

Fort Hunt Oral History
National Park Service
Interview with Frederick and Lucille Michel by Brandon Bies
May 30 and 31, 2006

BRANDON BIES: Okay, today is Tuesday May 30th, 2006; it's about 2:30 in the afternoon.

[clock chimes]

Perfect, and I'm here in the home of Frederick and Lucille Michel conducting a series of oral histories interviews about their memories of Fort Hunt [00:18]. And so we're going to get started right now with talking to Lucille, and so if you could just go ahead and get started by letting us know the embarrassing information like when you were born and where you were born.

LUCILLE MICHEL: Oh well that wasn't at Fort Hunt [00:33]. I was born in the Old Sibley Hospital in Washington, D.C. Sibley Hospital; in those days, it was on North Capital Street. So I was born in the shadow of the capital, on the 3rd of April 80 years ago, 1926. And my parents had [01:00] just moved from Northeast Washington to a community in Alexandria, which I have over the years found out was sort of a unique community in view of the fact that I think it was seven different addresses that never moved because the house was originally in Abington, Virginia and then it was in Alexandria and then it was in Arlington -- no it was in Alexandria County, then it was in Arlington County and then it was in Alexandria City and then it was 1130 Dewitt Avenue and then it was 2512 Dewitt Avenue. And it was just a lot of different addresses not to go anywhere [02:00].

BB: And so how long did you live there?

LM: Until I got married 20 years later

BB: Okay, and so if you want to start, go over a little bit just where you went to school in the Alexandria area?

LM: I went to elementary school one block from my house, was the old Mount Vernon

Elementary School. And by the time I got to the upper grades, the George Washington High School had been built for the entire city and the old George Mason High School became a part of Mount Vernon Elementary, so I did 6th and 7th grades in the old George Mason High School building. And then we had no junior high. We had 7 grades of elementary school and then four years of high school. So I went [03:00] from walking a block to school to walking a mile to school.

[laughter]

It didn't matter whether it was rain or shine, you still had to walk because we had to walk a block to get a bus and then you had to walk about 4 or 5 blocks after you got off the bus to get to the school, so you might as well walk the whole distance

BB: And if you caught the bus, it was a regular city bus, right; it wasn't this yellow school bus or anything.

LM: Yes, and we didn't have any special coins or anything that it was a free ride. So we had to pay and money was too tight. You -- this was still during the Depression [03:42] and so we walked to and from school but it was a nice high school. I was -- I think that it was probably one of the nicest high schools around at that time [04:00].

BB: And what year did you graduate from high school?

LM: 1943, and all the men -- boys left for the military right away and I think as a result we never had a school reunion until 40 years later.

BB: And so, growing up in that area, do you have any specific memories of when they were building the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway?

LM: I don't remember them building it. I remember the train, the street car that ended up there. It used to come down Commonwealth Avenue which was two blocks; it was a

block from my house to my school and then a short block to the back of the school, which was Commonwealth [05:00] Avenue. And I remember the street-car, I think they actually called it a trolley at that time being there. We did not have a car, so if we had wanted to go that way, we would go on the street-car. We used the public bus or the street-car in Washington or in Alexandria when we wanted to go anywhere.

BB: Do you remember, so did you ever take the street-car down to Mount Vernon?

LM: I don't remember taking it that far. I remember more seeing it than having been on it.

BB: And so the Parkway, then known as the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway was actually built -- they began construction I believe [06:00] in 1929, and it opened in 1932.

LM: Yes, that's why I don't remember that.

BB: Right, exactly being 4 or 5 years old.

LM: Yes. What I remember first about it specifically was that it was concrete. Many of our streets were concrete, we didn't have macadam in those days. And either you had dirt streets or you had concrete, but I don't remember this problem existing on other streets, but I suppose it did. But because the Memorial Highway goes so close to the river, it had very poor subterranean soil, and the squares of the concrete would sink. So they had holes drilled in the concrete [07:00] and there would be a truck with hoses and they would pump sand under this concrete to raise it up until it sank again; they would come back and add more soil.

BB: And so would that usually be after a flood or something like that I guess, or just on a regular basis?

LM: I think it was just sort of a gradual thing, and once it got to be enough of a problem that it probably was causing drivers problems, they would come along and pump the sand back

under the concrete.

FREDERICK MICHEL: And I think that it was done as late as 1980 or so, when they rebuilt the Parkway.

LM: I don't remember it being done that late.

FM: Yeah, yeah well we moved in there in 1978.

LM: I know but I don't remember it being done then.

FM: Yes

LM: You remember it. Good [08:00].

BB: We were talking a little bit earlier about the guardrails and the light poles if you want to describe those.

LM: Yes, they were wooden guardrails, large, not rough logs but they had square sides – corners.

BB: Kind of like timbers?

LM: Yes, but not like just a new-fallen tree. They were dark brown in color, but they definitely looked like more of a nature than the metal guardrails we have today. And the lampposts were the same except that they were thinner, they weren't as heavy as [09:00] the guardrails on the road. And they had the lights on the top, on the side of the top. And as Fred was pointing out, they turned them all off during World War II [09:20] and never turned them back on. And so the Parkway has always been dark since most people can remember.

BB: But from what you remember there were originally lights up around the entire --

LM: All the way.

BB: Really okay, in terms of people who were using the Parkway, do you remember, did a lot

of people drive on it just to go to work, or were there a lot of tourists, or was it a mix?

LM: It was a mix, I'm sure because I didn't see the Parkway where I was living or [10:00] when I would be going to work later because I didn't live that close to that. I lived closer to other highways. But, I would think that it was a mixture of -- during the rush hour of the people who lived along the Parkway, which were not very many people and they all had small houses. Those little houses cost a fortune today. But there are still people; the Smiths lived very close to Collingwood Road between the river and the Parkway. And their [11:00] granddaughter I suppose was still living in the house back in the 1990s, I know. So people, a lot of people have kept those houses and not sold them. Others have sold them and people have torn them down and built large homes now.

BB: Do you remember ever going to any of the picnic areas along the Parkway, because I think there's a Collingwood picnic area, and then down by Fort Hunt [11:33] there's Riverside Picnic Area? Did you ever, did your family ever use them, or were they popular places?

LM: No, because of the lack of access. When you didn't have a car you didn't go.

BB: Got you.

LM: And you -- as I say when I was a small child we maybe went once or twice but I don't remember specifically. I can remember more frequently [12:00] just seeing the street-cars go by as I would be going to the little store that was back behind the schoolhouse.

BB: Let me ask you a question about, then, another -- I'm just trying to think of questions of up and down that whole section of the Parkway. There's the area that's today known as the Belle Haven Park, and there's a marina there now.

LM: Oh yes, right.

BB: Any recollections of what that looked like because, if I recall, if you look at aerial photographs from that time period, I think there were some buildings out there?

LM: There -- what I recall there was a family who lived across the street from us on Dewitt Avenue who had a young sister who came and lived with them. Our mailman Mr. Dideer became smitten with her [13:00] and he used to stop there and have his lunch --
[laughter]

-- and Mrs. Keller who lived -- the next house to be receiving mail would just steam until she would finally get her mail. And the Dideers' eventually got married and bought a house in Belle Haven, which was considered a very out of the way place, but a very nice place to live, and the Dideers' home was tiny. It was brick, nice little house, but a very small house, and that was right in the neighborhood of the Belle Haven Country Club.

BB: Okay, do you remember [14:00] anything on the riverside of the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway?

LM: No, not from then.

BB: Okay, because I believe there's there were -- at any given time there was some trailer camps that were back there.

LM: Yeah I know that there were but I don't remember them. The trailer camps that I remember are all closer to Route 1 because that's where the busses went and so therefore you would be more familiar with that area.

BB: Another question about part of the Parkway is Jones Point [14:37] in Alexandria, the lighthouse. Did you ever go out there as a child, any recollections of --

LM: Yes, yes Coast Guard, not any specific I just we just went maybe walking there with my mother. It was isolated from the rest of the area [15:00], and sort of underneath of the

Woodrow Wilson Bridge now.

BB: Right, right which they're expanding right now; it's getting even closer. Let's see.

FM: I think there's maybe one other point you want to bring up.

LM: What?

FM: And that's the vagrant who was living --

LM: Oh, later but that was much later. There was a man living between -- what's the name of the new apartment house, the Italian name between Huntington?

FM: Porto Vecchio [spelled phonetically].

LM: Porto Vecchio. Very close to Porto Vecchio and the south end of their property, there was a man living in a little makeshift house on the banks of the river [16:00]. I'm sure he had wet feet many days as the water would come up, because it was that close. He lived there for years. The people at the firehouse knew him. He received mail at the post office because he had some sort of a pension or something that he lived on. But when he would stop at the firehouse, they would immediately draw him a bath, and he would take a bath and get a whole new set of clothes, which they had acquired knowing he would show up one day. And he would go off with his check from the post office, and his new clothes, and his clean body [17:00] and back to his little shack. And as recently as the 1990s, or was it -- yeah I guess it was in the 1990s that a flood washed his house away.

BB: So this was -- how long was this going on for though?

LM: For years.

BB: Going back to the '70s, '80s?

LM: I would say, we were not living in Virginia in the '70s, but I would say at least, he was there for a long time. But you would see him walking towards town or walking back

along the highway.

FM: The other thing that came to mind was the people that lived up on the hill, I can't think of them now, above the country club for years overlooking [18:00] the Potomac, you went to school with them.

LM: Eugene Olney, why, what about them?

FM: I don't know.

LM: I mean he lived there, his father was in a contractor or in real estate, I forget which.

FM: But they lived there for a long time before anybody else moved in.

LM: He lived up above the area where Jeb Stuart, Jeb -- not Stuart --

[laughter]

-- Jeb Bush [18:35] eventually had a house across from the park -- not the park, the country club and the Olneys lived up above that. It was and still is a very nice area of the Parkway to live [19:00]. It's convenient to downtown to Alexandria to Washington and yet where we lived on Collingwood, that was still very convenient; in fact it was more convenient for us because we could get on the Parkway without the problems that developed with traffic. Those who lived closer in really had trouble during rush hour.

BB: And you're speaking of where you lived most recently?

LM: Yes, where we lived from 1978 till 2003.

BB: And just real quick, what was the address, where was that at?

LM: That was 8409 Felton Lane in Collingwood on the Potomac.

BB: Got you, okay.

FM: On the Old River Farm

LM: Which was [20:00] actually a Fairfax County property but we had an Alexandria,

Virginia address, mailbox.

BB: Okay. So switching the focus a little bit now to -- specifically to Fort Hunt [20:15], what are your earliest recollections of Fort Hunt [20:20]?

LM: I don't have any. My earliest recollections were probably in 1940s because before that I don't think that the neighbors who did not live in that immediate area really had much access to it, again because we had no cars. But my former -- one of my former Girl Scout leaders lived in a house along Fort Hunt [20:56] Road, at Fort Hunt [21:00]. I mean Fort Hunt [21:02] Road being much larger away from the fort. And so that is really about my first recollection. Little houses that were not the nice brick homes that the Dideers had lived in, but more of clapboard houses, not terribly close together. Now they're much -- they've added more houses and there are much smaller yards.

BB: Do you have any recollections of Fort Hunt [21:40] while it was a CCC [21:43] camp, or anything about the CCC [21:45], before it reverted back to a military camp in World War II [21:49]?

LM: My recollections of the CCC [21:55] camp is because of the fact that one day [22:00] I went to the Westminster Presbyterian Church at the corner of Duke Street and St. Asaph, South St. Asaph in Alexandria. And it had a youth group that met on Sunday evenings, and it also had a bowling alley, which I thought was very unique in a church. A group of the members from the Cs came into the youth group one evening and asked if they could join the group, and of course we welcomed them. And they returned; as long as the camp was open they -- that one group came. It never got larger [23:00], it never got smaller, but there were about 10 fellows.

BB: About how old would they have been?

LM: They were straight out of high school. They were 18 years old, some of them had been there a year or something, were maybe 19.

BB: And about what year was this?

LM: This would have been about 1939, 1940. They, oh let me see, I was 14 then. 1921 plus 14.

BB: 1926 or 1921?

LM: 1926.

BB: 1926 plus 14 would be 1940.

LM: Yeah, so it was around '39 '40 '41, they were coming in. They were always [24:00] in uniform. They were always very polite, quiet, nice boys that happened to live in the coal-mining area of Pennsylvania. The President Roosevelt [24:16] had set up the idea of the CCC's [24:22] to help make jobs for the young men who needed to get out of undesirable locations, so we had the Pennsylvania coalminers, and --

BB: And so from your recollection almost all of this group was from the Pennsylvania area?

LM: [affirmative]

FM: Like Lawrenceville, well somewhere around there.

LM: Minersville is where Ray [24:56] was from but there was Sunbury and different little [25:00] towns there.

BB: What did you remember about just their uniforms? What colors they were, was it like a military uniform?

LM: Oh absolutely it was like a military uniform but it didn't have the fancy jackets and things that the soldiers and marines and such had. It was more of a just a very nice work uniform, but not a dress up uniform. And they had no money to speak of because they

didn't have money from home. Most of their money they earned went to their homes, and so they were looking for entertainment away from the fort where they could have some diversion and --

BB: Do you know how often they were allowed to leave the fort?

LM: I think they [26:00] could leave any time they were off-duty, I don't think there was any restriction. They were always at our house.

[laughter]

During the weeknights they would come in, but most frequently it was the weekends. I'm sure it was a problem of transportation again; I mean the fort was not that conveniently located.

BB: And so with this group, you saw them on a weekly basis, did you get to know folks in the group pretty well?

LM: Very well, we dated them. The girls dated them, rather, and the fellas were friends with them, but they -- I wouldn't say that the fellas ever went hunting [27:00] with them or anything like that. I mean on a strictly male-type outing. It was usually when we would go as a group, they would be included. And it was usually an outing that required a lot of walking, because nobody had any money.

BB: So just going for hikes and sort of things; did you ever go and see movies?

LM: Oh yes, there was a theater on Mount Vernon Avenue where my elementary school was located, about three blocks from the elementary school, so about four blocks from my house there was a small theater called the Palm. And we all frequented the Palm; it was inexpensive [28:00].

FM: You could pay a nickel a show.

LM: By the time that I was going with Ray [28:09] to the movies, I think it was more because we were grownup; it was we were 14. I mean, I was 14 or 15, and he was 18, so it wasn't a nickel. It wasn't matinees, and it wasn't on Sunday because there was no Sunday because of Virginia blue laws.

FM: Okay. We used to pay a nickel in Brooklyn.

LM: I know but this was in Virginia. We had Virginia blue laws and stores were not open, theaters were not open, and so forth until World War II [28:47] and Virginia and other states relaxed their blue laws so that the soldiers who were going to save our lives could be entertained [29:00]. And really it was the movies that broke it.

BB: So I gather there was at least one of the CCC's [29:10], Ray [29:10], that you got to be close with?

LM: Ray Evans [29:14], yes very close.

BB: You want to share anything about him?

LM: Well, I dated Ray [29:22] for a long time. My best girlfriend Ruth, who lived in Arlington, dated my brother and so we had double dates. And we would walk to the Palm and go to the movies and walk home. There wasn't money to go to Heywoods and have ice cream, with Heywoods was next door, two doors down. But, it was a confectioner's shop. But you know we'd just literally go to the movies and then go back home [30:00], because of a lack of money in those days.

BB: And then did he end up I guess leaving and going off to the service when the war started?

LM: Exactly.

BB: Did you date him through the beginning of World War II [30:16] then?

LM: No, no, but Ruth did. Ruth ended up marrying him. Yes, she did. She couldn't -- I mean

I wasn't going to marry him and they had known each other so long, so well that when he was overseas and they were writing letters, they fell in love and got married after he got discharged.

BB: Any other recollections, anything about the CCC [30:57] or I figure we'll wrap up talking about the CCC's [30:59] for now, anything else to [31:00] remember about them.

LM: Again, it was one of these things where we did not go to the fort as much as they came into town because they had a truck that would bring them in where we didn't have a car that would take us out. So most everything I know, I know from whatever Ray [31:22] told me.

BB: Do you know what kind of work he was mostly doing with them?

LM: He was doing mostly office work and he -- I have a book that I've put together about Fort Hunt [31:46] for you, not for you really, but you can copy it at -- I would like it back. But, in it [32:00] is a letter that one of his daughters wrote later that reminded me a lot of things that happened. But you know, things that just normally happen to people as they're growing up and you just don't remember them all and they were novel to Janette.

FM: When did you find out about the swimming pool?

LM: I knew about the swimming pool as long as I knew Ray [32:33]. I mean he would --

FM: Then how did you find out about it?

LM: I have no idea. I'm sure he talked about it but I don't think I ever actually saw the swimming pool.

FM: Yeah.

LM: They had barracks that were like army barracks where they lived. There were a couple of existing [33:00] houses on Fort Hunt [33:03] which were left, where I guess officers

lived. But in order to provide some recreation for the service -- I mean, for the CCCs [33:16], they did have a swimming pool. And there were so few swimming pools in those days that you knew where the swimming pools were. People who did not have any association with Fort Hunt [33:43] wouldn't have necessarily known because you couldn't see it from a road or anything. But, because Ray [33:52] had always told me about they had gone swimming or they were cleaning it up to put for the winter or you know [34:00] or whatever the situation was, I knew about it. And then, after I met Fred he would not tell me where he was stationed. He said, it's a secret. And this was a big in World War II [34:20] Washington was swarming with military. And you knew that if somebody didn't tell you something they couldn't tell you and you didn't ask. But, I don't know, I kept after him about where he was stationed simply because he wouldn't tell me. And then one day he comes into the USO [34:49] and he says "I have a picture you might enjoy seeing" and it was a snapshot of him with some other fellows. And I said well you're at Fort Hunt [35:00]. And "Shhhhhh, nobody knows about it, shhhhh." And I said "everybody knows about Fort Hunt [35:11]." "Shh." And he was having a panic, but we all knew about Fort Hunt [35:17]; we've lived with it all of our lives. We knew there was activity because there were soldiers coming into the USO [35:26] who said they were stationed at Fort Hunt [35:29], but they hadn't been brainwashed like Fred was. But they never, ever said what they did, but that was true everywhere. I never encountered a single serviceman who ever said what he did. One of them said that he did work on maps [36:00] period. I never knew anything else except that he was at Fort Belvoir [36:06] and he did work on maps. You can do a lot of things with work on maps. Anyway --

BB: So did you know about -- you know since we've transitioned now talking about Fort Hunt [36:20] and World War II [36:20] did you know that there were German prisoners being taken there?

