BB: Can you repeat that?

AB: Nylon stockings, for example, were a greatly sought-after thing, for heaven sakes. I even had guys who knew me and said, "Here's \$10. Get some [unintelligible] and send them over to us." "Well," I said, "how in God's name am I going to do this?" [11:00] But I did -- sometimes I fulfilled that quest for -- request. I don't know -- imagine those that -- people that had families were -- if you have a family, that is a very -- pulls at your heartstrings, and you want to take care of your people, and that's a natural instinct. Of course, sometimes we played on that, too, you know. I mean, after all, we were in the business of extracting information and getting things. We didn't use any ploys of any kind, no. We were straightforward in most things, and if the guy wanted to do some -- sometimes they wanted to see things. We would take them. We would see to it. We had to be careful where we went. We explained it to them. We said, "We don't want -- you're not going to go sightseeing. You can take in what you see [12:00] and leave it go at that. We'll try to take you through the most scenic route," you know, whatever we did, which we would do.

BB: Can you give us one example of a personal account where you can recall going to a restaurant or going to a store?

AB: I went to a restaurant. We had a very excellent lunch. I don't even know how that was

done as far as paying is concerned, either. That was rather fascinating to me because I remember there had to be -- I had to have -- I don't know if I had some chips of some kind or whatever it was. I don't really know. But there had to be a way of doing it because that would pose a problem. And I was sophisticated enough in those days. I had been around a little bit. You know, I had traveled in my life, so I knew a little bit about what was going on in life. But these people were very appreciative of what we did. I went to a good place to eat. I always did.

BB: Do you recall names of any of these places [13:00]?

AB: I don't. I don't.

BB: But this was in Washington, D.C., not in Boston.

AB: This was in Washington, D.C. No, Boston, we were -- and that was -- we were on an island, Brandon, and you don't get off. And he wouldn't let anybody -- the way it was done, that was more of a -- I thought to myself -- I many times thought about how that was operated, and that was a revelation in itself. It was quite a -- most people in Boston don't even know where Fort Strong [13:33] is. I don't know if you know that.

BB: I do from when myself and another ranger went to Boston to interview veterans up there. Virtually no one had a clue what or where Fort Strong [13:46] was located.

AB: Nobody ever heard of it. Nobody knew of it. Nobody heard of it.

BB: And so you know today there is now a large causeway built to it. You can now drive to it; it is -- you [14:00] -- only if you have a special pass because it is now used as a state mental institution.

AB: Oh, good heavens. State mental institution.

BB: Yeah, that's what it's used for now.

AB: How fascinating.

BB: And it's literally a causeway with a drawbridge, so it still can be an island.

AB: Oh, yeah, almost like --

BB: Could you state definitively that Wernher von Braun [14:24] was at 1142?

AB: I cannot do that because -- in fact, I just cut out a rather interesting bit of information how the scientists then got a hold of JPL [Jet Propulsion Laboratory] [14:42], and JPL in Pasadena did some work for them so that we could get our rockets up in the air. We had an unsuccessful operation, and Russians beat us. I never even -- I faintly recall that. But I didn't -- but after [15:00] -- to answer your question, no. These people that I knew, they knew Wernher von Braun [15:10]. Oh, yeah.

BB: Do you remember running across him, either in Boston or at 1142 [15:16]?

AB: Did I ever run across --

BB: Yeah, did you personally?

AB: Never. I never did. The only person that I got to know, and I didn't know him personally, was a very -- I went to Congress one day and listened to George Catlett Marshall and outline his Marshall Plan. I never will forget that as long as I live, and what an impressive gentleman he was.

BB: And that was while you were stationed in Washington?

AB: Yeah. Well, I was curious. We had -- President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt [15:52] was just inaugurated. Incidentally, our President Roosevelt was an ill man at the time he went into office [16:00]. He looked terrible, just terrible. We were appalled and astounded that he was running for office. You could tell that he was a dying man at that time. At least that was my recollection. I may be wrong. I don't know. I don't even recall how

fast that went after he was in office. I have no idea.

BB: The rocket teams -- would you say the folks at 1142 [16:31] that you worked most closely with were these people from the rocket programs, or were there other scientists who were not in the rocket programs that you also worked with?

AB: Most of them, I would say, were in the rocketry. I didn't -- I don't even know why I say this, but inks of different types, so forth. These were -- I don't know what the inks were used [17:00] for, but that came to my mind, and I don't know why. I have no -- I hope that doesn't sound like I was -- I guess I just don't know, so I can't help you there. My information -- what you have right now is probably most of the things which I could, in my experiences, give you.

