

Fort Hunt Oral History  
P.O. Box 1142  
Interview with Augustus Soule  
by Brandon Bies and Sam Swersky  
May 9, 2007

BRANDON BIES: I'm going to start off with just a real quick introduction that I do every time just so that we know what we're doing, and so today is May 9, 2007. This is the Fort Hunt Oral History Project. We need to put a tape in this week [spelled phonetically].  
False alarm, sorry about that.

AUGUSTUS SOULE: It's all right.

BB: I spoke with your son on the phone the other day.

AS: Oh, good.

BB: And he seemed to think this was all pretty interesting as well.

AS: I'm sure it is. He's right about that.

SAM SWERSKY: We're happy to make copies of these recordings for your family if you'd like, Mr. Soule.

AS: All right. I think I'd like [unintelligible].

[laughter]

BB: Okay, [01:00] good? All right. I'll start over with my introduction. Today is May 9th, 2007. This is the Fort Hunt Oral History Project; National Parks Service Historian Brandon Bies and Park Ranger Sam Swersky. We are here interviewing MIS-X [01:20] veteran Mr. Augustus W. Soule Jr., at his home outside of Boston. So with that, Mr. Soule, could we just start off and could you just give a little bit of information about your own background, when you were born and where you were born?

AS: I was born in Boston on December 13, 1918. I lived in Brookline, which is a suburb here. I went to Harvard and Harvard Law School. Is that what you're looking for?

BB: That's great. Did you have any [02:00] brothers or sisters?

AS: I had -- yes, two brothers and a sister.

BB: Do you remember what year you entered Harvard and when you graduated?

AS: I got graduated in 1940. I must have entered it in 1936. Then I went to law school in '43, law school.

BB: So you graduated from law school in '43?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay. Is that when you entered the military at that point?

AS: Yes.

BB: Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

AS: I was drafted.

BB: So you were drafted in 1943.

AS: Yes, I was.

BB: What sort of training? Did you go into the infantry?

AS: No, I didn't go much of anyplace. They didn't know what to do with me, so they used me to take care of the colonel that runs the rifle range [03:00], which I didn't like very much. I did that for about six months, and then I decided to get out of there.

BB: Where was that at?

AS: That was down the Cape, by Warren Bridge. There's a camp down there. I don't know the name of it, but it was a quite a big camp.

BB: That was around here in Boston?

AS: Yes.

SS: It was the Warren Bridge.

AS: Yes.

BB: Oh, by the Warren Bridge?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay, got you. So you were here in Boston for a little while and then where did you go from there?

AS: I went right down to 1042 [03:39].

BB: To 1142, okay.

AS: Oh, yeah.

BB: How were you selected to go to 1142?

AS: Well, I'll tell you, my father was a great friend of Colonel Catesby Jones [03:52]. All he had to do was phone call to Catesby, and next thing I knew, I was down there. So I wasn't -- like [04:00] I was married or anything like that.

BB: Okay. Did you receive any special training or anything?

AS: No, not at all.

BB: You just found yourself down there?

AS: Yes, that's right.

BB: Did you like that? Did you want to go overseas into combat, or were you happy to go down to Virginia?

AS: I was happy to go to Virginia.

BB: Okay. What did you know -- before you got there, what did you know about Mr. Catesby Ap Jones [04:29]?

AS: Well, I knew that he was in the military, and we saw him [unintelligible] summer, and a nice fellow and that's all I knew about him. I was grasping at anything to get out of this

place with the bridge, so that's the end of the likely thing and everybody said, "How do you influence him?" I didn't influence him at all. It was all my father's work.

BB: Okay. So you arrived. Do you remember [05:00] about when you would have gotten to 1142 [05:03]?

AS: Oh, I've forgotten about that. Late in '43, I think, would be my guess.

BB: Had you ever heard of 1142 before you got there?

AS: Never. No, no.

BB: What were you told about it when you got there?

AS: Nothing. Just follow instructions.

SS: Do you remember the trip going down to Washington from Boston?

AS: Yes.

SS: What was it like? How did you leave? How long -- what transportation did you go by?

AS: I don't remember that. I don't think I went to Washington.

BB: You went straight to 1142 [05:50]?

AS: I did, yes.

BB: Do you remember if they drove you there in a car or train or are you not sure?

AS: I'm not sure. I'm pretty sure I went on my own [06:00], had to find Fort Hunt [06:02], which was a problem, getting into another problem. I was on my own completely.

BB: Okay. What do you remember about the camp? Was it out in the open or was it secluded?

AS: Well, it was right on the main road and there wasn't any woods around there, all open, big field. There wasn't much to see. It wasn't hidden away, no.

BB: Were there lots of guards around?

AS: I didn't see any the whole time I was there. They must have been over in Y [06:40].

BB: Okay. So when you got there to 1142 [06:46], what job did they assign you?

AS: Writing letters to POWs [06:54] in code.

BB: Did they have to teach you that code [07:00]?

AS: No, I just caught on right away.

BB: Okay. You didn't make the code up yourself?

AS: Oh, no, no, no.

BB: It was an established code?

AS: Yes, it was, and this code, what you did was as you took the code word, and it was all ready for you to write in the letter, don't know if they'd seen your other code [spelled phonetically]. That's what I did all the rest of my term there.

BB: Okay. Can you give an example of how the code would work? Like would it be a long letter or a short letter?