LM: No, no, had no idea. At one point I was in the car with my mother and I assume my brother was driving. I don't remember. We were coming down the Parkway from Mount Vernon towards Alexandria and there was a soldier and another person walking along the Parkway [37:00] and as we passed I said to my mother, "that was Fred." And I asked him later if that was him, and he said yes, that he had a prisoner out walking. But he couldn't have acknowledged me and I didn't, but I mean just as we drove past, I was -- he was in uniform so I wasn't sure that it was him. You know he's got his cap on and he never wears a cap and such and so you're not real sure, but I thought that it was him. And he said yes he had been out walking that day. So

BB: So you mentioned the USO [37:55]. Where was the -- this particular USO [37:56] at?

LM: That was on Cameron St. in Alexandria [38:00], Virginia.

FM: It's still in -- the building is still in existence.

LM: Yes, and it had a swimming pool. The -- it was built as a recreation center starting in Alexandria it was just a swimming pool with a little bath house that was it. And then when World War II [38:27] came along and they developed the concept of the USO [38:31], United Services Organization, they built a brick building adjacent to the swimming pool. But as I said, there were so few pools, we knew where they were and so it was easy for me to identify Fort Hunt [38:53].

BB: So is that where you met Fred, at the USO [39:00]?

LM: Yes, he had just come been transferred to Fort Hunt [39:10].

FM: P Eleven, P.O. Box 1142 [39:15], I remember.

LM: I kept saying, "What do you mean P.O. Box 1142 [39:23]?"

BB: So that's all you told Lucille?

LM: That's all I ever knew.

FM: Where did we work? In the Pentagon [39:31].

LM: But you didn't tell me that

FM: We were told if we had to tell somebody it was in the Pentagon [39:41].

LM: I just wanted to know where you were [laughs]. Anyhow, I -- we had formal dances because it might be the last dance that a fellow would ever go to. And we had a formal dance every month and then every Saturday we had informal [40:00] dancing. Otherwise there was jukebox. And the USO [40:08] was a -- an administrative building with a few offices, but basically it was a building strictly for the servicemen. And there was one room off to the side that you basically did not go into. That was their room, it was a wide-open archway. I mean you could see who was in there and such, but if they wanted to go in and doze in a chair or read, or write a letter or something and not be bothered they could go. And I remember going in one time because one of the men in there motioned for me to come in and he told me whatever it was that he wanted me [41:00] to know, and I left. But that's the only time I was ever in that room. There were women who would sew stripes on their uniforms for them outside of that room, near it and such. I was never so nice as to sew stripes. Then there was a snack bar and a casual room and then a large room where we had dancing and a band and such for the dances and offices and workshop rooms and such in the back. And I had been in the back making decorations for the formal dance and it was of course hot, it was June.

BB: June of what year?

LM: 1945 [42:00].

FM: I was transferred in '44; it was Tuesday about the 3rd of June of '44.

LM: 11th of June 1944.

FM: The Tuesday after the Saturday.

BB: So this was only about a week or so after you were transferred?

LM: Not even a week.

BB: Not even a week, okay. Was this your first time to the USO [42:34]?

LM: This USO [42:35].

BB: To this one.

LM: Yes, and I had been in the back making decorations and I had paint on me, I was hot because as I say it was June and no air-conditioning. And I came out when we got finished. Well while we were making decorations [43:00] one of the head hostesses had come back to the room and said "I know I don't need to tell you -- all you girls this, but I am required to tell everybody, but there are servicemen who are leaving that nobody has spoken to, and we've just got to cut out any of this cliquishness, but you all aren't that type." And we weren't, the ones who were working that night. And we spoke to somebody, or we danced with people that was -- you didn't need to know them; that's why we were there. And so we got the lecture, even though she said she didn't have to tell us. And when I came out, there were two new servicemen standing at the snack bar and I thought [44:00] Ah, I just got a lecture, so I went over and I spoke to them. And here we are 60 years later.

BB: So it's a good thing you got that lecture then I guess?

LM: Probably, because I probably would not have spoken to them simply because I knew I was there working and I was dirty and I just wanted to get home. I mean I only wanted to get home for a moment.

BB: How often were you at the USO [44:35]?

LM: At the USO [44:38], every week at least on Saturday and probably two times otherwise. I mean there were quiet times there that fellows would be in and nobody [45:00] is there. So, there were really two dances a week and I was always there for a dance, and I would say two to three times a week. Frequently on Sundays.

BB: After you -- this was mostly after you graduated from high school or did you go as well before you graduated?

LM: I was going when I was in high school

BB: Okay. And then once you graduated from high school did you have a job?

LM: Yes

BB: And what was that?

LM: I worked in the death claims division of the Civil Service Commission, boring.

[laughter]

It was a government office, downtown Washington, with no air-conditioning and in the summer [46:00] they'd have all the windows open, and it was stifling.

BB: And how did you get downtown?

LM: By bus.

BB: Bus?

LM: Yes I -- the bus came into Washington to 10th and D streets and then they changed the terminal to 12th and Pennsylvania Avenue, which just meant I had farther to walk.

BB: And so you met Fred in June of 1944 at the USO [46:41] and then, Fred, about how often did you go to the USO [46:44] while you were at Fort Hunt [46:46]?

FM: Oh, I'd say --

LM: Every time I was there.

[laughter]

I mean I forgot everything I had heard at the lecture. I became one of those girls who didn't talk to everybody anymore [47:00].

FM: So at least it was two, three times a week at least and there was limited transportation. The transportation was either taking the bus and there were restrictions on how -- when the bus would go and when it would be taken back to camp. We had to be in camp at midnight. We went -- in the beginning, it was -- because of the classification, it -- we had to use a truck which dropped us off in the middle of Alexandria and then it would pick us up in the same location. If it were possible [48:00] we would hitchhike sometimes because an officer may have a car and pick us up and that was about the method of going back and forth.

BB: Was your contact limited to just the USO [48:20]? Did you write letters to each other, or was there not really a need for that because you were so close?

FM: No, there was no need.

LM: Not at that point. However, my brother -- my mother said I was too young to go to the USO [48:40] and my brother said "no, she's not," and said I should go because of all of these poor servicemen and then he very nicely, in addition, told the ones who didn't get letters at mail call [49:00] that I would write to them and I was writing to 54 different servicemen.

BB: Wow.

LM: Because the ones that -- when you met them at the USO [49:13], they may be back again, and they may never be back again. They -- you didn't know when they were shipping out and they very often would give you their address and say if I don't come back please write to me and so I would. And I mean all I did was write letters. I didn't need to write one to one I was seeing [laughs].

BB: Did they write to you as well?

LM: Oh yes.

BB: Did you save any of those?

LM: Yes, yes.

BB: Wow, that alone I would think would keep you pretty busy, let alone working a regular job.

LM: Well at least the stamps were only three cents [50:00].

[laughter]

And the postage for the servicemen of course it was free...but when I did, but back to Fort Hunt [50:10]. When Fred did show me this snapshot and I said well you're at Fort Hunt [50:19] and he was horrified. And he said "Nobody knows about it." I said "Everybody knows about it," we didn't know what they were doing, but we knew about it. And he said -- well I forget what he said. And I said "Well there are other fellows here from Fort Hunt [50:44]." He says "There are?" and I said "Yes, that fellow and that fellow and that fellow." And he said "I never saw them on the truck." And I said "That's because they don't [51:00] go back to camp on the truck, they hitchhike." And these were the MPs; the guards apparently and they didn't associate with people like Freddy.

Yes, I know, what?

FM: Do you want to hang at the phone in the dining room? [inaudible]?

LM: Sure. Excuse me.

BB: No problem.

[audio break]

LM: Even though we knew that those fellows were at Fort Hunt [51:29], we had no idea what they did. And I'm just saying I assume that these were all MPs, because Fred has never really acknowledged what they did; it wasn't that important to us. But he didn't know them, and I figure, because he didn't know them, they must have been the guards, and they were [52:00] a different group.

BB: So I guess nobody from Fort Hunt [52:05] that you recall had any distinctive patches on their uniforms or anything that would give that away?

LM: No, they looked like they had the same patches as any other body as.

BB: So did Fred ever, ever reveal to you what was going on at Fort Hunt [52:24], or not until after the war or?

LM: Never, even afterwards very, very [inaudible]. As long as he considered it classified, he kept it secret. And I'm sure to this day that there's a lot he's never told me because he's never really been told that it's all declassified.

BB: Yeah, and I've looked into that a good bit and everything that I can find out has been declassified [53:00]. Some of their records may have been destroyed; in fact I know the whole -- there were two programs going on at Fort Hunt [53:09]; in the other program they destroyed all of their records immediately upon the end of the war, within 24 hours they burned them all.

LM: But now, Shoemaker wrote the book that told about everything so.

BB: Everything, so the cat's out of the bag.

LM: I think it was very stupid, personally, because you may wanted to reuse that technique again and it's gone. I think it was not a good choice.

BB: Did you read Shoemaker's book, or do you know if Fred read it?

LM: No, we don't even have a copy of it. In fact, our daughter emailed me the address where I can find some copies and I'm going to buy one but I haven't [54:00]. But a lot of the residents in the area of Fort Hunt [54:05] I know have bought the Shoemaker book.

BB: Yeah I brought a copy with me, reading it on the plane a little bit. So let's see, so I guess upon the war ending do you -- any recollections of finding out that the war was over or, you know, when the war in Europe ended, was there a big celebration or was it, hey, there's still a war on in the Pacific

LM: There was -- my specific recollection had nothing to do with Fort Hunt [54:46]. My cousin who is now my sister-in-law [55:00] was a student nurse and had been working very hard that week and was very tired and I had talked with her on the telephone and told her that I had just recently been to a Swedish restaurant that had opened in the Washington area and it was not expensive and did she want to go to that restaurant and relax. And then they came out with the announcement that the war was over. And I said to my boss that I was going to -- right after work, that I was going to meet my cousin and we were going to this Swedish restaurant and she admonished me [56:00] severely and she said "You know that the president said there should be no celebrating because there is still a war on in Japan." And I said "No we will not be celebrating; we will just eat very quietly."

[laughter]

So that's my recollection of the end of the war, of that part. And of the Japanese, I really don't remember that signing as distinctly because I guess it didn't strike a specific note with me. I mean but Fred probably has a better recollection of that one because he was more involved with it.

BB: And so I'll get into this more with Fred when he gets back, but he I guess left and was discharged out of Fort Meade [57:00] if I recollect and was discharged. I think would that have been was that 1945 that he was discharged and then so did the two of you I guess keep up a correspondence at that point?

LM: No.

BB: No.

LM: He just moved in down the street.

BB: Oh really, okay, so he didn't move back to New York.

LM: No, he stayed right in the Alexandria area. He had gone out looking for a job and had found a job at a very small firm in Washington across from the old pension building on 5th street, about 5th and F or G. It was a company that maybe had 25 people at that point [58:00], that later became very large, it was called Melpar. Anyway he had found a job there and found a room to rent on Mason Avenue, which was about eight blocks I guess towards my high school from my house. Was very unhappy with his choice; the woman was not a pleasant person to live with and the neighbor one block away from us rented rooms, and my mother happened to be speaking with Mrs. Crimes one day, and she was looking for a renter. So, Fred moved down the street and so he lived just a block away until we got [59:00] married.

BB: Okay and when was that?

LM: We got married the 3rd of January 1947

BB: In Alexandria?

LM: No, in Washington in the chief justice of the district courts office. And my parents and my husband's parents were both very opposed to our marriage on the basis that they just felt that we had such different backgrounds and philosophies and so forth, and it would never work out. I mean, it wasn't anything personal, and we were equally determined that, yes, it will work out, and my father had been transferred. He worked for the General Accounting Office and he [01:00:00] had been transferred to St. Louis and he was from St. Louis area, and my mother was still living in their house, and in fact, my brother and I were still living in that house with her, and my father was coming home on the train. But the trains in post-war America were poor according to him and he had made the trip home for Christmas, and my brother was being married in June, so we were going to wait until April, till after my birthday, because then we could get married and not have to ask [01:01:00] my parents for permission because unless I was 21 in Virginia, I had to have my parents' consent. So we spoke to my father about coming back in April, that we were going to get married. And he absolutely was not going to come back in April; he was coming in June for my brother's wedding, and he wasn't going to be on this train twice, an extra time. And so we thought, okay, he's going to be here another week; we'll get married before he leaves, and we'll get married in Washington because it was important that our parents should be here with us. And so Fred [01:02:00] talked to his family and they said they could come, and I guess he talked to them after we made the arrangements. This was on the weekend and so Monday morning, I met him at lunchtime, and we got a

marriage license in Washington and went to the office of Chief Justice Laws [01:02:32] who was a church friend of my father's. And I had never met the gentleman I had only heard about Judge Laws [01:02:45] all of my life and we talked our way through two secretaries and he said "I can't believe you did this." He consented [01:03:00] to perform the service and then Fred's brother was taking a final exam in New York City and had to make the 12:00 train to Washington to be there in time for the wedding and missed the train. And there was no cell phone, so we all assumed that he missed the train because he wasn't on it and Judge Laws [01:03:37] says we will just wait; there will be another train in an hour. And so my parents, Fred's Parents, my uncle who was a policeman on the vice squad in Washington, but who didn't work days [01:04:00] had provided extra transportation because -- if we needed another automobile. And his daughter were, and my brother and his fiancé were all and my cousin were all sitting there for an hour waiting for Rudy to show up and sure enough here he comes breezing in because the District Court is right there beside --

(End of Tape 1A)

(Beginning of Tape 1B)

BB: You can go ahead and keep going, sorry.

LM: Then the marriage ceremony proceeded and after it was over my uncle said "Well now I can put the gun away. He didn't get away." He had been holding the gun in case Fred decided to escape so that when his daughter got married, his -- her future in-laws painted a cork gun rifle white with ribbons and flowers and everything else and presented it to him.

[laughter]

So we had a little levity along with the rest of it. But we got married in a week from the time that we talked to my parents so it was very fast, and very [01:00] -- it was nice; it was a very small, intimate service. I knew my father would come if his friend was doing the service and I wasn't sure he would come otherwise and we've gone through this now with several others of the family and there have been instances where a parent would not come and it's a shame. It's important I think and everybody just sort of relaxed about it, the whole thing afterwards and they thought as much of Fred as they thought of my brother's wife. They thought as much of me and Fred's family as they [02:00] could have if I had been the same religion or the same background, which I wasn't. So.

BB: And here you are 60 years later.

LM: There we are, it didn't work out obviously.

[laughter]

BB: So I guess wrapping up a little bit is there anything else, any other recollections of Fort Hunt [02:22], of the buildings that were there? Did you ever make it to Fort Hunt [02:28] during World War II [02:30] or was it off limits because it was a military base?

LM: No, off limits. It was off limits even for the people who lived right there. No, never. I went to Fort Belvoir [02:41] but I never went to Fort Hunt [02:44], until after.

BB: And so and then when you lived down close to Fort Hunt [2:49] for the last 20 years or so, do you recall any buildings there at Fort Hunt [02:57] that have since been knocked down or [03:00] anything or by the time you moved in there was everything already gone?

LM: Yeah they had already been taken down.

BB: Okay, okay. So let's see so anything else you want to share that you can think of about

Fort Hunt [03:15] or meeting Fred or the CCCs [03:19]?

LM: Not off hand, but I have included this letter that our biography or whatever you want to call it that Jeanette wrote about her father and his time -- his life and it includes a good section about the CCCs [03:43] group. And I had a particularly good picture of him in uniform which is which I put on the page. So.

BB: Fantastic, that's great. Okay well we can go ahead and stop recording for now [04:00].
[audio break]

LM: This is the letter, or the biography whatever that -- this girl, they had three children and the older two were born when things were a little bit better for Ray [04:26]. Ray [04:28] was very, very severely injured in World War II [04:33]. He eventually was rated at 125 percent disabled, which is 100 percent for himself and 25 percent because he couldn't be left alone. So his wife couldn't go to work, so in order to compensate them for the lost opportunity to make money, he was 125 percent disabled [05:00]. And yet when you read his history, I don't know why, but he certainly was up and down and up and down with emotions because he was originally -- I don't whether it was part of his physical health or what, but -- because it was terrible. He was never without pain a day in his life.

FM: I'm sorry

BB: Oh that's fine, don't worry about it.

FM: I didn't go to sleep [laughs].

BB: Well if you need to go to sleep that's fine.

LM: And he didn't die until 1989, I mean that was a long time. He became -- he could not work because of his disability payment, and he said "Well can't I just be a notary public? I mean people [06:00] could come to my house." You know no, you cannot earn any

money. So he became very active in the DAV [06:11], the legislative branch, and was one of the instigators and was totally responsible in Arlington, Virginia for these ramps on the curbs for handicapped because they just were not going to do that, and this was the attitude in a lot of places and now you just don't build curbs without a ramp.

BB: Well right, right.

LM: Anyway so this is all what Jeanette wrote and this is the picture that I had of him in uniform.

BB: And that's, is that his CCC [06:54] uniform there?