BB: This has been phenomenal thus far, and in the limited time we have left, I promise you, Vince and I will eek out just a little bit more information. Of the -- would you say -- of the scientific folks, whether they were rocket folks or other scientists, was your job more to get intelligence from them or was it more to escort them around and keep them happy?

AB: Both [18:00], both. It was a form of interrogation work, you might say, just like that gentleman that was at the symposium, you know, when you had your big get-together this summer. I was impressed with what he said, but I was also -- you get information, but these were under altogether different circumstances we got this information. These people were willing to do this, and I don't think that the Germans are any different than the Americans. They were very staunch, in most respects, of their land, the fatherland, and so forth and so on. I can't fathom that they would be traitors. After all, when you're a prisoner of war [19:00], all you have to do is give them your name and number. That's it. That was drilled into me. So what Fort Hunt [19:10] did was unusual in that respect,

and how they were successful was probably unusual. I don't know the reasons for it because, obviously, there must have been a personal feeling, a feeling of -- how should I say it? Maybe they felt that this was a change in the entire world for them, and this is perseverance or pre-severance, you know, preserve my life. I think that plays a lot.

BB: You said you got information from them. While you were escorting them around, you were gathering information.

AB: Well, we would ask [20:00] different things. They were most willing to share anything that we asked, and we used to -- I don't know if this was done as a rule or not, but I think that we kept our eyes and ears open for anything that we thought -- I think the most important thing was we wanted to be sure that these guys really wanted to do what they were sent over here for and what they said they wanted to accomplish. I think that's what you have to really come up with is the end result, and I guess that's what they did. We obviously were very pleased and satisfied, and they did a terrific job for us.

BB: Would you report this information in any way?

AB: Yes, if we felt it was important [21:00]. We weren't drilled for it or anything. We were short of -- I imagine this must be probably a lot of questions in your own mind, is was what did they do? [laughs] I can't recall that it was a systematic way of saying, "Okay, what did you talk about today?" We'd get through, and we'd report to the guy and say, "What did you do?" "Well, we took him here, and we did this. We have a feeling that possibly this man should be checked out a little bit more. He should be questioned, or he should be -- you might find out from those people who are going to work with him what kind of a person he is." Once a scientist relates to another scientist, then they get together, and they'll probably be able to [22:00] understand them better than any one of us who

would question them because they're doing the same thing. I don't know how far advanced we were, but from what I understand, we had relatively very little information about rocketry. The V2 weapons were the ones that -- and they felt that they were going to win. There was no doubt about it.

BB: Let's just recap something here. You went from 1142 [22:34] to Fort Strong [22:35], then to the Pentagon [22:37]?

AB: Yes.

BB: You didn't go to the Pentagon at all while you were at 1142?

AB: Not to my knowledge. We might have -- how should I answer that? No, we really didn't. No.

BB: Okay. Just a couple random things here [23:00]. Camp security. Were there MPs, guards, fences? Do you remember anything about that?

AB: No, I do know that we had a -- I never saw MPs around. I never saw fences or anything like that. I'm surprised that I'm saying this to you because that was another thing that sort of struck me. As a camp -- I don't know. I guess these guys were afraid to escape, maybe. I don't know. I have no idea.

BB: You remember anything about there being any Japanese prisoners there?

AB: No, I never saw anyone Japanese.

BB: Japanese interrogators?

AB: No, I never saw a Japanese interrogator. I never -- in fact, as a young man, we were more upset with the Japanese than we were with the Germans [24:00], and from the standpoint of ethnic cultural background that I grew up in, I couldn't understand why they would want to bother with them. But then I found out, too, later on, that the Japanese were quite

intellectual and were an excellent partner for the Germans.

BB: You indicated that there were several women. Were they civilian or military?

AB: They were in the military. One woman was a captain; another was a -- I imagine that what was -- their function was probably with the other groups because of the work that was done and liaison and so forth. And they seemed to -- I never saw them during the day. I'd only see them in the evenings.

BB: Did you ever interact with them, hello or a conversation?

AB: Social. Maybe say hello to them, yeah.

BB: If I read their names, do you think you would recognize the names of the women?

AB: Possible.

BB: We've got a -- let's see, a [25:00] -- what was her rank? Captain Katherine Vernon [25:05].

AB: Captain, I knew, and I'm trying to think, Captain Vernon.

BB: There was a First Lieutenant Emilie Berkley.

AB: Captain Vernon might be the one I know.

BB: First Lieutenant -- and again, this is listed as a WAC. Morton is the first name. That may be a typo. I'm not sure that a Morton is a WAC. We have a Lieutenant Elizabeth Stewart --

AB: No.

BB: -- and a Lieutenant Frances Robinson.

AB: We had several women that we would see sporadically, you might say, not all the time. We were pleasant to them. We didn't associate with them because -- [26:00] well, first of all, I was married, and I wasn't looking for anything. Keith Ball [26:09] was single. He

used to -- I know he used to -- well, of course, he was also with that group, but -- did you ever get his name?

BB: What was his last name?

AB: Keith Ball.

BB: Ball.

AB: B-A-L-L, yeah, from Niles, Michigan.

BB: And he was in the other program.

AB: He was in the other group.

BB: He was an officer?

AB: Yes, he was a first lieutenant just like I was.

BB: Was his first name actually Frederick, Frederick K. Ball [26:34]?

AB: Yes, that's it, Fredrick K. Ball.

BB: Oh wow. A first lieutenant listed in Military Intelligence in the X program.

AB: Yeah, that's him.

BB: Can you tell us anything about him? You said -- what hometown did he come from?

AB: Niles, N-I-L-E-S.

BB: This could be very important for us to try to potentially track him down.

AB: Well, it could be because Niles is a small town, about 45,000 people [27:00]. I raised my family there for about eight years.

BB: Did you say Miles?

AB: Niles, N as in Nellie.

BB: Got it, N-I-L-E-S?

AB: Yes, N-I-L-E-S.

BB: What state?

AB: Michigan, I'm sorry. They're right adjacent and almost -- Notre Dame, stone's throw, everything you know about --

BB: Do you remember what -- understanding you maybe didn't tell everybody or tell him everything, and he didn't tell you everything, do you know what his role was with that escape and evasion program [27:33]?

AB: I didn't. I didn't. You know, Keith and I -- in fact, I never did know after the war, and he and I became -- he and I were very personal friends. He went to Notre Dame. He went to Notre Dame, and after he went to Notre Dame, he became a lawyer. He and I knew each other extremely well.

BB: Did you know him at 1142 [27:54]?

AB: Yes.

BB: You did?

AB: That's how I got to know him. I got to know him, actually, at 1142, and he's [28:00] the one that told me that -- I was working for a manufacturer by the name of Gold Seal Asphalt Roofing Company. I was a representative for Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan. And when I did it, Keith said, "Well, you have to live in Niles," and he told me the reasons for it, and he was very right. It was a very excellent place to raise a family and a very nice area. And Keith -- but Keith played an important -- he used to go to San Francisco, and I don't know why he went to San Francisco. Is that possible, for any reason that you came across?

BB: Well, there's -- and this brings up another good set of questions for us.
[talking simultaneously]

Are you -- do you -- does -- is a site known as Camp Tracey [28:53] --

AB: Yeah, I heard of Tracey.

BB: You've heard of Tracey. Do you remember hearing that because of us or during the war did you hear of Camp Tracey?

AB: During the war, yeah. Tracey, I did. Yes, [29:00] I did.

BB: What do you know about it?

AB: Nothing.

BB: You just heard of --

AB: I just heard.

BB: It was also known -- had its own post office box number. P.O. Box 651 was Camp Tracey [29:13].

AB: No, Tracey, I didn't know anything about that. I'm sure that probably Keith did, I imagine, because maybe that was a part of his affair. You know, as curious a person as I am and as curious a person as probably Keith is, Keith never asked me, and I never asked him. I don't know if it was -- whatever reasons. I guess the war was over with and what the hell. It was, now what?

VS: That San Francisco is interesting.

BB: It is, because Camp Tracey [29:44] --

AB: [unintelligible] --

BB: Sorry, go ahead.

AB: Yeah, no, Camp Tracey was?

BB: Camp Tracey was in Byron Hot Springs, California, but it, as far as we know, was primarily used as an interrogation center just like Fort Hunt [29:57] was.

AB: That's exactly [30:00] what he did. He would go there once in a while. It wasn't a trip that he did a lot, but I do know that he did go there.

BB: But he was part of -- he was not -- was he an interrogator?

AB: No.

BB: So he was with the escape and evasion [30:14] folks.

AB: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

BB: You remember him going to this other camp where they had prisoners?

AB: He never told me that, but I'm assuming that's why he went. He always says, "Yeah, I was in California." I'd say, "Okay, fine." That's all I knew about it.

BB: Interesting.

AB: So that's a tie-in. That's your tie-in anyway.

BB: Very last question. The tape will probably run out. Do you remember any U.S. naval personnel?