LM: Yes. That I would say he's about [07:00] 19 years old, maybe 20. And this is the famous pool. And Fred.

FM: In my younger days.

LM: These are letters that I went through of his where these this fellow was stationed at Fort Hunt [07:37]. Now I -- doesn't really say much about being stationed at Fort Hunt [07:43] but I put them in, thought maybe...

FM: [unintelligible] his name?

LM: George, whoever George was. I thought it was George Sergin [spelled phonetically] but it wasn't.

FM: George Gross [spelled phonetically] [07:56]?

LM: I think so, I think it was I think you decided it was George Gross [07:59].

BB: So these are [08:00] letters from George to Fred?

LM: Yes, and these are different promotion pages, different things he had save that are now in his history, in Fred's history and that -- these are -- have you got these pictures?

BB: I do have that picture. I think I've got that because I brought -- yeah. Did you take these

out of this, out of that?

FM: No, no we got these from Mulligan.

BB: Oh from Mulligan, okay, well they look like -- I haven't seen that one before.

LM: Well you can take copies of any of them. And these are -- again this paper was such terrible quality, so much of it's brown.

BB: And this, I think you scanned this [09:00] and sent this to me.

LM: Some of them.

BB: Some but not all of them. I know something like this where it had names and serial numbers.

LM: Discharged -- anyway and then this is newspaper articles and stuff. Anyway, you can copy anything that's in here that you want.

BB: Okay. Yeah, I'd definitely like to make a copy of it. I don't know if the best thing is to run to a -- if there's a Kinko's nearby rather than having to scan every single page on your computer because I probably would like copies just to have records of it if that's okay with you guys.

LM: When you leave here to go to AmeriSuites; you're going to pass -- no you're not going to go as far. Kinkos [10:00] is on down towards 64. When you get to the McDonald's, Kinko's is almost directly across the street.

FM: Which Kinkos are you talking about?

LM: Next to Kroger.

FM: Oh okay. So okay that's -- and they're open till 9:00 at night or whatever, 10:00, 11:00, I don't know.

BB: Okay, okay. Okay yeah I might do those then this evening, run and do that, and that way

I can bring this back and give it back to you tomorrow. But yeah, but I would -- yeah especially the photographs and the letters and everything, if it's okay with you guys to take that, and then I'll put it all in a file and everything and --

FM: Now some of those outfits also have computer-enhanced capabilities if you [11:00] need that.

BB: Okay. Yeah, we'll see how the copies and everything come out but I may have them, some of the photographs or something. I may have them make better enhanced copies of them. And the other thing I'll do is I'll make -- eventually we're going to transcribe all of the interview tapes and everything and, you know, make it into text into sheets of paper and I'd certainly for your archives or whatever you guys want, certainly we'll give you copies of everything. And if you'd like I can even try to make a double audio tape, if you want to get an audio recording of it as well, we can do that.

LM: That would be nice.

FM: That's a big job

BB: We can send flowers to the secretary that's going to be doing a lot [laughs]. I would love to do it, but unfortunately, I have so much other work to do. The other interviews I've done like this, we've been very fortunate [12:00]. We've had a secretary that in her off time does a few pages at a time. But this will probably be the most ever done; most of the interviews have been, you know, a two hour interview not a two day interview.

FM: Now let me ask you, you have all those names of serial numbers and so on?

BB: Yeah.

FM: Any of the people you've interviewed are they on that list, just out of curiosity?

BB: No, no you are the only person that I've sat down with and done a face-to-face interview

of who was at Fort Hunt [12:37]. The other interview -- recently we did an interview with an Iwo Jima veteran from the Marine Corps because we also -- part of our park oversees the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, the Iwo Jima flag-raising memorial. And he fought in Iwo Jima; he was friends with Ira Hayes [13:00], the Native American Indian who was one of the flag-raisers.

LM: I was going to say, I couldn't think who that was, but I knew the name was familiar, yes.

BB: And in fact there's even it's like a Johnny Cash song, "The Ballad of Ira Hayes." And he, Ira Hayes, he survived the war, but died of alcoholism just a few weeks after the monument was dedicated in 1954. And this gentlemen kind of escorted Ira Hayes around town when the Marines flew him in in 1954 for the dedication. So he's one of the last people that spent time with him alive. So not only was he a Purple Heart Marine Corps veteran of Iwo Jima, but he knew a lot about the memorial itself, so just like the same questions I was asking you about what you remember about the history of our park, that's a different aspect there. So, I did an interview with him but in terms of specific to Fort Hunt [14:00], I've only spoken with one other veteran of Fort Hunt [14:05] and that's only been over the phone and his name is Silvio Bedeni and he was the chief --

FM: Bedeni?

BB: Bedeni, B-E-D-E-N-I.

FM: That was not the Navy guy that

BB: No, he was in the MIS-X program [14:21]. He was the chief crypto-analyst in the building that was referred to as the Creamery [14:28], in that building. And he was there for the whole history of Fort Hunt [14:33] and ended up being I think an associate director of the Smithsonian, and is still living in Northwest D.C. I think he's about 88

years old. I've spoken with him on the phone several times and he is still very hesitant because I think what they were doing was maybe even more top secret than what you guys were doing and he has [15:00] still been very hesitant to reveal much information. He's talked to me over the phone about a great deal, but he doesn't want to meet in person.

FM: Really?

BB: Yeah, he hasn't been willing to come and meet in person, so we, you know -- I -- that's up to him; that's fine but he has a number of those escape devices. You know how that other program was sending things to captured allied airmen?

FM: But Shoemaker talked about all of this stuff.

BB: Bedeni is referenced several times in Shoemaker's book, he's mentioned in there several times. So he has a number of these escape devices that weren't destroyed, he kept them and has them still. And he sent us photographs of him at Fort Hunt [15:54], which unfortunately I wasn't able to bring. There are some snapshots of the fort [16:00]. I might try to see if I can have a few of them e-mailed to me. But they're really close up shots of a couple soldiers standing next to a barracks building or something. But that's it, I've gotten through the list of other folks that you've sent me and I've looked up a few of them but I haven't had a chance to actually call anyone. But I would really, really like to do that and continue doing this and hopefully find people that are interested in talking with me. And again a lot of what I have to do is to you know to talk to you and talk to Timothy Mulligan at the Archives to make sure it's okay that we talk about these things. Everything that I've been told is yes, all records that survive have been declassified; for good or for bad they've all been declassified.

FM: Well you know security aspects have changed so tremendously that [17:00] whatever you might glean out of this, its, I think, worthless. And certainly we have not used the tactics they have used in -- oh in Europe and -- what's the name -- in Iraq

BB: Abu Grab?

FM: Abu Grab or anything that's been done down in --

BB: Guantanamo Bay?

FM: Guantanamo Bay and -- which is unfortunate. That's my personal opinion, but we never did the kind of thing that they did or are still doing, if you know, whether you know it or not at Fort Hunt [17:58]. And in [18:00] places related to Fort Hunt [18:05], now I noticed in the book for example there is a collection place in -- near Frankfurt where people were identified to be sent to Fort Hunt [18:21]; you didn't know that, did you?

BB: No, I think I recall.

FM: And there's nothing in the book that's mentioning that.

BB: So this was in Germany there was?

FM: In the Taunus Mountains in Germany.

BB: And where they identified German POWs to be -- this is after the war, to be -- or is this during the war?

FM: During the war, to be sent to Fort Hunt [18:50]. Now my cousin can tell you about it, he only lives few minutes from where you work and [19:00] I had forgotten or I can give him a call and ask him about it and so on. But anyway there was a collection place for people to be sent to Fort Hunt [19:14].

BB: And were these Army prisoners or Navy or a mix?

FM: You mean U.S. Army?

BB: No, no German because you're speaking of German POWs right?

FM: Right, exactly, and I think they were mostly German Army, yeah because he was an interrogator just like I was. We were both graduates of Ritchie [19:52] too which is not mentioned here either and I guess what I'm talking about you know [20:00].

BB: Yeah I know because we've spoken on the phone and you said how you went through the Fort Ritchie [20:04] program, and yeah, you're right; I was just flipping through this on the plane on the way here and they don't mention anything about Fort Ritchie [20:11].

FM: Like they're not mentioning several things here but anyway.

LM: You can talk about that when he records you tomorrow.

FM: Oh we're not on the air now?

BB: Well, I actually do have it going, just to catch kind of small talk. When we were flipping through this, we did finish up with Lucille, but then I've done this before where I turn the tape recorder off and then all of a sudden somebody says something incredibly important. So this part I may not transcribe, since it's just kind of small talk here and there, but I'll check it for good information like a good interrogator would.

FM: We never turned the listening devices off at Fort Hunt [20:58].

BB: They were on all the time [21:00]?

FM: Yeah, sure because -- okay, well we'll talk about this tomorrow.

BB: [laughs] See it's difficult to not get going and we finished up with Lucille talking about the CCCs [21:14] and Fort Hunt [21:15] and everything and we learned a little bit about your wedding and everything downtown and then kind of --

FM: With the gun too?

[laughter]

BB: Yeah, we heard about the gun, so yeah, you know, I can wrap it up for today if you're feeling tired. We can start recording with Fred now.

FM: It's only 4:00.

BB: Yeah, yeah so, whatever works for you guys.

FM: No, I can keep going if you want to, only if you want.

LM: Well, he wants to take this and copy it though too.

BB: I can do that later this evening though; I can do that after dinner.

FM: Let's locate the Kinkos to make sure that he knows how [22:00] he gets there; is it a Kinkos?

(End of Tape 1B)

(Beginning of Tape 2)

BB: Okay, I think we're going. So again, today is Tuesday May 30th, 2006 at about 4:30 in the afternoon, and I'm at the home of Fred and Lucille Michel and the purpose of this tape is to start talking about the World War II [00:24] service and history of Fred. So if Fred if you want to get started, just like we did with Lucille and just go over a little bit about when and where you were born and your early childhood.

FM: Okay I was born in Landower, Germany on the -- [laughs] when was I born?

LM: You have a bad habit with that, don't you?

FM: On the 23rd of September 1916 [01:00]. No.

LM: 1921.

FM: 1921 correction, but I'm getting older all the time. So anyway I went to school in Germany at the public school and then later on at the Gymnasium for high school and left Germany in October of 1936 to go to the United States. We landed in Brooklyn -- no,

correction in New York City at Pier 83 or I think it's Pier 83 and settled down in Brooklyn. We lived in Brooklyn at [02:00] 796 Putnam Avenue and almost within a day my brother and I, whose name is Rudy Michel [02:13] started school. We went to school at PS 26 and my training principally was to attend English-speaking classes in order to quickly learn English. We were also encouraged to read the funnies or the comics because that showed us both the illustration and the language and made it a lot easier for us to learn English [03:00]. Shortly after that I took an examination for Brooklyn Technical High School, which was one of the few high schools in New York City which required an entrance examination and stayed there for four years. The basic training was in technical areas; we had to take woodworking shop, sheet metal shop, machine shop, drafting and so on in order to prepare myself for a -- for the college in engineering. I graduated from City College in 1944 [04:00] and at that point went straight into the army and was trained at Camp Upton [04:09]. From Camp Upton [4:18] I went to Camp Blanding [04:22] down in Florida and took my basic infantry training there and was then subsequently retained for training other GIs in heavy weapons. Shortly thereafter I was transferred to Texas and subsequently was shipped to Fort Ritchie [04:53] in Maryland, where I was assigned to the [05:00] interrogation, PW interrogation school [05:06].

BB: Real quick before we go too far into all that, if I could just back up a little bit and cover some areas in a little bit more detail. You said your family came here in 1936; did the whole family come together from Germany, you all came over at once?

FM: Yeah we were fortunate in that both my parents and my brother and I came over here and we came on the -- what is it -- the S.S. Washington, the S.S. Washington came straight into New York City. The customs inspection and so on was done on board ship; we did

not have to go through Ellis Island at the time.

BB: Okay and what was your family's [06:00] reason for leaving Germany?

FM: Well the reason was because we were Jewish and at that time of course Hitler [06:09] had been in power.

BB: Do you have any specific recollections of growing up in Germany within Hitler's [06:18] rise to power and how that affected your family?

FM: Oh yes, considerable. As a matter of fact I kept a diary at that time, which I still have and because my dad was an officer in the German Army during World War I [06:43] we were relatively not bothered too much. In the 1936 [07:00] [inaudible] 1935? Can we cut it off?

BB: Sure.

[audio break]

BB: All right we're back on.

FM: In 1935 the Reichstag [07:18] met in Nuremburg [07:21] and at that time Hitler [07:25] announced a program for dealing with the Jews. My dad decided right then and there that there would be no future for his sons, and we undertook an effort to get an affidavit to allow us to come to the United States, which we then did in 1936.

BB: Okay, okay, yeah then that's good. So yeah [08:00] if you want to go on you were speaking of high school and then you went to -- where'd you go for your four years of college?

FM: City College

BB: City College, at what point -- were you drafted immediately or did you volunteer?

FM: Well let me address that. I was deferred long enough to complete my engineering

education, but then I was drafted immediately and assigned or inducted to Camp -- at Camp Upton [08:36] and that's about it.

BB: And what were your personal thoughts about the war? Were you -- did you want to join the service, was it just something that everybody did, were you against the idea, what were your feelings at the time?

FM: Well, all of us, most of us [09:00], as soon as the United States entered the war, wanted to volunteer. But then I was convinced to finish my engineering education and -- let's see. [audio break]

FM: Now what's your next question?

BB: I think that's it. I was -- yeah like you said, you were -- so you were drafted immediately upon graduation and then you were -- when I cut you off before you had said that I guess you went into basic training and then training in heavy weapons, okay and then --

FM: I was retained at Camp Blanding [09:54], Florida. I was training cadre and then [10:00] the army suddenly discovered that I was fluent in German and therefore they pulled me away from Blanding and sent me to another camp down in Texas and then we received orders to proceed to Fort Ritchie [10:23] in Maryland.

BB: Okay, before we go any further, I'm sorry, I just thought of something else; were you -- at this point were you yet a U.S. citizen?

FM: Oh that's an interesting question. When we were drafted we were classified as enemy aliens. And being classified as enemy aliens we had two choices either be drafted or else forever lose the right of becoming a U.S. citizen. So, that was the options [11:00] we had. When I was sent to Camp Blanding [11:08], somewhere within the next month or two a whole bunch of us were loaded onto busses and we were shipped to the U.S.

District Court in Jacksonville, Florida and sworn in as citizens. Now the reason for that was that if we ever had been shipped or would have been shipped to Germany, Germany would have considered us enemy aliens and we would have been shot. And that was the reason for us giving citizenship as quickly as possible.

BB: Any recollections about that citizenship ceremony, did anything stick in your mind [12:00]?

[laughter]

FM: Well you should see the picture that was in my citizen papers. We were in GI uniform, in fatigues and that was the picture that was in my citizen paper.

BB: Got you, so okay, sorry for interrupting, so to go on, you were then sent up to Fort Ritchie [12:28] for the initial training?

FM: Yeah and that was the week of the death of Roosevelt [12:37], by the way, and I think we were halfway through Maryland when that announcement was made on the way to Camp Ritchie [12:48].

BB: Okay, okay so then you were going to Camp Ritchie [12:52] in -- it was 1945 then not 1944 because I know because there was some discussion in the last interview if it was [13:00] 1944 or 1945.

FM: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Yeah, it was 1945 that I went to Ritchie [13:12].

LM: I was the one who said '44. I was wrong

FM: You might want to pick up that correction.

BB: Okay, so it was 1945 that you were being shipped to Fort Ritchie [13:35]. Okay, and if -- do you want to go over what kind what kind of training you received or what your activities were at Fort Ritchie [13:43].

FM: The training at Fort Ritchie [13:46] was interrogation of German PWs, not for everybody just for our group. And there were other people who were trained at interrogating [14:00] Italians and others were trained in interrogating Japanese and so on, but ours -- now when we were shipped out of Ritchie [14:19] everybody expected to go to Europe but we were pulled out, about 20 or so people, and were loaded on a bus and nobody knew where we were going to go. And the next thing that happened was we came down Massachusetts Avenue in Washington. And then everybody was trying to figure out where we were going to go and some people speculated that we were going to Bolling Field and we're going to ship -- be shipped [15:00] to Germany by air. But in fact what happened was our bus driver pulled up in front of the Pentagon [15:11] and got new instructions on where to go. And the next speculation was that we would go to Fort Belvoir [15:19]. But the next thing that happened was that we went through Alexandria and everybody still was wondering what we were going to do and the next thing that happened was we were going along the George Washington Parkway which nobody knew and nobody knew where we were going but the next thing that happened was suddenly we pulled off the Parkway into a wooded area which was surrounded by barbed wire [16:00] and there was a guard at the gate. And we were going into this unknown area and finally came into a briefing room where we were briefed on what the nature of the installation was and that we were -- and that the installation was known as P.O. Box 1142 [16:30] and that we were not to, under any circumstances, tell anybody where we were. And it was a Saturday afternoon

BB: Okay. When you were at Fort Ritchie [16:49] or before that did they perform background inspections or tests? I would think because you were all from originally a lot

of you were from Germany [17:00] that they would have wanted to do some level of background checks; do you know if they did?

FM: No, no not that I know of.

BB: Okay and when you were in training at Fort Ritchie [17:14] were you, did you have a preference, were you hoping that you would go to Germany or to the European theater or did you not really have an opinion?

FM: No, no, no discussion. But I forgot something earlier. When we were inducted into the service I was volunteering for the Navy but at that point there was a shortage of army personnel and I was assigned to the army. Now what [18:00] about Ritchie [18:01]?

BB: Anything else, how long was your training for at Ritchie [18:06]?

FM: I think, and I'm trying to remember we were there for about six weeks or thereabouts.