AB: Yes, I do remember there were two guys. One guy was the -- I don't know his name. The other fellow was in the U-boats. I don't know [31:00] what -- they were not very -- particularly wanted to associate with any of us because they were in the Navy, and they were the only two guys in that. They stayed with us only a very brief time, probably a month or two, but they were very interested in the -- one guy lived in the Bodensee, and he's the guy that got me interested in going to the Bodensee years later, which we did. The Bodensee, incidentally, is everything what he said it was, one of the most beautiful parts of Europe that I have ever seen. You know, it's funny, as you grow and doing various things, when I think back, a lot of these guys got me excited about, "Did you ever go to Switzerland?" "Yeah, I heard about Switzerland." And of course, I got swans over

here, so when I write to my sister, I say, "Well, I'm in Geneva." I sit out on the porch looking at [unintelligible] or hawks. [32:00] We used to have a lot of that going around. We even have herons in there. You see them flying through the air.

BB: Real quick last question. We just ran out, but I'll ask it anyhow. Does the name Alberti [spelled phonetically] ring a bell in terms of the naval interrogators? His last name would have been Alberti.

(End of Tape 2B)

(Beginning of Tape 3A)

[inaudible commentary]

BB: I'm going to pick up with just one more last introduction. Today is February 11, 2008.

This is an interview for the Fort Hunt Oral History Project with Mr. Alfred Bomberg here at his home in San Marcos, California. This is the third in a series of interviews. This is Brandon Bies with the National Park Service, as well as Vincent Santucci. And with that, we'll try to wrap things up here in this last half hour. Right as we cut off, you were starting to mention -- we were talking a little bit about Boston, and you had mentioned you remember working with some enlisted men who you thought were probably born in -

AB: Yes, I have -- there were two young lads. They were quite young. They were rather fascinated with themselves, and rightfully so [01:00]. They were playing somewhat of a good part, and they did good work, and I wouldn't take anything away from them. In fact, they were the guys that really spoke to these people because they were ready to go home. I don't know the reasons for Fort Strong's [01:19] existence to begin with because I thought it was a rather unusual place to house prisoners. I mean, it was so isolated,

unless they didn't know what else to do with them, and it was a good jumping-off point because of the fact that there were ships that were close by that was going to take them back to Germany. I'm assuming that was it. I don't know. I have no idea because that wasn't privileged information to me. There's a guy by the name of Colonel Green [01:51] [spelled phonetically], who was running that thing. His name was Green, G-R-E-E-N. He and I became very good friends. I mean, he looked upon me probably as [02:00] a son, I suppose. Then there were several others. Owens [02:07], O-W-E-N-S, I can't think of his first name at the moment. Jean and Captain Owens used to go on walks a lot on the island because it was a rather unusual area to walk and to look at, while I kept myself busy. I don't know what I kept myself busy with, really. Kazmarski [spelled phonetically] was that guy's -- captain's name, Kazmarski or something like that -- I'm not sure of it -- who ran the --

BB: The mess hall?

AB: No. Yeah, the mess hall. Yes, yes, yes, yes. He is an affable individual. Wasn't my cup of tea, but that's all right. Who else that I was thinking about? We had two guys who were [03:00] Italian, Umberto Aleissi [03:03] and Albert. Umberto, obviously, was an intelligence officer in the -- in our service, but he was working the Italians, so what he did there, I don't know, but that was -- this was sort of a space for him to come to. His home was in Boston. In fact, I met his mother, and we had a wonderful meal over at his mother's home in Boston itself. She was a gem. She was a great gal. Umberto [03:36] and I became very good friends. We had a knack of that. He was of the old school, European, just like Italians, temperamental, but obviously did a terrific job over there. I don't know what he did. He was a captain, and his brother was a second lieutenant, I

think [04:00]. I don't know why his brother was there, but I think Umberto [04:04] needed some help from the standpoint of -- I think he went through some mental problems at one time, probably over there for whatever reasons. Whatever he did, I have no idea.

BB: So these were two brothers named --

AB: These were two brothers, Umberto and Albert Aleissi.

BB: Got you. Could you spell that last name?

AB: Yes, A-L-E-I-S-S-I or A-L-L -- I almost think that that's the way it was spelled, but that was -- those were the names.

BB: And they were working with you? They weren't on assignment?

AB: They weren't really working; they were just staying there. They had nothing to do with me at all. I think this was sort of an R&R [05:00] part, and I actually feel that that was sort of an R&R for the prisoners who were being shipped over. They were, you know, well taken care of. I remember seeing to it that they had warm jackets. We had fur jackets, terrific. I always was impressed with the service. They come up with all the good things. I never heard of them not being well taken care of all the time I was in the service. Of course, I was only in the United States, unfortunately, because -- and I was in the service for almost five years, which is amazing to me. I almost made it twice, but never did make it, as you know.

BB: You mentioned just in passing earlier that Jean would walk around with Captain Owens [05:57]. She was allowed on the island?

AB: Yes [06:00], she was. I don't know if she recalls how she got there. She only could get the same way we did, and that was by --

BB: By boat, right.

AB: -- by boat. I think she took out a, maybe, a -- I remember Colonel Green [06:15] said, "Well, why don't you have Jean come [unintelligible]." I said, "Would you like to do that?" She said, "Okay." So she would stay and stayed overnight with us, and she's the only woman that I ever saw there, and that's a fact. She'd go back to this place where we -- it was one of those -- a most unusual place I've ever been to, kitchen on the bottom and three stories.

VS: Do you have any photographs from Fort Strong [06:52]?

AB: Yeah. No, no. This wasn't at Fort Strong; this was in Boston when she went back to Boston. But Fort Strong is a -- [07:00] sort of like an abandoned place. I mean, you could tell by looking at it. It reminded me of Alcatraz Island down there. Not that bad.

BB: Do you have any photographs of your time at Fort Strong [07:19]?

AB: No, no. I was never a photographer, unfortunately for me. But more places that I went to all have -- all were interested, as you saw. Yale, I have more pictures of Yale [07:34] than you ever saw in your life. I have everything. I have pictures of, as I said, Duke of Windsor [07:42], everyone you could -- well, we were impressed. But going back to Fort Strong [07:49], it was a mundane existence, really. It was lonely. It was lonely for them. It was lonely for us [08:00]. We had those things to do. We had a couple guys who saw to it that they would have exercises and so forth. I was not in charge of that. I was only in charge of their well-being and seeing to it that they were okay. I would check on that. These two young boys I mentioned were -- did the most important part of conveying information to them as to what procedures they had to go through and so forth. I don't know how doctors and so on -- I know that that was going on to a certain extent also.

BB: You mean medical care doctors?

AB: Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure there had to be because I don't know exactly how that was done. I have no idea.

BB: The two younger enlisted men that you worked with, do you think you would recognize their names if I said a few?

AB: I doubt it very, very much [09:00]. My contact with them was very sparingly; let's put it that way, and I would only -- they seemed to have much more of an inside and direct relationship with those people than we did. Our function was, more or less, to oversee that things were correct and were done the way they should have been done, whatever we had to do.

BB: These two gentlemen, do you remember anything about their physical description? Were they tall? Were they short?

AB: You mean these boys?

BB: Yeah.

AB: These young guys? I would say they were probably -- that's surprising to me. They were young fellows. I don't know. I remember the one with glasses; he was -- there were two of them. The one -- I couldn't tell you their names [10:00]. They were -- I don't know very much about them. I'm sorry.

BB: Just for the heck of it, I'm going to mention two names to see if they ring any bells. One is Henry Kolm, K-O-L-M.

AB: No.

BB: And the other is Arno Mayer.

AB: No.

BB: Okay. And that may not be -- there are two gentlemen who kind of fit the description of who we've been talking about, who were both native-born in Germany. We've spoken with them. They worked very closely with the folks out there at Fort Strong [10:43], and they're both in -- one of them is in, and one was the person who took that photograph that we were looking at earlier, meaning that they were at Fort Hunt [10:55] and at Fort Strong.

AB: I see. I didn't realize that either [11:00].

BB: So just a thought, but not certain.

AB: I don't know how many months I was there. Let's see, I must have been there -- let's see. I arrived at Hunt. I went there -- it seems like I was there about -- I don't know what time of the year.

BB: Do you remember if it was cold, if it was warm?

AB: It was cold. I remember that. It was very cold because at the time --

BB: It was probably winter.

AB: Yeah, ice, ice, a lot of ice. So it was wintertime.

BB: So probably winter of '45, '46.

AB: I would say that's right. I would say that's right. Yeah, winter of -- I would say that fits in perfectly, and then it was springtime when I went back to -- see, I went back in about probably -- I know it was a very short stretch of time. It probably was, at the most, three to four months [12:00], maybe a little bit longer, and I went back to Washington, and Jean went home, I think. I'm not sure. But we -- no, we leased an apartment there, I think. I'm not sure about that either because I can't tell you what timeframe that took place. But then I made preparations after Jean told me what she did. I said, "Okay, fine,"

so I came to the conclusion that if I wanted to have a happy married life, that's what I'd better do [laughs].

BB: Would you say that Boston -- let me start again. Was Boston -- was this more a place where the people who were there, the Germans and other personalities over there, were they coming or were they going?

AB: Going. They were going home.

BB: Going home.