BB: And that was intensive, just about interrogation of German prisoners of war?

FM: Yeah. Another point I wanted to mention was that I ran into my cousin, Werner Michel [18:31], who became a professional soldier [clock chiming]. And just sort of happened that his mother, who lived in St. Louis at the time was visiting him, so we could all meet together and, you know, talk about things.

BB: Okay, so getting back to Fort Hunt [18:58] or at that point you didn't even know it as Fort Hunt [19:00]; they just said it was P.O. Box 1142 [19:03].

FM: Now another interesting thing that happened was that even though we had very strongly been admonished not to tell anybody where we were or what our job was somebody in the group picked up the phone, called their parents in New York, and told them where we were. And of course this was found out right away and he got very, very strongly admonished about the breach of security. Now, where shall we go from here?

BB: Well, I guess, what were your initial impressions of Fort Hunt [20:00] and what happened once you were there? Did you receive further training or did you immediately begin interrogations?

FM: No, we -- I feel we immediately started interrogations, first with the assistance or supervision of an officer who was already stationed there and who had gone through the drill and the experience and so on.

BB: And what was your rank at this time?

FM: My rank at that time was corporal.

BB: Okay. And was everyone in your group corporals or were there a variety of ranks?

FM: Well you have a copy of our staff and most of them I think were corporals. When off -- when not on duty [21:00] but when we were on duty, interrogating we usually would be wearing officer's insignia. Usually the rank of the interrogee or maybe one step below that because the feeling was that Germans respected rank, and if somebody of a non-commissioned rank would interrogate them, they wouldn't expect any results.

BB: Did you have your own variety of uniforms or was there -- how did you get the uniform that you were going to put on for the day? Was there just a supply closet of uniforms?

FM: Yeah there was a supply closet of insignia [22:00] and so on and before you were assigned to interrogate a certain individual you would use the appropriate material.

BB: I'd like to talk in a great deal of detail about the interrogations, but before we do that what can you recall about the accommodations per se at Fort Hunt [22:26]? Where were you staying? Where were you eating?

FM: Okay, there were commonplace army barracks of one story only, not the two-level or two story barracks and those were basically occupied by enlisted people, and mixed with

some guards people [23:00]. As far as the eating facilities were concerned there was a mess hall which was used by just about everybody. The cooks interestingly enough were German PWs and people preferred them because their cooking facilities and their skills were far superior from the American cooks that were assigned to the post.

BB: As so were these German prisoners of war who were regular prisoners who were permanently assigned to Fort Hunt [23:46] for that purpose?

FM: That's right

BB: Okay, and with your barracks were these standard sets of double -- were they bunk beds or single beds?

FM: They were just plain bunk [24:00] beds with a blanket and a pillow and not double-decker.

BB: Okay just a single bed. About how many beds were in each of the barracks? Were the barracks standard size or did they vary?

FM: They were standard size single deck army barracks and with a latrine and so on at each end.

BB: Was the latrine part of the barracks or was it a separate building?

FM: I think it was part of the barracks.

BB: Okay so you didn't have to walk outside?

FM: No

BB: And were the latrines, they served as the bathrooms as well as the showers?

FM: The showers and toilet facilities and I would say that in the recollection those barracks [25:00] were very much small barracks which were not subdivided into individual rooms. They were kind of open spaces, but you could -- you know, you could play a radio as

long as somebody wasn't objecting to the noise and that sort of thing.

BB: And everybody, did everybody have their own footlockers and that sort of thing?

FM: Everybody had their own footlockers and I've forgotten. I just don't remember whether we had any closets at all. I think we hung our clothes on coat hangers and -- but not in a separate [26:00] closet.

BB: And do you remember -- I know this might seem like a lot of mundane details, but since the buildings aren't there anymore, that's why I'm asking all these questions. How were they heated, do you remember?

FM: There were potbelly stoves.

BB: Okay, and that burned coal, I presume?

FM: Coal, wood. Now you could -- by the way, as far as entertainment is concerned, a lot of the people here were bridge players because they were all more educated folks, and that was one of the general entertainments and so on.

BB: Okay. And the folks that were in your barracks were a mix of interrogators and guards [27:00]? These would have been, you know, the prison guards?

FM: No these were MPs

BB: Just MPs, and they were the MPs for the entire fort complex?

FM: Right. But they were not the majority. I would say the interrogators were the majority of the folks and a lot of them, by the way, were from New York City and New York vicinity, and we got weekend passes and they all seemed to go to Union Station and hop the train for New York and the train was really crowded. It was just loaded. Quite often I had to even stand between trains on the platform [28:00] between individual cars in order to be able to get up there.

BB: Wow and did you go back to New York frequently or just every once in a while?

FM: I would say I would go back to New York every two or three weeks anyway.

BB: Okay, and so were you on leave every weekend?

FM: Yeah we had regular passes, weekly passes.

BB: Okay so most of your work, your interrogating took place during the week then?

FM: Absolutely.

BB: Okay getting back to the folks you were living with were -- there were obviously several sets of barracks at Fort Hunt [28:51]; were most --

FM: Three or four, that's all I can remember.

BB: Okay and were they all near each other?

FM: Yeah, they were pretty close to each other.

BB: Were there [29:00] other interrogators in the other barracks as well, or were they all in yours?

FM: Not that I know of.

BB: Okay so your barracks had all of the camp's interrogators?

FM: Right.

BB: OK, but that would have just been NCOs, though, correct? The officers had their own separate housing.

FM: Right.

BB: Do you remember anything about the officers' housing, where it was, or what it looked like?

FM: Well there was one was like a farmhouse sort of, and that was assigned to a WAC [29:35] captain, and don't ask me what the name, her first name was --

LM: I've forgotten right this moment; I had been thinking of it at a couple of weeks ago.

FM: And there were a couple of other houses that were set aside for officers [30:00].

BB: Do you know what that WAC [30:02] captain was doing there at Fort Hunt [30:04]?

FM: I was trying to think. I think she was an administrative officer.

LM: I was going to say, she was working in the office I know.

BB: With the handful of POW -- excuse me, of MPs who lived with you, did you ever talk about what you were doing or did you not even talk with them, or did they know what you were doing?

FM: I think they knew what we were doing, because they were also aware of the fact that we had PWs, and -- but I don't think there was any discussion about the interrogations.

BB: Also from talking with you in the past and talking with Timothy Mulligan I gather there were also [31:00] Navy personnel there at Fort Hunt [31:04] conducting some interviews as well, is that correct?

FM: There was only one Navy person who I knew of, who was an officer and who was working with a German scientist by the name of Schlicke [31:28], S-C-H-L-I-C-K-E, and I was trying to remember what his name was. It was sort of an Italian sounding name and I think you and I mentioned it.

BB: I think we did; in fact Alberti [31:48] was the name, was it Jack Alberti [31:51]?

FM: Right.

BB: And where were you saying he was stationed again, or where he was housed?

FM: He was stationed in -- what is it -- T [32:00] 4, or 5, or 6

LM: T-something

FM: The temporary Navy, World War I [32:07] temporary Navy department buildings on

Constitution Avenue.

BB: Oh, okay and he then drove in, but he didn't live on the fort.

FM: Right, right, right.

BB: In terms of day to day at the fort, was it strict military discipline, was it kind of lax, was it relaxed, was it tense, did you have to salute every officer, what was the overall military atmosphere?

FM: It was sort of relaxed, I would say. You didn't have to salute an officer every time every time you passed him or anything like that. And you know a lot of them again were from New York [33:00], and especially the so-called Fourth Reich. I don't know if you ever heard that term.

BB: No I haven't.

FM: But that was the area of --

LM: Washington Heights.

FM: What?

LM: Washington Heights

FM: Washington Heights, Uptown Manhattan, where a lot of the refugees from Germany settled and that's where the linguists came from.

BB: And so that where a lot of the folks that you were working with were from. Was that where your family had settled?

FM: No, no we lived in Brooklyn, and the reason we lived in Brooklyn is a couple of my our cousins had settled there and, you know, you want to live where your family lives, but anyway [34:00] as far as the relationship between officers and non-coms was concerned, it was rather relaxed. Now I had been assigned to a major by the name of Herschberger

[spelled phonetically] [34:19] and I don't know what happened to him.

BB: So he was your commanding officer?

FM: Yeah, and he had a special assignment and the special assignment he had was to find out as much as possible about what's going on in Germany with the development of nuclear facilities -- nuclear weapons and he had the responsibility of reporting on a regular basis to Vannevar Bush [34:58] at the National [35:00] --

LM: Research Council

FM: -- Research Council, on Constitution Avenue, it's still there today as you may know. We didn't -- my coworker and I didn't find out about this until Hiroshima and Nagasaki happened and then he told us that his assignment was to find out and collect information about what was going on in Germany on nuclear weapons.

BB: I definitely would like to talk about that; we might not get to that until tomorrow, the specifics of those interviews, but if -- now that we've talked a little bit about the camp goings on, if you wanted to start talking a little bit about [36:00] what the interrogations were like, in particular do you have any recollections of your very first interrogation, if it was intimidating or if it went through without a hitch or anything about that.

FM: I really don't recall the details of the first interrogation, because we had been briefed on how to run the interrogation, how to approach the prisoner and so on. You know it's just the way it is in the book here. Make them feel at ease and then gradually go into some specifics and [37:00] so on. Offer him a cigarette and so on.

BB: It even said sometimes they even used liquor. Would you go in with -- that's mentioned in the book; they would sometimes offer a cigarette or a drink.

FM: Well, there were other things done to prisoners and I don't think that's mentioned in here.

Some prisoners of good behavior would be taken into Washington to a fine restaurant, treated to a dinner, and so on, and made to feel at ease.

BB: And would they try to interrogate them over dinner, or just do that as a reward for cooperating?

FM: I think it was the latter, as a reward. Of course [38:00], as they talked and information came to surface it would be reported back, but it was not the primary purpose to take them out. That was primarily a -- for good behavior.

BB: Okay. How long before an interview did you usually prepare? Did you have any information about the person going into it?

FM: As I recall there was no fancy preparation for, you know, the background of the prisoner and so on and so forth. I mean, you would just -- it was cold turkey basically.

BB: Do you know -- did you know why that person was selected because not [39:00] every -- is it correct that not every German prisoner of war, obviously, went through Fort Hunt [39:06], only select people went through? When you were there in 1945, what were some of the folks like who you were interviewing? And we'll talk later about the whole German U-boat that was captured. I want to cover that separately, but if you wanted to talk about some of the more typical interviews that you did.

FM: Well, to answer this question first of all my colleague and I, and by the way his name was Mandel [39:39], and he's in that list. And we he was I think a chemist and I of course was a mechanical engineer and so we were basically interviewing people who had similar backgrounds [40:00] in order to discuss with them the subject that we were knowledgeable in. So, and I'm not so sure that we really interviewed very many PWs other than I the three people that I was assigned to and who came off the U -- whatever

the number is.

BB: Yeah. I need to double check the number

FM: Right, so my time, once that started was spent almost 100 percent for those three people.

BB: Right, but before that were you -- a lot of people that went through Fort Hunt [40:55] were from U-boats. Did you -- were those the folks that you were interrogating or were they more [41:00] Army folks or were they German civilians?

FM: I never -- I only met one person that was from the German Navy and he was kind of a trustee at that point and he was the lieutenant in the Navy and he was an Austrian. And the reason he was there was that he knew all about the schnorkel [41:39]; you want me to spell it?

BB: Sure

FM: S-C-H-N-O-R-K-E-L, the breathing device that allows the submarine to remain underwater [42:00] for an extended period of time, and we didn't know that so this was a very valuable information to the U.S. Navy.

BB: And so did you interrogate him?

FM: I did not interrogate him, but I knew him. I knew of him because as I said he was kind of a preferred prisoner at that point.

BB: So he was one of the folks that did cooperate.

FM: Right, very much so. Now talking about cooperation, the quality or the type of prisoner changed considerably after Rommel [42:50] was driven out of North Africa and the Afrika Korps [42:53] people came in. They were very uncooperative [43:00]; they tried to make trouble; they tried to cause disturbances. But once the war in North Africa ended and the U.S. went into Italy, the attitude of the Germans changed considerably in that

they felt they were going -- were on the losing end and therefore they would be much better off to be cooperative with the Americans, especially with the Americans because by that time too there was a concept being recognized that if they [44:00] weren't captured by the Americans, they might be ending in Russia and everybody was scared to death about ending up in Russia as a PW. So, we got lots of cooperation, beginning with that period. But, on the other hand too, German POWs told us that they didn't understand why we would be fighting with them or why they would be fighting -- why -- yeah we would be fighting against the Germans because one of these days, we both would be fighting together against the Russians. And that was kind of their theme song, consistently, especially those that were officers [45:00] or even higher officers. Now, and I think that was mentioned someplace in that write-up too.

BB: Yeah I think there's an account of one of the interviews, a transcript, and the prisoner specifically mentioned the Russians in that, so did that -- so that seemed to come up in a number of the interrogations that you did?

FM: Yeah, right and that's the theme song they had and why they couldn't understand that we would be fighting the Germans because we would be ending up both of us together fighting the Russians.

BB: Did -- on a similar theme there without going too far off track, did you interview many or any people [46:00] who came across as Nazis, as firm-believing Nazis? Or were most of the people, did they not let on that they were or what was the general type of person with that regard?

FM: By that time I think, I believe, I know, that they were not members of the Nazi party or supporters of Hitler [46:35]. They denied it and they didn't want it to be known that they

were Nazis. Now during the North Africa period they were all -- many of them were staunch Nazis and supporters of Hitler [46:57].

BB: But these [47:00] were folks that would have been interrogated before you were at Fort Hunt [47:04]?

FM: Right, Right

BB: So going back to one of my earlier questions about preparation, you said you really didn't have too much of a chance to prepare or anything; you didn't really have much information about the prisoner beforehand, who you were going to be interviewing.

FM: Well, yes they did give us a little bit of background as to what function they had performed in the German army and maybe some guidance as to the nature of the questions.

BB: What kind of information they wanted to get out of them?

FM: What information they wanted to get from them.

BB: I'm sorry, this random question came to my mind; were most of the interrogators your age, were they younger, were they older [48:00] because I just thought of the whole idea of, if it was a young soldier interrogating an older experienced German officer, in your case you would have been, what, in your mid-20s, in your early?

LM: Early 20s

BB: Early 20s, were you considered young among interrogators or were you the average age?

FM: So that was -- since most of the interrogators came out of the fort Washington Heights area they were mostly younger people, like myself, born in Germany, going to school in the U.S., and there was only maybe a couple of commissioned officers that were a little bit older and a couple of older officers [49:00] who were not linguists; they were just

camp administrators.

BB: Okay, because I guess what I just thought of is if you have a lot of 22, 23, 24 year olds doing the interrogating, but sometimes you had to dress up in a uniform, what was the highest ranking uniform you ever donned?

FM: Lieutenant colonel.

BB: So I guess I'm thinking how many 23 year old lieutenant colonels were there out there and could that have been a giveaway to the Germans who were there? It's just something that struck me that I've never thought of before.

FM: Well, there were a couple, three or four, maybe a half a dozen of German refugees who had [50:00] gone through OCS [50:02] and were a little bit older. That took care of the problem.

BB: I guess with the -- I don't know if there would ever be a typical interview. Was there a typical interview or were no two interviews alike?

FM: I would say, thinking about it, that you played it by ear depending on the response of the PW, the attitude, if he was -- whether he was belligerent maybe to some degree although we didn't have that problem very much and so on [51:00].

BB: How long would it usually take, or was there a wide range?

FM: I'd say one to two hours.

BB: Okay. So it never went over the course of multiple days, you would

FM: No

BB: just sit down with them at once? Would you ever take a break and then go back in, or it was short enough that you would just do it straight?

FM: There was another category of interrogations and that was where an enlisted man or

possibly make-believe officer was quartered with the PWs and lived with them day and night and presented, quote, as another PW and that was a method of [52:00] interrogation that took place and of course that took place over days.

BB: Did you ever do that?

FM: No I never did that.

BB: But do you know how effective that was, did they ever suspect people or was it fairly effective?

FM: Well, I think it was fairly effective because the people that were housed together with the Germans, they were pretty well-trained in the German army organization and the weaponry and so on. Now, whether they got special training, I can't tell you. I don't know, but they must have had some special training so that they would [53:00] not give themselves away. Something going through my mind. I knew of this incident that this Ph.D. wrote about and that is this one PW who used to live in Washington before the war and knew, of course, Fort Hunt [53:37], and used to tease the listeners that he knew exactly where he was and he used to take his girlfriend there, and that was Fort Hunt [53:51] on the George Washington Parkway.

BB: Did that happen while you were there with that [54:00] individual or is that just something that you learned about that was passed around?

FM: I learned about it. I did not know about the incident firsthand but apparently it was a well-known story.

BB: Speaking of other stories, I know you weren't there, but what did you hear about the shooting and escape attempt of Werner Henke [54:24].

FM: First of all, and my wife knows that too we were contacted by a German journalist in

about 1995 who was stationed here, who was -- yeah who was assigned to Washington and who wrote for a magazine. Did I give you that business card?

BB: No, I don't think so.

FM: Do we have it? Anyway --

LM: I don't know what you have in your business card file.

FM: I don't think I have it in there.

LM: Well, I don't have it.

FM: Okay. Anyway, this guy was stationed in Washington -- I mean assigned to, not stationed, and there was an article in the Alexandria Gazette, written by -- what's the name?

LM: Matthew Gail [spelled phonetically].

FM: Matthew Gail? Anyway my name was mentioned in it and this guy called me up and said [56:00] you know, "I understand you're Mr. Fred Michel and you were stationed at Fort Hunt [56:09] and I'd like to talk to you about it." I said -- and I think I was at work, at Meadow.

LM: I think he called you at home.