AB: All going home. Not coming; all going home [13:00]. They were looking forward to going home. They knew they were going home. I think these people must have done various things for us or were good prisoners or were exceptional, but we seemed to have a special hand on it. For what reasons, I have no idea. I can't tell you gentlemen. I wish I could. I can't help you in that direction. Some things were that way. This -- these things -- what arouses curiosity in myself is why I didn't ask more. I don't know. I can't answer that.

BB: Would you say -- was there much intelligence-gathering going on at Boston, say, as compared to 1142 [13:55]?

AB: Nothing. No, it was a hang-loose setup [14:00]. We had no axes to grind. We had nothing to gain. We had nothing to lose. Actually, the picture was to see to it that they were well fed and taken care of, that they were properly -- so we would not be reprimanded by whoever we would be reprimanded by and sent back. I don't even know how they went back. I had nothing to do with it. There was a -- I do know of one group, and they left, and I'm assuming they had probably left by tug or whatever we used to have. Those were very interesting, these old sea-bitten captains. The one guy was a

character. He was absolutely -- we had a great deal of faith in him, and the other one, we weren't too sure about him.

BB: You don't happen to remember their [15:00] names, do you?

AB: No, I don't. I don't.

BB: Believe it or not, other people have talked about at least one of these seagoing kind of old sea-salt sort of guys.

AB: They were characters. They were characters. The one guy we loved, and the other guy, we liked him, too, but we didn't think he knew how to really handle the boat. We thought, who's coming? We'd talk about him, "Oh, yeah." So isn't it funny that I would confirm that?

BB: That has come up in previous interviews.

AB: Well, so you know I was there.

BB: We absolutely do. Vince, you've spoken with Mr. Bomberg about Boston. Is there anything else that you think is worthy of touching on?

VS: There was no going in and doing shopping --

AB: No.

VS: -- or going out --

AB: Nothing like that. There was nothing, no. I'm going to call you both Vincent and Brandon. You can call me Al. You don't have to call me Mr. Bomberg.

BB: Did you have any knowledge about [16:00] the legality of these alien enemies being on American soil without citizenship? Do you know anything about any discussion relative to that?

AB: It's funny that when you said legality, there had to be something there because I recall

that there was something going on, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it. I didn't know.

BB: Was there any effort to keep it pretty much concealed that they were there, even from other branches of the government?

AB: Yeah, I think so. I think so.

BB: What about Immigration?

AB: I would say that we were hands-off of everyone. I mean, we ran our own deal, and we were in charge of it. We didn't -- the colonel only answered to one guy; that's the guy that put him there, I guess. And I answered to him.

BB: We might want to [17:00] ask him what he did when he went to the Pentagon [17:02] afterwards. And back to the question, you don't know what [Operation] Paperclip [17:07] is, but you're familiar with the name Alsos. Where did you learn that name?

AB: Oh, as a child. I knew Alsace when I was a kid. Alsace-Lorraine is something that I was raised with, you know. People in Alsace-Lorraine, incidentally, they have a language which is somewhat different than German. It has a different -- as I mentioned to Brandon before, be like a southerner, and it's only even worse. But the Alsatians are altogether -- they're part French and part German. That's what it is.

BB: I think we're talking about two different --

AB: You're talking about -- yeah.

BB: There's another more military program called the Alsos, A-L-S-O-S.

AB: No, no, no, no, no, no, no. [18:00] No, I'm talking A-L-S-A-C-E, which is a --

BB: Yes, I have family from that region as well. You mentioned Alsace-Lorraine, yeah.

AB: So that's where I'm from; that's where I came from anyway.

BB: You had mentioned earlier as we were finishing one of the first tapes, and this gets back,

I think, to 1142 [18:21], information about infrared.

AB: Yes.

BB: Could you talk about that a little bit?

AB: I couldn't. I have no information on that, other than the fact that I remember and recall that we discussed that to some point. We were very grateful to get that because we didn't have anything. There was also, as I mentioned to you -- I don't know why I'm saying this again -- but inks, and I don't know -- dyes. That's the word I want, dyes used for various types of things. I'm not a chemist, so you'd have to embellish on that yourselves, I guess. I don't know [19:00].

BB: Well, and I don't know if this is completely bizarre or related or not, but we know one of the prisoners at 1142 was -- he was actually -- his last name was Hertz. He was the son, as in the Hertzian wave. That was his father.

AB: Really?

BB: His name was Helmut Hertz [19:20], and he later went on to invent the inkjet printer.

AB: Okay, that's where it's from.

BB: I'm wondering, could that be -- you mentioned about these inks. Could that --

AB: I don't know where I got my information from. This is just a fragment of things, and you put things together. You'd have to pursue that further in that respect because one of the things I have to be very careful of when I speak to you is, as my daughter says now, I said, "Well, I have to tell them exactly what I -- you know, I can't embellish on anything," because all of a sudden you start believing your own BS.

BB: Right, exactly [20:00]. Just one last one, to finish with infrared. Again, I want to mention, just for the off chance, I want to mention the name of a prisoner. His name was

Heinz Schlicke [20:15]. He was a German scientist who dealt with infrared and microwave technologies, and he was captured off of a German U-boat.

AB: Yes. That's where the -- I don't know anything about it, but I know of the story, and I think that's where they got -- yes.

BB: Could you take off where I left off about that German U-boat? Do you remember anything?

AB: No, I can't. See, the only two people I knew that were -- and probably these two guys that I'm discussing with you were maybe part of that. I don't know. But that was the only time that the Navy was involved with us and that I knew about, and they stayed with us, as I've said [21:00], from the standpoint of it was easy for them. Perhaps this young guy that was captured from Bodensee was maybe the second-in-command of a U-boat or something like that. I have a feeling that that was what it was. And this other guy was probably very well-versed in the Navy and maybe spoke -- maybe was a person like one of the guys that I'm telling you about that lived in Germany and came over here. I have a feeling that that was what it was. No, I don't know about that. I know of it, and that's -- those are the things that you just hear about, but I did hear about infrared rays, I told you, and I heard about the dyes. I did know about that. It's funny, but I think I read something about it, too, and I don't know if it was ever discussed. You see, that's another thing about [22:00] us in the business that we're in. We never discussed our work to begin with. The only guy that I ever discussed my work with was Herb Arndt, and Herb and I were careful. I was careful of him because I realized that he was in a very dangerous situation with his family, and he had some family left, or he had some problems. What they were, I don't know. I have no idea. But it's funny. That's the first

picture I've seen of Herb Arndt [22:34] since I left 66 years ago. I doubt if he's living anymore now. I don't know.

BB: And again, to summarize that discussion, what was your understanding? Did you understand that he had started off as a spy, spying on the Americans for the Germans?

AB: I had reasons to believe that. I had no way of authenticating it [23:00]. Once in a while you hear things, and particularly if you're -- like Herb Arndt [23:05] and I had obviously some reasons for discussing several things, which we did, but we never got into anything like that at all, no. We would discuss various things that happened in the interrogation work. I became somewhat aware of some things, but I wasn't sure. I never pursued it. I respected his -- and he probably knew more about me than I knew about him, actually, when you really come down to it because he met Jean. And I'm very surprised that Jean doesn't recall and remember him. He was a very, very unusual guy. Of course, she didn't know him at the post. She got to know him at Fort Strong [23:59], and then she only [24:00] saw him sparingly, at that. So that possibly accounts for that.

BB: Do you know what his role was, if his role was any different at Fort Strong?

AB: His role was to extract information from prisoners of war. It was as simple as that. We would discuss -- scientists would -- had to be careful with the scientists because the scientists would say, "Well, what is he doing here? Why is he here?" So there would be a moment of distrust there because there was no longer a reason for his presence with the scientists because they were working for us. So if anything, we were probably more important than Herb Arndt [24:41] because we probably could ascertain whether he was - - what kind of a person he was -- evaluation. I think it was sort of an evaluation of an individual.

BB: Could you [25:00] -- last thing. Could you spell his last name to make sure we're getting that right?

AB: Arndt?

BB: Yes.

AB: A-R-N-D-T, I think, but I'm not sure.

BB: That's what we have as well. I want to make sure, in our attempts to get more information, that we were spelling it correctly.

AB: Does that make sense to you?

BB: Well, no, it does make sense. I just wanted to make sure from someone who seemed to know him fairly well if that was how it was spelled.

AB: Yeah, I knew him well. He knew me well, too.

VS: These are just bullet questions. Any knowledge of Manhattan Project [25:36] personnel linked to 1142 [25:39]? Any thoughts about OSS [25:41] at 1142?

AB: I knew of some things -- I mean, of some people who were associated with OSS, but I wasn't aware of -- there's a guy by the name of Brown. I don't know if he was an OSS [25:56]. I have a thing -- he was from -- where the hell was he from? Indiana [26:00]. He was from Indianapolis, I think, Indiana. His name was Brown, Captain Brown. I don't know anything more about him.

BB: Was the FBI interested in 1142 at all?

AB: I couldn't answer that question. I don't know exactly what -- why they would have been, unless they were checking up on us, which they could have possibly.

BB: I'm sorry. Captain John H. Brown [26:37]?

AB: That's the guy I'm talking about.

VS: He was in the MIS-Y program as well?

AB: Yeah. So he is a part of it, right?