FM: At home?

LM: Maybe it was Gail's article. I thought you were saying something else.

FM: So I said "Well I don't know what you want to talk about, why you want to talk about Fort Hunt [56:40]?" So he mentioned this incident, and so -- and I said "Well I don't know anything about it. I can't tell you anything." And so [57:00] the conversation continued on a kind of a casual basis because he wasn't going to get anything out of me as far as information is concerned. The next thing that happened was I called the German

embassy to find out whether this guy was for real or not because he said he was assigned to the embassy. And the secretary who answered the phone was very talkative and verified the fact that he was assigned to Washington, not the embassy, but as a journalist, et cetera. So next thing happened was [58:00] that he would like to come and talk to me or see me and he would like to bring an acquaintance with him who was supposedly a relative of Henke [58:21], so I thought about it and I said "You know, what can I do?" said I'll talk to them and we made an appointment for them to come to our house in Alexandria. It turned out that the journalist couldn't make it and this so-called relative of Henke [58:55] showed up with two bottles of wine on a Saturday afternoon [59:00] and introduced himself and it turned out that he was a sales rep of Lufthansa in Washington and that he lived over in Maryland at, oh what's the name, the new town.

LM: Columbia.

FM: Columbia. So he came over and we talked and he -- why he was interested in Henke's [59:34] story was that he was -- I believe he said that his mother was a relative of either Henke [59:47] or Henke's [59:48] wife and that in order to make his story more believable [01:00:00], he told us that his mother lived in Munich during the war years and that she was an anti-Nazi and to prove it the Nazis broke into her apartment and arrested her and tortured her even and so on. But the other reason was that he then told the story that Henke [01:00:42] had been told that the Brits were looking for him -- you know, this is the way the story is -- and he was afraid that they would kill him [01:01:00] and he was not a Nazi; he was just a good, loyal German and he did not shoot those sailors of the submarine that they had sunk, and that as a matter of fact that he was responsible for saving some of them, fishing them out of the ocean. And he wanted to

know whether I knew about this or what I knew about this and so on. I said "Well this happened; he was there as a PW when I wasn't there. I don't know anything about it."

And apparently this journalist wanted to write a story to [01:02:00] -- oh, what's the word I'm looking for -- to take the guilt off of that guy.

BB: Oh okay. Exonerate him?

FM: Exonerate him and publish it, so I says "Well, whatever you are going to do that's up to you and your friend. I have no way of validating what happened, what the captain did." I didn't know and he may have been a fine officer and without guilt and so on, and you know, if that's the case, fine, but I have no way to validate that [01:03:00] at all, and that was the end of the story. Do you remember anything?

LM: No, not additional.

BB: Do you remember ever hearing about it, Lucille?

LM: No.

BB: It wasn't -- it wasn't like it was in the papers or anything like that

LM: No.

FM: But, one of the neighbors on Fort Hunt [01:03:23] Road.

LM: Saw it, witnessed it

FM: Yeah, witnessed the shooting.

LM: But it was not in the papers at the time; there was nothing said at the time.

FM: And it was not talked about, even when I was stationed there, if I that I remember.

BB: So you don't even recall ever even hearing about it happening until possibly even after the war?

FM: No I think I might have heard something about a PW having been shot before I got

[01:04:00] there, but that was about the extent of it.

BB: But when you were there, there were no other escape attempts or anything? The POWs didn't give you any trouble in terms of trying to leave? Okay, well --

(End of Tape 2)

(Beginning of tape 3A)

BB: Okay, we should be going. It is Wednesday, May 31st, 2006. I'm Brandon Bies with the National Park Service here interviewing Frederick Michel in his home in Louisville, Kentucky. It's about 11:00 a.m., and this is the second day of a series of interviews on Fort Hunt [00:24]. And today like I just said I think we're going to start off asking some more specific questions about the interrogation process. I guess since we already spoke a little bit yesterday about what you did during the interrogations and how long they took if you wanted to go into some detail about that one German submarine that was -- I guess was it captured at the end of the war or did it surrender and any details you know about that.

FM: No, the submarine surrendered to I believe [01:00] the Navy in the Atlantic Ocean and it had some interesting cargo. Number one there was some uranium oxide which was supposed to be taken to Japan for their work on nuclear areas. And then there were several interesting people on board, three of whom were assigned to me to work with and to obtain information from. All three of them were cooperative PWs, one of whom was a physicist by the name of Dr. Heinz Schlicke [01:52], S-C-H-L-I-C-K-E, the second one was a [02:00] Air Force officer whose name I don't recall but he appeared to be a captain in the German air force and apparently was not particularly interesting from the point of view of knowledge, so we I didn't spend much time with him at all other than I guess

guarding him, make sure that he didn't get into any trouble. And then there was the third person who was not on board the submarine, but who was assigned to me for different reason and that was a man by the name of Dr. Hertz [03:00], H-E-R-T-Z, [Carl] Hellmuth Hertz [03:05]. And he was the son of a German physicist who I believe ended up in Russia after the war and a brother -- and had a brother who was also a physicist and who lived, I believe, in Berlin at the time. The main interest, or the interesting part of the Hertz [03:40] story was the fact that he was a member of the Afrika Korps [03:49] and managed to become a PW of the American forces. And with that [04:00] brought with him a number of names of German physicists, European physicists, a number of whom had come to the United States at the beginning of the war, and people like Fermi [spelled phonetically] for example. The other interesting part was that when he became a PW he was quartered in Oklahoma, I believe and apparently was able to communicate with former German physicists who were at the Pentagon [04:54] and to let them know that he had been captured by the American forces [05:00] and where he was. They immediately apparently reported this prisoner or the presence of this prisoner to higher headquarters, to higher level personnel that was interested in German physicists. And as a result of that he was pulled out of the PW camp in Oklahoma and assigned to Fort Hunt [05:36]. Obviously having that kind of background and so on was completely cooperative and was accordingly treated not only with respect, but also given [06:00] certain privileges.

BB: What were some of those privileges?

FM: You know, freedom of movement in the camp and so on, occasional outings like a boat ride on the Potomac River and so on.

BB: And would you be assigned to him while that was going on?

FM: Yes, I was assigned to him almost the entire time that he arrived at Fort Hunt [06:30] and was subsequently released and I'll describe that in a moment too.

BB: When you were escorting him were you armed with a sidearm or were you unarmed?

FM: No unarmed, as a matter of fact I think that was true for almost all PWs at the time who had been privileged [07:00] and well who had been found to be cooperative, or "trustworthy" is a better word. Because of his connections with the international community of physicists, and that's about the best way to describe it, because of his grandfather, who was the inventor of the Hertzian waves and I believe might have been a Nobel Prize winner. He had connections, as I said, all over the world in the community of physicists and at the end of the war, was released directly into Sweden to Uppsala [spelled phonetically] [08:00] and had been arranged for scholarship to complete his Ph.D. work in Sweden and that's how what happened to him at the end of the war. He subsequent -- well there's some more story to that on this particular individual. He met his former wife, his future wife in Uppsala who happened to have been a doctoral student, a medical doctor and he completed his own Ph.D. work in physics and later on I understand received the Lasker Award from the United States. He [09:00] was the inventor of the printing device for the computer printer; I'm trying to think of the name.

BB: I think we spoke about this earlier, was this the LaserJet or the Inkjet?

FM: Inkjet, the Inkjet printer and had this patent administered by a consulting firm in Boston who is -- did I give you that? His information?

BB: Let me check here.

FM: [inaudible] when the name comes to me. But as a matter of fact it was a world renowned consulting firm headquartered in Boston and they were assigned [10:00] the management

and administration of the Inkjet invention, which eventually of course ended up with IBM and other companies of that type. As a result of that too he had the opportunity to come to an international optical conference in Washington in later years but I would like to introduce at this point how I picked up the trail again of Hellmuth Hertz [10:50].

BB: Before, if I could interrupt cause I would like you to talk about that, but if we could talk for a few more minutes about what you did with him at Fort Hunt [11:00] during the war. How long do you recall that was he held at Fort Hunt [11:06]?

FM: My guess at this point would be that he was held there for close to nine months.

BB: Really, so -- and was that normal, or was that long for a stay, because --

FM: That was long, but he was treated as I said as a desired guest, and as one who would be of great help to us in the area of physics and so on.

BB: Was he kept in the standard POW rooms and or did he have his own housing?

FM: No, we had some huts on the property and there were three occupants, number one, Hertz [11:55], number two, Schlicke [11:57], and number three, the air force [12:00] captain.

BB: And do you remember about where those huts were in relation to -- I know this is a tough area for you, but -- and if not it's not a big deal.

FM: I really don't know but there were I think several of these huts on the grounds and they were handled -- or they were reserved for privileged prisoners.

BB: And they had their own private hut?

FM: Their own private hut which was used 24 hours a day. They ate there, they slept there, they exercised there, they worked there.

BB: Were there guards stationed outside them or they had pretty much free reign?

FM: No, they were trustees, so to speak.

BB: And when you -- did you work with them on a regular basis, on almost a daily basis?

FM: The answer to that is yes. I saw them daily, I visited with them [13:00]. I made sure they were properly taken care of as far as food and clothes and shelter is concerned. And as far as providing material like paper and pencils and so on our concern in order to be able for them to work whatever work they had done.

BB: Were you interrogating them at this point or were you acting more of a liaison between them and other camp officials.

FM: Well I think was kind of a combination in that number one I acted as the liaison to help them to make sure they had their needs are being satisfied, but at the same time I would also report on what interesting materials may have emerged in the course of conversations [14:00].

BB: Were these conversations -- were these recorded like the other ones?

FM: Yes.

BB: So they did have listening devices or things installed in these huts?

FM: I don't know whether we had listening devices in these huts, most likely, but you could find that from the National Archives whether there were recordings made on these folks. Now as far as Hertz [14:35] is concerned I knew that he had been sent directly to Sweden, not through Germany, but directly to Sweden. And in 1955, I believe, when I was working for Westinghouse Electric in Pittsburgh I had an occasion to go [15:00] on a trip to Annapolis where they had a plant, and still have a plant not under Westinghouse, but it was the oceanic division. At that point I had come out of Washington, D.C. and knew one of the salesmen that were working in the ocean division and he asked me whether I would be willing to take a visitor from the Swedish defense organization back

to Washington and I agreed. During the drive from Annapolis to Washington, we made some small talk and during the small talk I inquired about a Dr. Hertz [16:00] and whether his name meant anything to this particular individual. And the answer was he didn't know him personally but one of his colleagues at the defense department in Sweden was acquainted with him. So he gave him my business card, which he delivered and about three months later I received a letter from Hellmuth Hertz [16:30], much to my surprise, much to his surprise of having gotten that business card with my name on it.

BB: Do you still have that letter?

FM: I think Lucille has; we have several letters from -- oh that was the beginning of an exchange of letters at Christmas and I think we have [17:00] those letters.

BB: Oh really, okay. I'd love to look at those at some point, or look for them to see, if you don't mind sharing those; I'd love to look at them.

FM: In the letters he kind of brought me up to date that he had gotten his Ph.D. and that he had done work in nuclear medical field, not in the nuclear weapons field, but in the medical field. And apparently due to his, I'm just guessing now, but I assume because of his experience during World War II [17:41] and the use of nuclear energy during that era also maybe because of the fact that his wife was an MD in the medical field and so on. And they had I believe one or two children as a result [18:00] of that marriage. He told me about his visiting Washington for that optical international optical conference in one of the big hotels, I've forgotten which one I don't know whether it was the Warden Park or some sort of hotel of that category and we made an arrangement to get together and took him for a sightseeing tour, and this was on a Sunday afternoon.

BB: About when was this?

FM: This was about 1955, no wait a minute. Oh, wait a minute. Oh we were already -- it must have been in the 1960s anyway [19:00]. We took him to Fort Hunt [19:03] by the way because he asked to and showed him around and then --

BB: Do you remember anything in particular about that visit, were -- do you remember if any of the buildings were still there when he went back?

FM: I think some of the buildings were gone and certainly I think those huts, those little huts were gone. So we just took a ride around the periphery and just to kind of refresh one's memory. And then we took him on a tour down to Charlottesville to see Monticello and tell him about Jefferson and showed him the University and [20:00] the invention of the wall construction of Jefferson, the -- what is it called -- the walls that are meander shaped.

BB: Serpentine wall?

FM: Serpentine, yeah, serpentine walls for structural purpose and some other things like things that I thought might be interested -- that he might be interested in. Anyway we continued our correspondence over the years and what happened to our lives and the fact that he was awarded the Lasker Award. And then his wife [21:00] sent a letter to tell us that he had passed away as a victim of cancer.

BB: Do you know about how long ago he passed away?

FM: I think we still got the letter, but I can't remember the date. That was probably before we moved into our latest house in Alexandria, so it must have been in the late '70s maybe and so on. But there must be a record that had his -- the time of his death. I think if I remember correctly that his son also had tried to become a physicist in the tradition of the family [22:00] and was going to school on the west coast, but beyond that I do not have

any further information on what happened to his family. We did not stay in contact with his wife, and I don't know that she ever went to the United States or anything of the sort. That's about the story about Hertz [22:31].

BB: So just a few last quick questions on Hertz [22:35] during World War II [22:36], so you know was he working directly with the German nuclear program during the war? Was that why the United States was so interested in him?

FM: Well no, he was still a student.

BB: He was still a student, okay.

FM: And I don't know where he went to the University, I think it was Göttingen [spelled phonetically] or [23:00] somewhere near Frankfurt. And I don't think he ever went to a research facility which was housed at the time in a castle in the Black Forest in Sigmaringen [spelled phonetically]. That's where most of the nuclear work was being done and it was a castle that belonged to Kaiser Wilhelm II. Beyond that, the only thing that I can say is that he very carefully had written down all of the names of all of the physicists that he had known to have come to the United States, just to have a fallback position [24:00] in case he ever would become a PW of the United States, which also sounded like he had planned to become a prisoner of the United States army.

BB: But you had said that he was a German officer, correct, or was he just a civilian during World War II [24:25]?

FM: No I imagine he was an officer in a lower rank, but he was in the service in the Afrika Korps [24:36].

BB: Right, and he was captured at the end of World War II [24:41], or do you know if it was before the end?

FM: No, no, before Rommel [24:47] was driven out of North Africa. And most of those PWs at that time were all sent to Oklahoma and so on [25:00].

BB: Right, was he at Fort Hunt [25:04] when you got there or was --

FM: No he came after I came there.

BB: Okay, so then he would have been there, what's that, from around 1945 into 1946?

FM: Right, and he was released at the end of the war, whenever that was. Was that in 1946? All the PWs at Fort Hunt [25:33] were -- shortly after the war were all released and I think you have a record of that somewhere.

BB: Yeah, the war in Japan, the whole all of World War II [25:47] was over by early September of 1945. But was he kept there, because you didn't arrive at Fort Hunt [25:56] until sometime in earlier in 1945 [26:00]. And you said he was there for about nine months or so was he held there after the war ended then?

FM: Yeah, these people were held there and new people arrived and those new people were part of Project Paperclip [26:20].

BB: I've never heard of that before.

FM: Well Project Paperclip [26:26] had the mission of collecting all the German technical people before they fell into the hands of the Russians. And Braun, von Braun [26:40] was one of those by the way, Wernher von Braun [26:45]. So we processed some of those Paperclip people [26:52] before they were sent down to Huntsville.

BB: Oh, okay let's see [27:00], anything else before we move on anything else you can think of about Dr. Hertz [27:05]?

FM: No, not really, other than, you know, he obviously was a very friendly person, friendly towards the United States. Very smart, intellectual person, well-educated and interested

in pursuing his profession after the war.

BB: And I guess I gather he was happily providing the United States with information.

FM: Yeah, absolutely.

BB: I guess before we move on to Schlicke [27:47], because you have some memories about Schlicke [27:49] as well. Before we do that, I know you said you don't recall too much but anything about that Air Force officer who you thought was a captain, I know you had said earlier that he [28:00] wasn't very cooperative.

FM: No it wasn't a question of him not being cooperative but he apparently didn't have much information to share. And he was he was probably the one person, if I recall, who tried to tell us that we're all going to fight the Russians one of these days and why do we fight the Germans when we will need them at a future date. But he was a pleasant person and not difficult to get along with, not obstructive or anything of the sort.

BB: Okay. Was he also there for a long period of time?

FM: They all came about the same time, even though Hertz [28:56] did not come off of the submarine [29:00] but Schlicke [29:02] and whatever this guy's name was, the Air Force captain, both came off the submarine. They were supposed to go to Japan and were supposed to set up a low frequency transmitting capability so that the Japanese could talk directly to the Germans, without interference by the U.S. organization.

BB: Okay. I guess then we'll move on to Schlicke [29:43] then if you want to talk a little bit about him and your work with him.