BB: Yeah, there is a Captain John H. Brown [26:48] listed under the MIS-Y [26:52] -- under the interrogation program. Whether or not there's a link to OSS [26:56] --

VS: That might be a common name, too, though.

BB: It could be. The fact that you mentioned [27:00] he was a captain, and this gentleman --

AB: Yeah, he was, and also, you could probably know something more as I identified it I think in Indianapolis, Indiana. So if you ever ran across any information, you could probably [unintelligible].

VS: Do we have his serial number, so we might be able to find out as a cross-reference?

BB: Yes. We have his serial number, so we could potentially look him up and find out where he enlisted.

AB: Well, you could look it up.

BB: And if he enlisted in Indianapolis --

VS: Yeah, you might make a note of that. Let's see, coming to an end here. When you came back to Washington and went to work at the Pentagon, did you have separate orders for that, and what was your --

AB: No, I don't really -- see, at that time, there was a sort of a surge, if you all want to use that word, of guys that wanted to get out, and there was still a big question in my mind. So I got into a very excellent group that I was able to see, and [28:00] they wanted me. I knew that because they needed people. It's -- like it's not because I was exceptional. It was because they needed guys.

BB: Do you know what your job was?

AB: Well, I think they knew what my background was. Actually, I hate to say this. I don't exactly know what I did at that particular time, other than probably go through records, do some things probably waiting for -- I was trying to determine where I was going to go. I know that. And that's where I must have done some good work because -- and I can't put my finger on it -- because I was let into some possibilities that were attractive to me. It's like anything, like a job [29:00]. It's like my granddaughter comes up, "Oh, yeah, I got an interview coming up," blah, blah, blah. She has her master's in environmental science, which is a wonderful field, and I said to her, "What are you going to do with that?" Well, she's done extremely well. She's now 26 years old now.

VS: Did you ever hear that 1142 was closed down, or were you there during that time, or no thoughts of 1142 after that point?

AB: I never kept up with anything because it was of no longer any purpose in my life. And I guess when you're in the service in those days -- I don't know. I mean, I went from one thing to another.

BB: But when you left 1142 [29:48], it was still functional?

AB: Oh, yes. It was still functional, but we had every reason to believe that it was going to be gone. I mean, that was the reason why we were leaving.

BB: So did [30:00] the war end when you were at 1142?

AB: Yes, it ended when I was in Alexandria. I never will forget. I went to St. Mary's Church there. And V-Day [30:12] and, my heavens above, there was bedlam. I never -- I couldn't believe it, couldn't understand it. None of us could. We were like we were shell-shocked. You know, what the hell is going on now? So that's about the way you felt, and we lost a lot of guys. I knew some of them. Some guys were in my class, but

that happens. So anyway --

BB: Well, I think that's a good way to end things, and what we can end with is telling you that from everyone we've spoken to [31:00] and the documents we've uncovered, you and your colleagues at 1142 [31:05] and in Boston made a tremendous difference. Despite what you may or may not think, there are a lot of people that really look up to what you guys did.

AB: You have to remember we all did a part, and as I said, I was a young guy. I was very impressionable. I was running around with a lot of guys or met a lot of people that had a tremendous amount of successes and so forth. I was just a youngster out of school.

VS: And your untold story, largely untold, is one of great interest, not only to a bunch of park rangers, but to future historians that will have the opportunity to hear, in your own words, your descriptions of 1142 [31:52] and Camp [sic] Strong [31:54], et cetera. But even intelligence community, various agencies in the [32:00] federal government have contacted Brandon and the rest of us at the Parkway and said, "There's a lot to be learned from what they did at 1142."

AB: Well, I was very surprised that you people were that interested. As I said, I can think of a lot of guys that were in the Marines. They did a hell of a lot more than I --

(End of Tape 3A)

(Beginning of Tape 3B)

AB: Some of my high school friends, never saw them again. Yeah, that was a day of reckoning, I'll tell you that. And I feel sorry for what's going on now, but I don't know what political backgrounds you guys are, but I happen to be very much in favor of what we're doing, and I hope it's successful. I do. I think we're trying to do something that

maybe when I'll be long gone and you're going to be gone, when it all comes out on the table as to what -- those people are different than we are. There's no two ways about it, and I feel sorry for the American troops over there. I hope they come back as quickly as possible. And I have to -- I didn't appreciate the way [01:00] Congress took care of our General [David] Petraeus. I was very much appalled at several people and their questioning about his -- and as a man who has gone and done what he has, to me, is -- I don't understand that, so I hope you bear up with me on that.

BB: Absolutely.

VS: Thanks again.

BB: All right. Well, we'll turn this off.

AB: Listen, thanks a lot for --

BB: Well, fantastic.

[end of transcript]

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