FM: Okay, Schlicke [29:50] was very cooperative. He knew that the war was going against the Germans [30:00]. He also knew that he had a risk of being taken to the Russians and wanted to avoid that under all circumstances and so as a consequence was very

cooperative. He was also interrogated by a Mr. Alberti [30:32] and apparently in his discussions with Mr. Alberti [30:38], Alberti [30:39] found out that he was a specialist in -- not microwave, in -- yeah I guess microwave transmission and the design of microwave [31:00] devices. He volunteered apparently during those interrogations to write a textbook for the Navy department and -- which is what kept him pretty much busy during the time. At the end of -- apparently through the arrangement of the Navy he was given the opportunity to emigrate into the U.S. after the war. And indeed that happened, he was sent to Canada and through legal channels he became a immigrant to the United States, but he was also given the chance to pick up his wife and I think his child or children in Germany, bring them to [32:00] Canada and then immigrated legally into the U.S. He then had an obligation to work for the Navy as a result of this gift so to speak, the privilege, and was working -- was assigned to the radar section at the Naval training devices center at Sands Point, Long Island [32:33], which was one of the Guggenheim estates which was used by the Navy to develop training devices equipment, which were later moved down to Orlando, and they're still [33:00] down there I believe. Anyway he served his term, I was -- this was after I was retiring or released from the Army, from Fort Hunt [33:16] -- from Fort Meade [33:18]. I was discharged at Fort Meade [33:21] on the 26th of July 1946 and went to work for a small company in Elmhurst, New York and one of the activities I was engaged in as city engineering supervisor was to help them get some Navy work contracts. In that process I went out to Sands Point to find -- to explore business opportunities [34:00] and I had known that the army had discharged Dr. Schlicke [34:09] to Sands Point so I made it my business to look him up. And by the way he looked like a typical German submarine commander; he had a beard and not a full

beard but one of these small beards apparently to blend in with the navy environment he was working in. I believe he had the rank of commander, I'm not sure about that. But anyway I looked him up and kind of walked from behind him. He was sitting at the desk and tapped him on the shoulder and [35:00] looked and he turned his head and had a big surprise on his face because he certainly did not expect to find me of all places in that environment.

BB: And this would have been, what, a year or so after the war ended?

FM: No, that was in -- let's see, 1950 in 1950.

BB: Okay. And -- but he recognized you right away?

FM: Yeah he did.

BB: I guess because you spent so much time with him at Fort Hunt [35:38].

FM: Right, right and you know it was a big shock to him and he was wanting to know you know what was I doing, how did I get there, where did I come from and so on. Then I continued to go to Fort Hunt [35:58]. He completed his [36:00] service for the navy and was given the chance to take a job in private industry and his specialty at that time was contact materials for electrical contacts. And he had quite a bit of knowledge in metals which are used for those types of things. And ended up I believe in Milwaukee and then I lost track of him completely. I can't remember the name of the company; it's a well know company; it's probably now combined with another company but [37:00] they were known for the manufacture, the design and manufacture of contact materials for relays and those kinds of things. So that is about the story about Dr. Schlicke [37:18].

BB: And do you know about how old he was, was he about your age?

FM: No, well first of all he had his Ph.D. already, he had already worked. Now I don't know

where he worked whether it was at Peenemünde or in Berlin or wherever but he had working experience as a Ph.D. as a designer.

BB: And during the war though he was actually a commissioned [38:00] navy commander for the Germans?

FM: Right, right.

BB: Okay. And just one last thing with him at the fort, you mentioned he was writing this technical manual; was this something that you were assisting him with?

FM: No, this was strictly done with Dr. -- or Mr. Alberti [38:23] and with the navy people and the main effort was to design or share the no to design those elements that were used in the transmission of microwave devices. It is special connectors and so on because connectors were a new technology and there was very little known about them [39:00] and we -- the Navy was very anxious in finding out more about them.

BB: And was Schlicke [39:11] given similar freedoms as we talked about for Hertz [39:17]?

FM: Yeah.

BB: So he was allowed some of these other privileges and I guess was that Air Force officer as well, they were given the rights to go out on trips?

FM: Yeah.

BB: Okay and would you also go out and accompany them when they would do this?

FM: Yeah, sometimes like walking down the Parkway or stuff like that.

BB: Okay, I guess since we've talked a little bit about those three folks right now, you mentioned a little bit about, you mentioned Alberti [39:50]. What do you, what do you remember about him? I know -- you said he was kind of the lone naval representative that was there. Was he fluent [40:00] in German, did he interrogate folks himself?

FM: No I don't think he spoke any German. I don't think, but I'm not sure but maybe he did. But they all certainly two both of them Hertz [40:19] and Schlicke [40:21] spoke English.

BB: Oh did they, okay.

FM: Yeah and I don't know. I've forgotten about the Air Force type but and maybe Alberti [40:32] spoke German too, but I just don't remember that, so I can't tell you for sure. Maybe Mulligan knows about it, I would certainly suggest to talk to him about it.

BB: Do you know who Alberti [40:54] reported to, did he?

FM: Somewheres in the Navy department along [41:00] Constitution Avenue and -- but there was an awful lot of secrecy about him, it was all hush-hush, more so than we -- did our work and I just don't know why.

BB: Was he already at Fort Hunt [41:24] when you arrived there?

FM: He was not at Fort Hunt [41:28] per se; he was not living there, he was living in Washington someplace, had an office in the Navy department building at one of those World War I [41:44] temporary building and so on. And as I said, or as I suggest maybe Mulligan has some information on him more than I can provide you with.

BB: Was he in uniform or was he just wearing civilian [42:00] clothes?

FM: He was wearing civilian clothes, there's no question about that.

BB: And so from what you know most of these prisoners, folks like Schlicke [42:14] actually worked directly with him at times?

FM: Yeah, not in private rooms -- well maybe, I'm not sure, I'm not sure about that. Now he provided the draft materials for the book for the training manual, whatever, and so that was the way he kept busy. Now whether that was ever published I don't know; again Mulligan would probably know about it. I know; I worked on a book and you might

want to talk about that for a few minutes [43:00]. There was very -- shall we talk about that?

BB: Sure because I was pretty much done talking about those three individuals so yeah if you want to switch because I know that you had said you had worked on producing a manual at some point?

FM: Yeah right, my buddy and I Mandel [43:21], whose name you know, you have to, and I were working on a dictionary, so to speak, with technical terms that had been created during the war particularly with the work at Peenemünde at the rocket work and so on because there was no dictionary in existence in the U.S. translating [44:00] those words. And that was published later on by the intelligence division of the War Department, and I asked Lucille if she found it, I think she found it. You can look at it and find out what the TM, the training manual number was and probably still is available somewhere in the archives. It was unique at the time because it not only covered the translation of the words, but it also provided explanation of what the words meant. And that was done when we were both working for this Major Herschberger [44:52], who was our boss, our immediate boss. And [45:00] I believe I told you earlier yesterday that one of his primary assignments was to collect information on work done in Germany on nuclear weapons; Uranium and related issues. And that was his specialty for interrogating PWs and report to Vannevar Bush [45:37] at the National Science Foundation where they that information was collected and then reported I guess to General -- oh what's his name who ran the nuclear program [46:00] down in Oak Ridge?

BB: Oh okay, I'm not sure.

FM: I'll get his name in a minute but -- so anyway that was his mission and I don't know what

happened to him. I think he was from Ohio, and you know Pennsylvania Dutch probably and you know did speak some German and you know there were colonies of Germans in -- west of Cleveland and sort of below Lake Erie and so on. As a matter of fact there's still a -- well that has nothing to do with [47:00] -- but anyway that's about all that I know about him. He was very close-mouthed as to what his work was and I guess you know it was top secret really and so that's that story. Leslie Groves.

BB: Oh that's the -- yup you're right he's the general. Was Herschberger [47:34] your immediate supervisor, so he was your boss and he assigned you individual people to, you know for example Schlicke [47:43] and Hertz [47:44], he assigned them to you and did he also assign you the task of, you and Mandel [47:49], this task of developing this dictionary?

FM: Yeah, I was trying to think on how that came about. We got a [48:00] request from the Pentagon [48:02] that they needed that document or that book or text and I guess he assigned to us because he knew we were both technically educated and we'd be able to handle that.

BB: And from what you recall was Herschberger [48:27] already -- he was already there at Fort Hunt [48:30] when you arrived?

FM: Yes, he was there.

BB: Do you know if he had been there for the entire history of the program?

FM: No clue, no clue.

BB: Okay. And I assume, was he there when you were discharged when you left did he stay behind or were you discharged when the whole program was closed?

FM: We were discharged in July of [49:00] 1946, July, and I was discharged through Fort

Meade [49:13] because I wanted to stay in the Washington area and get a job there

BB: But Herschberger [49:23], do you know if he -- did other people remain at Fort Hunt [49:29] after you were discharged or were you some of the last people?

FM: Yeah, some guys were sent to Boston and there was some activity started in Boston and I don't know. I don't remember how it was because one of the letters that I had received from one of the guys who was transferred up there expected for me to show up there and it never happened [50:00].

BB: Yeah, I was looking at that just this morning and the letters are all -- well I'm going to try to flip to them here are from an individual named George [50:09]. It doesn't have his last name on here but written from Boston it looks like in July -- excuse me August of 1945. Yeah he does mention about how you might be coming; he thought you were going to come up there and I was trying to get a sense of what they were doing up there.

FM: Was this George Mandel [50:35]?

BB: Oh, it could be; it just says George so that may it may be your friend; it may be Mandel [50:43].

FM: Yeah, I'm pretty sure it was.

BB: He mentions a number of other names in the letter. Let's see here Len Weisberg [spelled phonetically] is a name, Lieutenant [51:00] Kenner [spelled phonetically] is a name and he even mentions Major Herschberger [51:08]; he says "How is Major Hershberger or 'Berger' to you?"

FM: Right, so obviously he still was at Fort Hunt [51:15] at that time. Now he might have been discharged at the end of the war, shortly after that because I think he returned back to civilian life from Fort Hunt [51:31].

BB: Hershberger did?

FM: Yeah, now here's a piece of information that may or may not help you. A lot of our papers, not the interrogation stuff or that, but personnel papers were stored in St. Louis and there was a big fire.

BB: In 1974 I think it was [52:00].

FM: Yeah and a lot of those records were destroyed, including some of the people whose names are mentioned in there, so you may have a tough time trying to track some of this stuff.

BB: Yeah I think something like 80 percent of the U.S. Army records from World War II [52:21] burned because I've run into that trying to do research at the National Archives in St. Louis and they don't have very many army records left.

FM: It's inexcusable, inexcusable.

BB: Yeah, it is very frustrating that that happened and there of course were no copies.

FM: And they had no sprinkler systems or anything, no smoke detectors or anything. I wonder if they fixed it now.

BB: Hopefully, hopefully.

FM: How about the archives at the National Archives, are they all properly protected against disasters?

BB: Yeah I think they're in much better shape in Washington, D.C. [53:00], and that brings up actually an interesting point speaking of the Archives. Were you aware that there were -- there was film and negatives and whatnot kept at Fort Hunt [53:13] by the National Archives during the war?

FM: Well yeah, I knew that and there was some general knowledge about it, that the bunkers

underneath the naval guns, I guess they were naval guns, had been cleaned up and been used for storing of materials from the National Archives, rather from the Smithsonian Institute. But what it was, whether it was paintings, there was some talk about paintings, whether it was film [54:00] and that sort of thing, I really didn't know except what I was reading in the book.

BB: Okay, and so did you ever go in the bunkers or anything?

FM: No, there was no reason for that, they were locked up as far as I remember.

BB: Okay, were there guards posted outside of them or were they just locked up and closed?

FM: No I think they were just locked up.

BB: Okay, do you remember if they used all of the bunkers? Because there were -- I think there's four different gun emplacements for -- that were built for the big naval guns. Do you recall -- and one of them is a very large one, battery, Mount Vernon and that would have been close to one of the POW enclosures, and do you know if that one or other ones were used for housing this equipment, do you have any recollection?

FM: I have no recollection as to which bunkers we used for what, except [55:00] there were no prisoners in there.

BB: Right, another question relating to those concrete bunkers. Right next to the large bunker was a concrete spotting tower and it's actually still there today and it might have looked like a guard tower, but it was actually for the spotters to go up before World War I [55:26].

FM: For the artillery observers?

BB: Exactly, you got it, an artillery observer platform, and I was wondering if you remember that or remember it being used for anything?

FM: No, I really don't, and I seem to remember though that this area even then was pretty well overgrown and not very visible.

BB: Oh really, okay so you didn't really go amongst any of those World War I [55:50] bunkers or anything or even walk around there. Okay, okay, I just --

FM: No, and not for security reasons [56:00] either just there wasn't any particular interest in exploring and so on.

BB: Since we're talking about individuals, real quick I jotted down a list of a few names of various commanders that were at Fort Hunt [56:20] and I just curious if you remember any of the names or any of the people. One of them was a colonel from Rhode Island, his name was Russell H. Sweet and he was apparently -- he worked in the Pentagon [56:36], but he ran the Pentagon [56:38] office for the MIS-Y, the M-I-S-Y [56:42] program, but you don't recall the name Sweet?

FM: No, no.

BB: Another one, the commander of the POW branch of the army was a Colonel Catesby Pat Jones [spelled phonetically], no?

FM: No, he sounds like a Brit [57:00].

BB: With the name Pat Jones, it almost does sound like that, and then the last one which I think you did mention you remember was Colonel John Walker [57:10].

FM: Yeah he was the commanding officer, but you know we had nothing to do with him. He probably gave us a security briefing when we first arrived there on the 2nd or 3rd of June 1945.

BB: Right, okay, but otherwise, you didn't have much interactions with him?

FM: We didn't even -- as far as I remember we didn't even have retrieve at 5:00 in the

evening.

BB: Oh really?

FM: I don't remember that at all.

BB: Any dress parade or inspections or anything?

FM: No, very little. Yeah maybe inspection of the barracks [58:00], make sure the beds are made and that a quarter is dropped on the blanket and bounced off.

BB: Do you remember them actually doing that?

FM: Oh yeah.

BB: And was that done regularly or just intermittently?

FM: Not, no, and not very much at Fort Hunt [58:19]. I mean that was more in the line organization.

BB: When you were in boot camp and training, but as you said yesterday Fort Hunt [58:29] seemed a little bit more lax, they didn't --

FM: Oh yeah, yeah right.

BB: Okay. And so do you remember in the mornings would they have -- was there reveille every morning and the flag running up or just on occasions?

FM: I don't even remember that.

BB: Yeah, okay, let's see, I've got a few other more specific questions about the fort. I guess one last thing because this tape's about to run out. You had mentioned [59:00] yesterday that you were the head of the library or you had some dealings with a library there at Fort Hunt [59:06]?

FM: We had a library and I think it was in a separate barracks out in the woods and we had reference materials like training manuals and other records and so on and quite often,

well not so often, questions that came from outside other army organizations and so on whoever had dealings with us, would be referred to us for research and so on. And like Lucille said yesterday our standard answer would be "Have you checked the New York Times yet?" And of course because we found out that the New York Times sometimes had better information [01:00:00] or more current information on specific questions than we did.

BB: And, so this library was it more -- it was more technical, it was a technical library or were there pleasure reading --

FM: No, no pleasure reading.

BB: Okay, so it was just a technical library.

FM: It was library -- a library that dealt with specific assignments of Fort Hunt [01:00:31], of Y and Fort Hunt [1:00:33], not even X.

BB: Okay, okay so it was just for the Y program. And you were -- were you placed in charge of that, were you just kind of informally in charge of the library?

FM: I really don't remember. I know that we worked there and maybe this was on a rotational basis or whether it was on a more permanent basis, I just don't recall [01:01:00].

BB: Do you remember, you mentioned that you thought it was in a separate barracks building, was it its own building, or just in another building?

FM: I think it was like in a separate --

BB: A stand-alone building that served -- okay.

FM: And I remember we used to have a burn basket, and there was a daily assignment to burn classified material which should not -- would not be required to maintain, but it was a big deal to burn all of this superfluous material that was classified.

BB: And you said that would take place on a daily basis?

FM: Yeah, pretty sure.

BB: Do you remember where they would do that at, was there a specific location or they just -
-

FM: It was in a wooded area, that's all I can think of, but relative to the buildings and so on [01:02:00], I suspect it was near wherever the offices were and so they would bring the material over and we would burn it and so on.

BB: And it was usually just one trash can full, or was it lots more than that?

FM: No, it was like one trash can full.

BB: Okay, okay, that's interesting.

(End of Tape 3A)

(Beginning of Tape 3B)

BB: -- making casual -- and this way I can make notes from this. So right now we're just kind of recording some casual conversations between myself, Brandon Bies, and Fred Michel in his home on Wednesday afternoon, May 31st, 2006 as we're going through a series of letters that you wrote during World War II [00:23].

FM: Are we on? On August 23rd in 1945, I hitchhiked a ride from Alexandria to Mount Vernon, I mean to Fort Hunt [00:45], and the person who provided the ride was the lieutenant stationed at Fort Hunt [00:53]. On the way to Fort Hunt [00:57] his car broke down [01:00] and we had the problem of getting him and his wife back to their house which was just a mile or two away from Fort Hunt [01:14]. We commandeered a personnel carrier to provide the transportation to this couple who were kind enough to provide us transportation back to the camp. In other words we stole it.

BB: You stole [laughs]. So that's in reference to that letter. Here you mention Lucille is coming up on Saturday [02:00]. "Saturday night the NCO club is giving a party at one of the nightclubs near Alexandria here. I imagine it will be a pretty good affair."

FM: That building still stood up until very recently.

BB: This is -- that's from Rudy [02:31]. Now I wonder if he -- if this is a reference, probably not. He says "I am pretty sure that you are right concerning 1662's future." That's not -- that doesn't mean P.O. Box 1142 [02:54] or anything?

FM: No, no, no. No I don't know whether 1662 [03:00] was the setup in Boston or what, or whether that was his engineers' battalion.

BB: That could be it. Says here September 17th, 1945, "Thursday night I'm going to school in Washington for registration."

FM: Oh yeah, that was getting ready for discharge. Oh no, no, no, no, no, I'll tell you what it was. Lucille and I -- the Department of Agriculture gave courses at night like Spanish [04:00] language courses and we decided -- Lucille and I decided we would take a course there and we'd attend the Department of Agriculture or register for the course in the Department of Agriculture. That's what this is referenced to.

BB: And then it says, "The weekend was fairly quiet. Saturday Lucille and I went to the National Museum in Washington to the Archives where they have the surrender documents and then we went to a movie." So I guess you went to see the actual surrender documentation downtown.

FM: Right. In the Archives on Constitution Avenue.

BB: This doesn't sound good. September 27th, "Thanks for sending [05:00] the dog tags. Monday morning I realized I had left them home." I imagine that wasn't a very good

thing to do.

FM: No.

BB: “Still have work here and haven’t heard anything about our future. Tuesday night I started school and it was very simple.”

FM: That was the Department of Agriculture.

BB: “Incidentally, I am the only male in the class of about 30 students,” [laughs]. Oh, okay, yeah, “The teacher is not very interesting and has a hard time explaining Spanish phonetics.”

FM: Why we took Spanish I have no clue. I think just to have the excuse [06:00] to go out and spend time together.

BB: Here’s October 1st. “Saturday night we went ice skating and then we went to the movies and saw The Bell for Adano.” Do you remember where the ice skating was?

FM: I think the ice skating rink was in Alexandria in the name of -- Lucille could tell you in a sec, but I think it was in the neighborhood of where AAA office was.

BB: Okay, I know what you’re talking about [07:00].

FM: Between there and King Street, somewhere in between there. It was kind of a large building with a roof with a shape like so, like an arena almost.

BB: And then it sounds like your Spanish class was getting better. It says “Spanish is a little better; there are two more males now, a G.I. and a naval lieutenant.” So that made three of you I guess. But yeah, never really any detail, obviously you never mention Fort Hunt [07:42] or anything. It says here you were “CQ, charge of quarters for the weekend, from Saturday night to Monday morning.”

FM: Which meant that [08:00] I couldn’t leave.

- BB: Right, so I see a number of mentions of “working on the radio” and “radio parts.” Did you have a radio that you were working on?
- FM: Yeah I think I was building a radio, just to pass time.
- BB: Here’s another that slipped in: “This afternoon I took a walk to Mount Vernon and it was really beautiful.” If you were working on the Pentagon [08:36] that would have been a really, really long walk, whereas it was only about a mile and a half from Fort Hunt [08:43]. And here it says on Saturday you and Lucille went to Washington [09:00], oh to the Washington Zoo where it was very nice. “It’s in a big park and the animals are spread far apart.”
- FM: Yeah there were lots of things to do in Washington as long as you got there.
- BB: Sure. Well it sounds like there was a bus strike in November of 1945, but the Virginia buses didn’t go on strike.
- FM: Well the bus line was a privately owned line, which was called the AB&W [10:00], which was also the bus going down to Mount Vernon [unintelligible], M-A-Y. The word AB&W stood for was Alexandria, something, and Washington.
- BB: Here -- this letter is dated November 8th. “Here at the post there isn’t anything new. We have a little work now and then but it looks like we’ll be here for a little while yet anyhow. Fellows are constantly leaving on discharges [11:00], though, and the barracks are getting emptier every day.”
- FM: And that was when, in November?
- BB: November of 1945, so but during this period you were still working with those three German scientists and officers?
- FM: Yeah.

BB: Okay. Here still of November 25th. "A few days ago I got some new work again and expect to be busy for the next few weeks." Your boss is going on a business trip for almost a week, leaving everything to you to do. "Had a long talk with him last Monday as to what to do about my future army life after having told him my preferences and all the possibilities. I had told you about them last Sunday. He thought [12:00] I shouldn't do a thing, but sit tight, not even write to Wright Field. He expects to get out in a few weeks on the basis of his time in and the army said I will be responsible for our section. He told that he would make disposition in that direction before leaving. That would keep me here until the place closes. He also said I shouldn't press the issue of another job too much and get myself tied up that way and so" --

FM: This must have been Herschberger [12:41].

BB: I wonder if it was Herschberger [12:42] you were referring to, yeah, "...and so" -- something -- "my possibilities of getting out when this place closes, but should wait till we have a clearer picture of the situation. Then I still can go to the Pentagon [12:56] and look for a job. That's the situation at the present time [13:00]." So it's --

FM: Actually they offered me a commission.

BB: Oh did they really?

FM: And, I didn't want to stay in the Army, so I said no thanks; thanks but no thanks. And by the way, those were the people that had been working with Hertz [13:24].

BB: The people at the Pentagon [13:27] who offered you the job?

FM: Yeah.

BB: Got you. And I definitely would like to make a copy of that because that's talking about everything going there at Fort Hunt [13:39], things starting to shut down. Talks about

going shopping with Lucille. I guess your brother is still in Bavaria.

FM: Yeah now he was part of the Army intelligence [14:00] then. He finally also recognized that he was, you know, speaking German.

BB: Now here's a bunch in German.

FM: Yeah, let's see, okay, "My dear ones," and this was sent from Nyack, in New York [inaudible] [15:00]. Oh that's a letter that -- who wrote -- let's see. Oh, this was my mother's cousin's mother-in-law. And my mother's cousin was born in the same house in which my mother was born, in Landau and he ended up working for a company called Liferooter [spelled phonetically], which was a famous banking house for the Kaiser and he worked for them in Berlin [16:00] and then he was sent out in Berlin to open their office in London and later on he came to New York in about 1938 to open the New York office and that office is still in existence, they are doing very well, and he's the founder of another organization called the Leo Baeck Institute [16:32]. Are you familiar with that?

BB: I've heard of the name before, I know it sounds familiar.

FM: And it is an institute to preserve the history of German-speaking Jews, and they are located in New York. They are also located now in London and in Jerusalem. Now what's this here [17:00]? [inaudible] [18:00].

BB: That's more German.

FM: [inaudible] [19:00] Oh this is a picture they took of me on the -- in the same uniform as when I was made citizen.

BB: Oh, okay. So that would have been when you were down at Camp Blanding [19:17].

FM: Right, right. And the name was Southern District Court of the United States court. Now

this was in January of '46 [20:00] and I'm talking about my brother and [inaudible].

BB: To your sons. I think that's from your father or your mother?

FM: Might be. That's my father's handwriting, he had beautiful handwriting. You should see the books he kept. We have some of his ledgers, it's unbelievable. Well, I don't know how much there is in here, but of course, Lucille and I have different religions, and that was a big issue [21:00].

BB: This is interesting here, not to -- I'm sorry for interrupting you. This letter January 12th, 1946 they -- let's see here, well there's a couple of things. Oh, okay, I'm sorry that one's about Rudy. This one says "There still isn't anything new here and slowly but surely it's becoming extremely disgusting." Probably, I guess, just because you were there for so long. Then you say "Wednesday I took a trip to Fort Meade [21:41] with one of our officers which was quite interesting. That's about the only thing that I've done since you were here." So that must be that trip with that Afrika Korps [21:55] officer, do you think that was when you wore the uniform and everything [22:00]?

FM: Yeah, and there was a set of orders.

BB: Yeah and that's in the other book and I did see that.

FM: I'm sure that it was about the same date.

BB: You got a B in the Spanish course and you didn't seem to be very impressed with that. This is neat because it says P.O. Box 1142 [22:47].

FM: And it says -- does it say Alexandria?

BB: Yeah, Alexandria, Virginia

FM: February 9th [23:00]?

BB: February 2nd, 1946. It looks like you -- it has said in earlier letters as well as here about

papers for MIT, I guess, were you looking at --

FM: I was applying to MIT because I had a connection up there for a recommendation and was one of the German physicists who had escaped Germany, who was not Jewish but who had escaped. And let's see what was the connection, I had met him --

BB: Was this his name, Professor Hippel?

FM: Yeah, yeah [24:00]. No, no, no, Professor Hippel was somebody who was related to the family and -- I've forgotten.

BB: "Here at the post there isn't much new. I manage somehow to keep busy and keep out of people's way. You know the less they see you the less there is a chance of them getting any ideas."

FM: Truly spoken like a soldier, if you don't see them, they won't bother you [25:00]. They don't get any ideas.

BB: That's February 7th, 1946.

FM: Getting closer [inaudible].

BB: Looks like you went to the, talks about going to the theater, then you say "but the Washington theater crowd is very narrow-minded." What else do you say? "There are a few nasty cracks in the play which were really funny and only very few people laughed."

FM: I guess the Washington audience at that time was pretty unsophisticated.

BB: Right [26:00], and then still P.O. Box 1142 [26:05] Alexandria, Virginia, February 18th, 1946.

FM: I guess the secret is out.

BB: Right. Talk about trying to meet up with your brother, still not having heard from MIT. "I wrote to Professor von Hippel."

FM: Yeah I guess that was the guy. Somehow, and I've forgotten what the connection was, but somebody knew him and suggested for me to write to him and get a letter of support, that sort of thing, for admission to MIT. And of course the competition was tremendous [27:00]. This was at the end of the war and everybody --

BB: Oh, everyone was coming back, right.

FM: -- going to go to grad school and so on.

BB: I'm sure Lucille probably remembers this. "This last Saturday night the Berrimans [spelled phonetically] gave a party in honor of their returned son, to which I was invited."

FM: Yeah, Richard.

BB: And then this is kind of funny: "This is the Southern Broadcasting System signing off for the day. It will resume its activities as soon as more material has been collected," a little humor. Now this is interesting, this it's a little blurry "P.O. Box 1142 [27:52] 25th February 1946 Memorandum to Captain Herman L. Halle [28:00]."

FM: Halle [28:01], he was one of the guys from New York

BB: It says "Number one, this is to state my interest in a civil service appointment if such a job should become available at P.O. Box 1142 [28:15]. Number two, my work at this post has consisted of the following duties: A. Interrogation of German scientific personnel in the scientific research section first under Major W.O. Herschberger [28:29], and after his discharge, on my own until Lieutenant Youkstetter [spelled phonetically] was put in charge; B. Translation of German technical documents under A; C. After Major Herschberger's [28:44] discharge handling of special project for Colonel Walker [28:48]." That's the post commander I guess.

FM: Right, Right.

BB: “D. Took part in working out of a German-English scientific dictionary; E. Librarian under [29:00] Lieutenant Tiller,” or Tillar [29:04]. “Number three, my previous army assignments,” and then you list from April ’45 to June ’45, Camp Ritchie [29:12], interrogation of prisoner of war, of course. And then you have November of ’44 to March of ’45, Field Cadre at Camp Blanding [29:23], and then basic training at Camp Blanding [29:25]. And then schools attended, in 1945 Department of Agriculture, and then 1941 to ’44 College of the City of New York, bachelor, Mechanical Engineering. And then your high school and your gymnasium in Germany.

FM: There you have the final

BB: And then German, languages, German: literary and technical, fluent native tongue, and B. Spanish, Department of Agriculture. So I guess you thought you did better than that B that you mentioned you got. And then [30:00] jobs held before entering the Army: Stenot [spelled phonetically] Tool and Machine Company, and then JK Smith and Company as a diamond tool maker and then International Mutoscope Reel Company as a machinist and screw machine operator. Then signed Sergeant Frederick J. Michel, scientific research library.

FM: Okay, that explains the library assignment, now what was --

BB: That’s in German there.

FM: Dear Fred, [unintelligible] [31:00] --

BB: I see Lucille’s name and then the word “religion.”

FM: Yeah that was my mother’s letter of admonition the danger of marrying across religious clans. Yeah that’s my mother’s writing; it has nothing to do with the Army. It was my father in particular who was quite upset by the whole thing [32:00]. Even though I found

out that when he was a young man and unmarried, he had not such gentle girlfriends; it's all the same.

[inaudible commentary]

BB: April 8, 1846 to your parents. "This morning I called the bureau of standards and was told that the job was still waiting for me."

FM: What if you ask her that name? I went to them for an interview, during Easter [33:00], anticipating getting discharged in July of the year and to see what kind of a job they could offer me. And in those days, they had professional ratings, like a P1, okay? And I told the guy I had already had some experience as a tool and die maker, and as a machinist and so on, and can't they do any better than a P1. And the guy hemmed and hawed and finally said "Well maybe we can get you a P2." So I said, "Okay, now what do we do now?" And he said, and this was during Easter [34:00] and then he said "Well when you get your discharge papers, come and see us and we'll take care of it." So I got my discharge papers from Fort Meade [34:15], first thing I did, I called the bureau of standards, this guy. And he got in a long hemming and hawing about what needs to be done first, namely that we have to fill out an application, a civil service application and then I have to go through a qualification process and all of that and so on. And I said, "Well how long is this going to take?" And he said "It's probably going to take at least several weeks, if not months." So I said to hell with that. I can't afford to sit [35:00] around doing that. So I took the Yellow Pages and I looked for engineering companies, of which there was nothing. The only one was the power company, the telephone company, and a small company called Melpar, M-E-L-P-A-R, which existed before your time. But I went to all three on the same day, applied for the job and Melpar, which was

by the way a little brownstone house on 5th and F, which doesn't exist anymore. It's right up to the GAO office, the new one and said "Here I am, I'm looking for a job are you, [36:00] you have any interest?" And the guy who was interviewing me was the general manager and he said -- this was on a Monday morning; he said "Well there is a man, a project leader who probably can use you, but he commutes from New Jersey to Washington and he is still on his way back here." This was his daily -- weekly routine. The next thing that happened to us on the same day, I was living in Alexandria in a rental room and they had gotten a call from this general manager who lived next door incidentally and said "Well if you've got a drafting set come on down, start working tomorrow morning [37:00]." So I had a job, unbeknownst, you know, and so I went to work for that company. And Melpar was the contraction of two names Malloy and Park and they were the owners and they had gotten into business during World War II [37:24]. So then I stayed with them until 1968, when and then they came into trouble. Minute program because they had, do you remember [38:00] Bobby Baker?

BB: Yeah I do remember that name.

FM: Well, they got hooked up with him, they got a contract because of that and so on, and so they got deep into trouble. And then I thought it was time to get out and I applied to a company which later became part of Westinghouse Baltimore, and that's when I went to work for Westinghouse Baltimore and so on and so forth.

BB: Got you, there's two more letters left, so we must be getting to the end.

FM: I hope we're doing okay.

BB: Yeah. Here's Alexandria, Virginia April 15th 1946. You're hoping that you'll be out by July 1st [39:00].

FM: Yeah, recently -- happened very shortly after, like the 26th of July.

BB: Still talking about school a little bit. Here it says "It was a wonderful day; we took a sun bath, went for a ride to Mount Vernon, called the bureau of standards again" and that's about it.

FM: Well the funny part about the bureau of standards was later on when I worked for Westinghouse we got involved with a manufacturing [40:00] technology program and after that got involved with what became the director of the bureau which later on became the National -- let's see -- National Bureau of Science and Technology. And I got him the gold medal for the society of manufacturing engineers and he became the director subsequently as the head of the National Science Foundation [41:00] and is still there. And his assistant also, because of my doing -- got the gold medal for the society in his position, in his career. And when I started, you know, they were giving me a P1, later on I ended up as an SES.

BB: That's pretty darn good then.

FM: When I started to work for the Army. So I was the equivalent rank of a Major General.

BB: Wow, that's pretty good then.

FM: Yeah. Anyway.

BB: This is the last one and this is really neat. I'd really like to make a copy. The header says [42:00] "War Department Military Intelligence Service [42:03], Washington, D.C. June 21st, 1946, "To whom it may concern, Tech Sergeant Frederick J. Michel serial number has been in the military intelligence service [42:15] for the period of a year. During this time his work has been characterized by high technical proficiency, intelligence and the attention to duty. He has been especially valuable because of his thorough scholastic

background in science combined with his skill in scientific German. I would recommend him highly for any civilian work he would care to undertake. Signed Gerald H. Douin [spelled phonetically] [42:39] Lieutenant Colonel FA executive officer.” And then I’m curious I’d like to take this out if it’s okay. There’s a little name tag there for you but then it looks like some sort of an ID card for P.O. Box 1142 [43:00]. So it says P.O. Box 1142 [43:02] Alexandria, Virginia, April 17th, 1946, for Tech Sergeant Frederick J. Michel. “This pass privileges the holder when not on duty or so scheduled to be absent from his post during these times.” And it’s signed by you and then by a captain and then on the back it’s just stamped with a few expiration dates. Well that’s neat and that’s it.

FM: Well, now, you want a paperclip for marking those pages that you wanted?

BB: Yeah, you know what? I’m just trying to figure out -- I probably should’ve been doing that as we went through. I may go later on -- I’m not sure if I want to leave and go to Kinkos in a little while and do that, or I may even take it back. We’ll see. I might take it back to my [44:00] hotel room after dinner or something and mark them that way, and then go to Kinkos and give it back to you during breakfast tomorrow morning, but we’ll - - we can figure it out. Do you -- do you want to take a break for a while? Are you doing okay?

FM: I’m fine.

BB: Okay.

[talking simultaneously]

(End of Tape 3B)

(Beginning of Tape 4)

BB: Okay, I think we’re going here. Again, this is Brandon Bies of the National Park Service

having conversations with Frederick Michel in his home in Louisville, Kentucky. This is the fourth tape thus far on the second day of interviews. It is currently about 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday May 31st, 2006. And we're going to ask some more specific questions about Fort Hunt [00:32] and facilities and whatnot there. And I guess what I'll start off with is if you could describe -- I know you've said you were -- you don't have great recollections of what the buildings look like and everything, but specific -- the buildings where you were working most of the time, were you working inside the actual prisoner of war enclosures or was there a separate [01:00] building or office you worked in?

FM: There were separate offices where we worked and I believe that some of the pictures that you see, that you have from Mr. --

BB: Laird, from Laird, Matthew Laird.

FM: No, from Cuning, Munning, Cunningham?

BB: That doesn't ring a bell. From this report here?

FM: No, the pictures that Lucille showed you that had been given to us waving at Fort Belvoir [01:41] from some years later.

BB: Okay, from Mulligan? Mulligan, okay.

FM: Mulligan, from Mr. Mulligan's pictures. Those are some of the office spaces that we utilized outside the compound [02:00]. I think there was only the work that was done within the compound were possibly some interrogations by personnel who were planted there as prisoners, supposed prisoners. But as far as the office work is concerned, the review of the interrogations and so on, they were all done in a separate building or buildings. The other building that I recollect was the briefing room where we were first taken on the Saturday that we arrived, which was just a regular briefing room and it

seemed like it was partly covered by [03:00] soil, sort of like a building that was built below ground level, not totally, but almost entirely environmentally compliant.

BB: [laughs] Right, like a green roof on top. So was it almost like a bunker?

FM: Yeah.

BB: I -- we actually have a photograph, unfortunately I wasn't able to bring it with me, that shows a some sort of an underground bunker it looks just like a raised hump of grass and there's a couple of ventilation stacks coming out of it.

FM: Exactly.

BB: Okay, I'll send you a copy of that to see if that isn't the... but that sounds exactly like what you're describing. Can you remember [04:00] where in the fort that was? If it -- where in -- was it close to the barracks? Was it close to the gun batteries or the POWs?

FM: It was close to the office locations. Not near the barracks. The only buildings that I remember near the barracks or by the barracks was that occupied by the Reich captain and so as I said, it was more in the vicinity of the offices, offices, not officers.

BB: Okay, okay. And these buildings -- most of the buildings you were in did you get the impression that they were constructed during World War II [04:59] or were some of [05:00] them older post buildings.

FM: No, except for the house that the captain was in and then I guess he was the post commander, was living in. They were kind of pre-World War II [05:20] buildings, kind of like saltbox construction, and like you see in the countryside around Virginia.

BB: Okay, and so with the prisoner of war enclosures, how many do you remember being there when you were at the fort?

FM: I would guess, and now it's strictly a guess -- I would guess we had probably 25 or so

PWs.

BB: Oh okay, 25 or so prisoners at any given time [06:00] that were there. In terms of though the actual barbed-wire fence compounds where they were kept, were there multiple ones of those? Was there just one compound where the prisoners were kept? This is -- this is --

FM: I think there was one compound, but as I recollect it was several two story typical Army barracks. I'm not sure about that, though.

BB: And were prisoners kept in them?

FM: Oh yeah.

BB: Okay, and were they surrounded by the barbed-wire and everything?

FM: Oh yeah, there was a double barbed-wire fence around the compound.

BB: And did they have guard towers?

FM: There was some guard towers, how many, I don't know, I don't remember. Whether it's four or two or one, I just don't remember.

BB: Do you remember anything about the towers [07:00], you know, if they had spotlights in them, or machine guns or anything, or was it just a tower with a soldier in it?

FM: I think so, but I don't remember because it was not part of my activity and part of my duty and as I said we spent a good part -- if we didn't interrogate people you spend a good part of our time in the scientific office, or whatever it was called. And two, three people Major Herschberger [07:39] and George Mandel [07:41], and myself.

BB: And so again just to clarify. Most of the interrogations that you did they were not inside the barbed-wire compound, they were in a separate building, this is [08:00] -- these -- I'm not referring to the interrogations of Hertz [08:05] and Schlicke [08:06], but the more

typical interrogations.

FM: I just don't remember. I think, and this is the best of my recollection, that they were done in an office within the barbed-wire enclosure.

BB: Okay. And those were one on one, just you and the individual?

FM: Yeah, except when I was in training and showing the ropes, not physically the ropes but the methodology of interrogation and so on.

BB: I'm not sure if we covered this yesterday or not but if you had to guess, about how many separate people do you think you interrogated while you were there at Fort Hunt [08:58]?

FM: I think I only [09:00] interrogated maybe a half-dozen people because then I was given this special assignment, the two people that I was in charge of and of course the library duty and the translation of German technical to English words.

BB: Right, do you remember -- there's a photograph that I think you guys have of one of the windowless busses that transported the prisoners. Do you remember seeing them? Did they use them while you were there?

FM: Yeah they were used, and even when we went to -- took people to Fort Meade [09:50] either the bus was used or a staff car was used, an Army staff car. Not [10:00] an unmarked, ordinary vehicle.

BB: Okay, so they were always in marked U.S. Army vehicles.

FM: Right.

BB: Do you have any recollections of what the prisoners were wearing? Did they have a standard prisoner of war uniform? Were they wearing German uniforms?

FM: They were not in German uniforms, I can tell you that. They were usually in khakis.

BB: Okay, supplied by the United States?

FM: Yeah, right.

BB: Did they have any markings on them to show that they were prisoners.

FM: A PW or something?

BB: Was anything like that painted on them?

FM: Not that I know of. You see, they simply never escaped. If they were trying to escape, they would be shot [11:00], and there are not that many around there and it really wasn't that difficult for them to hide in an attempt to escape.

BB: You mentioned a few minutes ago and you've mentioned several times your friend George Mandel [11:24]. Is he still living, do you know?

FM: I don't know. All I know is after he stopped writing to me, I'm pretty sure he -- at least he applied to medical school, I think to Yale. And after that I lost track of him.

BB: Okay, well that's somebody I can definitely try to look into, because it sounds like the two of you had very similar jobs while you were there. Switching now --

FM: And by the way I might want to make [12:00] that comment. Even though our names were not on the TMs of the translation, that is of the technical translation, the German words, I would like to make sure that the record shows that he was the second person that worked with me on in creating those that document.

BB: Right, and you think you might have a copy of that document here.

FM: Yeah, as a matter of fact I asked Lucille last night but it was too late, she was too busy and it was midnight. But if we if we I know we'll find it and she thinks it may be in amongst those books, in there. We can certainly mail that and make it available to you [13:00], or you can -- if I give you the TM number, you can get a copy of it out of the archives or someplace, unless it's burned up in St. Louis.

BB: All right. Switching now to talk a little bit about, not the prison aspect but just the fort in general in terms of the GIs that were working there. Can you remember, ballpark at any given time, how many GIs were stationed at Fort Hunt [13:38], between the two programs MIS-X and MIS-Y [13:42]?

FM: Well I know no knowledge of what's what was going in this Y section, and I thought maybe that Shoemaker might have made some reference as to the number of people employed in [14:00] that. At least I remember from listening to him, or reading his book that he seemed to remember the various people and their ranks, so that would be a guy who would number -- for the number of those people. As far as Y is concerned, my guess would be about 40 people. Now the best source for that would be the number of people that were transferred from Fort Ritchie [14:43] or Camp Ritchie to POB 1142 [14:56].

BB: And so those 40 or [15:00] so people that would -- that's just counting interrogators, not counting MPs that were there. But there were standard MPs that were there just acting as guards.

FM: And it was a relatively small number. And the reason I say that is some of those were from New York also and we usually went home together on weekends, that's all. Now the biggest --

BB: No go ahead.

FM: Just as an observation, the biggest surprise of course was approaching Fort Hunt [15:41] nobody clue -- nobody had a clue as to the fact that there was a camp behind this living fence, so to speak, and there was even a bigger surprise [16:00] about the fact that it was an Army camp and that there was any kind of military activity, cause there was no sign,

no nothing that anything was going on. And the first sign of military activity was that there were a couple of GIs guarding the entrance to the fort.

BB: [affirmative] Was there only one entrance to the fort that you could remember?

FM: It seems like there was a side gate to Fort Hunt [16:43] Road, but it was not used. It was usually locked and so on.

BB: Okay, but the -- so the main gate was the one that went directly out to that interchange on the Parkway, which is not there anymore today. They've closed that entrance off [17:00].

FM: Oh it is closed?

BB: Yeah, I don't know how long ago but I think many, many years ago they closed off -- there's the one direct entrance that would have been further down the Parkway. You still get there from the Parkway today, and if you're leaving the fort you can go underneath that brick overpass there. Was that one used during the war?

FM: Well basically, I'm not sure whether it was a brick overpass, but that was the basic entrance.

BB: Right there by the dock that was there?

FM: Where the fence is today and where the opening is, very much close to that was the main gate and the guardhouse was right there, so that has -- I don't think that has changed [18:00] very much at all.

BB: Was there a barbed-wire fence, or a metal fence around the entire fort?

FM: There was a fence around the fort, yes. Now to what extent it extended beyond the artillery emplacements, I don't know. It seems like it was kind of open, but I wouldn't be surprised. I just don't remember.

BB: But then it was all also screened by woods; there were lots of trees and everything.

FM: Yeah, yeah absolutely. There was no open area, really. And as you went down the Parkway and went as Fort Hunt [18:49] until the Park Service put signs up, there was absolutely no visible sign or visible [19:00] existence of any kind of facility, until you got right up to the post, to the guard gate.

BB: Now I know it's been a few years since you've been to Fort Hunt [19:16], but is the area that's open today, the field area, was that pretty much the same area that was opened and had buildings and parade grounds when you were there, or has the tree-line moved, has that changed? So what's wooded today..

FM: No, that was the parade ground, so.

BB: Okay, and speaking of the aspects of the fort, you know, I mentioned the dock being there by the entrance, do you have a recollection of that dock being there?

FM: I knew it was there, and but I never -- I don't think we ever used it for [20:00] using a boat of getting somebody on board a boat or something, but I do remember that there was a dock there.

BB: Okay, and you had mentioned earlier in one of our phone conversations about the radio parts from the MIS-X [20:19] program. Do you -- what recollections do you have of that incident and of the radio parts and if and if you could do your best to try to describe where the general area where they ended up being disposed of?

FM: Somehow I seem to recall that the junk pile, and that's about the best I can describe it, was west of the parade ground, maybe towards where the horses -- where there seemed to be kind of a drop-off in the land.

BB: Okay, kind of like a drainage ditch?

FM: No, I wouldn't describe it that way [21:00], just a dump.

BB: Okay, okay.

FM: And I remember that we nosed around it and found some -- well at that time there were called capacitors, resistors, or components of that type. No chips or anything, nothing as modern as that.

BB: Right. Had it been burned, or was it just parts that were dumped?

FM: I don't recall any signs of burning, it just seemed like it was dumps, which were covered with soil and so on.

BB: Oh, okay, so they covered it up with soil to try to disguise it.

FM: Right, and try to decompose it, or promote the decomposition of the parts, and that's about all.

BB: So, was it [22:00] buried, did they dig a hole, or was it mounded like a mound on the --

FM: It may be both.

BB: I was just curious because anything that'll -- you know not that we --

FM: There was no sign of a bulldozer or any dug a pit to dump the stuff in the pit. It just seemed like it was dumped and maybe there was some soil scraped over it, so. But I'm sure if you run some test borings, you can find out whether it was really dumped and covered up, or to what extent it was hidden, maybe that's the way to approach it.

BB: Yeah, that's what I'm trying to narrow down the area where we would look for that, if because I think that would be really neat to try to go out and find some of that.

FM: Now [23:00], let's see I don't know whether -- what's his name?

BB: Shoemaker?

FM: Shoemaker mentioned it, is he still alive?

BB: No, I believe he passed away, I don't know when, but I think it at least five years ago or

so.

FM: Oh I thought maybe more -- okay because we're here now already three four years. That could be. The last time I saw him I believe was in a high school when he gave presentation in the high school in Alexandria on the North end of Duke Street. We were in high school, is that TJ?

BB: I'm not sure, okay. We mentioned just a little bit yesterday, but what understanding of the MIS-X program [24:00] did you have while you were there? Did you have no idea what they were doing, just that they were a separate program doing top secret work?

FM: Yes, the latter. Separate program, very hush hush, nobody was supposed to inquire, nobody did inquire what's going on. And other than that the building was the Creamery [24:28] and there was no scuttlebutt in the barracks about the work. I don't even remember or recall that any of the personnel that worked in the Creamery [24:46] was even part of that activity.

BB: So, did -- was there any interaction whatsoever between the two groups or did you, did they dine in the dining, in the mess hall with you [25:00], or were they completely separate?

FM: I don't even know whether they commingled with us, whether they slept in the same quarters as us, nothing of that kind.

BB: Okay.

[audio break]

FM: His name I gave you who lives down in, not Monticello, what's the name of the apartment complex?

BB: The ones right by the Wilson bridge?

FM: Yeah

BB: Something Towers, I think, Hunting Towers?

FM: Hunting Towers, and the name of that guy who was a journalist for a long time and if you could -- whose family used to own the farm on Mount Vernon Road [26:00] where now you can pick up wood chips, and there's a bald place there. Anyway, he was the one who called me after one of the articles appeared in the Gazette and so on. He may have some recollections.

BB: And was that Bill Chuming [spelled phonetically]?

FM: Yeah, right.

BB: Okay and I have a phone number for him as well.

FM: Okay, that phone number was still good about four or five years ago. And even though he was close to my age, he was not quite my age, so he should still be alive.

BB: Okay, I'm just going through a few other names you've given me and some of these are just from your orders. Bill, Bill Hess [26:54], and was someone that you worked with.

FM: He might be good recollection and he [27:00] lived over in Montgomery County, I believe.

BB: Okay I think you'd even mentioned Bauer Drive? Or I may have found somebody that was lived on Bauer Drive.

FM: Yeah, right, right.

BB: And then obviously we just tried contacting George Mandel [27:18] and let's see here, Heinz Lychenheim [27:27]?

FM: Yeah, he was -- he called me also when he saw that article, and -- but I think he may not he may not -- he may or may not be alive anymore because I think he was older than I

was.

BB: Okay, okay and another name I got was Erich Kramer [27:50]?

FM: Yeah, he lived in New York City and he was about my age and again [28:00] you know, who knows?

BB: And then that's about it in terms of names that I have here and I know some of the other orders you gave me have --

FM: Well I looked at some of those names and tried to remember them.

BB: Okay.

[inaudible commentary]

[audio break]

FM: Name of a research lab and I don't think they were the same because I'm pretty sure. I have some more lists of names but I don't know [29:00] what Lucille did with them

BB: I think there might have been a couple in that, but I'm not sure

FM: Now, did you mark what you --

BB: No, I haven't done that yet. I may go ahead and do that.

[audio break]

FM: When I was stationed in Camp Blanding [29:24] for my basic training there were mostly people from the Appalachians with Indian background and so on. And then there were other people from, let's see, Tennessee and some from Maryland and so on, and you used to talk about various things we did before we went into the service [30:00]. From my class a number of people went down to Venice -- did you find it?

[audio break]

To continue, a number of people went to Oak Ridge, go down there, without knowing

what they were doing, what they suppose, that they were supposed to work on concentrating [inaudible]. And the next thing that happened was that some of those people from Oak Ridge that ended up in my training battalion turned out to be working as receiving clerks and that sort of thing. And the materials they were receiving were various types of metals and so on. And so by putting [31:00] two and two together I could figure out that there must be some work going on down there in the design and development of nuclear weapons. Just by putting bits and pieces together of things that I had picked up in various places. And you know, they operated in a very substantial complementary -- not complementary, compartmentally in order to save security and apparently [32:00] it really didn't work, at least from what I conclude. So, but that was at Camp Blanding [32:11] and not at Fort Hunt [32:12], just coincidentally.

BB: Is was there anyone that you were with at Camp Blanding [32:21] who ended up also going with you to Fort Hunt [32:24] or --

FM: No.

BB: So you the people that you ended up going first I guess to Fort -- not Fort Meade [32:34].

FM: Fort Hunt [32:34].

BB: No before Fort Hunt [32:36], where you got your --

FM: Blanding?

BB: No where you got your special --

FM: In Texas.

BB: No in Maryland, Ritchie [32:48], sorry, Camp Ritchie [32:50]. When you went to Ritchie [32:53] for your -- that's where you received your special language training, correct, the interrogation [33:00]?

FM: No my special language training was my attendance in school in Germany.

BB: Right yeah no I misspoke what I mean is where you went to learn how to interrogate prisoners of war.

FM: That was at Fort Ritchie [33:18].

BB: Fort Ritchie [33:19], and so the people you were with there though, you didn't know anyone before that these were all a group of strangers that were all gathered up?

FM: Except for my cousin.

BB: Oh okay, and what was your cousin's name?

FM: Werner Michel [33:34].

BB: Werner Michel [33:35] okay, and what did he end up -- he did not end up going to Fort Hunt [33:39]? He was sent to Europe?

FM: He was sent to Europe as an intelligence officer and he eventually he made the Army his career and eventually he became the inspector general for intelligence of the whole Army [34:00] and then with DOD, and he reported to people like Rumsfeld and his predecessor. So, he ended up pretty high and talking about stories, he was stationed -- during Vietnam he was stationed over in Vietnam and in intelligence and he -- let's see World War II [34:34] he came in touch with the Japanese and in the position of intelligence officer and had some interesting stories to tell. He's been interviewed on some of that stuff. He only lives a few minutes from where we used to live [35:00], right near Fort Hunt [35:02] too. And anyway he's got some interesting stories to tell.

BB: Getting back to Fort Hunt [35:13], I was just thinking. When you were there were there ever -- you mentioned the one breach of security where somebody who was new called home. Do you recall any other security breaches or scares or is there anything that went

on while you were there of that nature?

FM: No, I think that security breach taught a lot of people a lesson and so it maybe helped to maintain security a little bit more easily just by that one little crash [36:00].

BB: When you were, when you were mustered out at Fort Hunt [36:08] --

FM: At Fort Hunt [36:11]?

BB: I'm sorry so you were taken to Fort Meade [36:13], did you have much notice or did it they just announce, okay, you're being mustered out, and then you went to Fort Meade [36:22] solely for the purpose of mustering out?

FM: Well, we had inklings, sort of, you know, the camp was being shut down and the other things were being done and so they had some rumors and some indications that our days at Fort Hunt [36:45] were coming to an end and also that because at that time the rule was that you were eligible for mustering out if you [37:00] had completed your two years of service and so there were several indications and signs that the end was coming.

BB: When you left, had they begun dismantling any buildings or removing anything other than the incident of the -- you know the pile of radio parts from MIS-X [37:32].

FM: No, nothing other than the activities of X. But no, other than that, you know, the dismantling of the communications equipment, like [unintelligible] pipes and so on. It wasn't that [inaudible].

[end of transcript]

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