AS: It might be a short letter. The code usually was like "Look in Private Jones' [07:46] duffle bag," things like that, because, as you know, part of X [07:55] was shipped down just with [unintelligible] all kinds of stuff [08:00] hidden in the [unintelligible] on purpose. We would notify these fellows that somebody was coming and such and such, and they'd be ready for it.

BB: Okay. So they would get this coded letter from you, and it would be alerting them that a package was coming?

AS: Correct.

BB: Okay. Would you ever write any other messages to them?

AS: No, no.

BB: Okay. Did you ever get messages back from them?

AS: No. There's no way to find out because we put an address on there.

BB: So you just wrote them messages and that was it?

AS: That's right. I think they understood what it was all about.

BB: Do you know how the letters got from 1142 [08:52] to the prisoner camps?

AS: No I don't, but I'm assuming that the [09:00] regular mail service did it.

BB: Okay. So they looked like regular letters?

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: Okay. Would you pretend to be somebody else when you were -- obviously, you didn't sign the letter "Augustus Soule," I'm sure.

AS: I didn't. I didn't sign the letter at all.

BB: Oh, okay. So you don't remember if you pretended to be somebody's wife or --

AS: No, I didn't pretend to be anybody.

BB: Okay. It was just kind of a letter coming from an unknown person?

AS: That's right. The prisoner understood that, I think.

BB: Okay. Do you know if the prisoners, if they had had special training so they could understand the code?

AS: Some of them did. The Air Force in Italy did, but the infantry didn't.

BB: Okay. Would your letters just go to Air Corps people or were they going to all sorts of people?

AS: All sorts of people [10:00]. How they chose those people, I don't know.

BB: Okay. And do you -- you mentioned the care packages, the packages with the escape devices. Do you remember anything about them? Did you ever see them?

AS: I did off and on. There were just bombs and they sent pistols and they sent money and they sent maps, things of that sort.

BB: Do you know if they were just sent in a box or do you remember if they were disguised as anything?

AS: They were disguised. The maps were. [unintelligible] of a model or that kind of thing. They were very much disguised.

BB: Do you remember how they would disguise something like a pistol? That seems kind of difficult to me [11:00], to be able to send through the mail.

AS: Well, let me think now. It was in a chess set, I think.

BB: Oh, really?

AS: Yes, that's my recollection anyhow.

BB: Do you remember where all of these items were coming from? Were they being -- you know, the chess sets and the mops, where were they -- were you acquiring them? Was somebody else getting them?

AS: Somebody else completely. I had nothing to do with that, never, somebody else completely. They bought them from someplace. They didn't make anything. They just bought stuff to send along.

BB: Would they then be manufactured? Would you then insert the items there?

AS: Yes.

BB: There at 1142 [11:45]?

AS: Yes, right.

BB: Okay. Do you have any idea how often these packages were sent out?

AS: I'd say at least once a month. Maybe more.

BB: Just [12:00] one package at a time or a whole group of them?

AS: Well, one package at a time.

BB: Okay. So then about a package a month or so?

AS: Oh, yes, at least.

BB: Okay. What about the letters that you were writing? Do you remember how often you would send out a letter?

AS: I would say about every six weeks.

BB: Okay, so every six weeks or so, you'd send out one letter?

AS: Yes.

BB: So would you be spending the rest of the time just working on code? If you were only sending a letter out every six weeks, do you remember what you were doing in between that?

AS: Writing other letters.

AS: Oh, okay.

SS: So you wrote to the same person every six weeks?

AS: No. I never knew who. See, I'd be given a name and an address and I'd just take it from there, and didn't know any more than that. But I might have done, in a month's time, I might have sent out 10 letters, I guess.

BB: [13:00] Okay, so you were doing about 10 letters a month or so?

AS: That's right.

BB: And they were going to all different people?

AS: Yes, all different.

BB: Okay, and did you -- even if you didn't get them, did you ever hear from other people



that the packages had been -- that the letters and the packages had been received? Did you know if you were having success?

AS: I knew only because I had a schoolmate who was a prisoner of war [13:28] and I used to write him, and after the war was over, he showed up at 1142 [13:34].

BB: Oh, really?

AS: Yes, he said it was a sign.

BB: Oh, and he said that he had been getting the messages?

AS: He got letters and presents, all that kind of stuff.

BB: Wow. Do you remember his name?

AS: William S. Barnes [13:49], B-A-R-N-E-S.

BB: Great. We might be able to look him up and see if there's any records on him [14:00]. Do you know if he's still living?

AS: I don't.

BB: Okay. Was he from the Boston area, though?

AS: No. I can't tell you where, but it wasn't Boston.

BB: Was he at Harvard with you? Is that how you knew him?

AS: No, I know his school, [unintelligible] School. He came from New York, I think.

William Sprague Barnes [14:26].

BB: Spray?

AS: S-P-R-A-G-U-E.

BB: Great. That's fantastic, because we would love to speak to someone who had been receiving the letters and the packages. You have a phenomenal memory. That's fantastic. So William Sprague Barnes.

AS: Yes.

BB: Great. Fantastic. So you heard from him that during the war he had been getting the letters?

AS: He showed up in person and told me.

BB: Do you know, was he [15:00] debriefed at 1142 [15:02], or did he just show up on a friendly visit?

AS: He just showed up on a friendly visit. He wasn't debriefing at the same time. I wasn't sure about that.

BB: Did you ever hear if any of your letters that you'd written had been intercepted by the Germans?

AS: Never, no. They might have been, but I never heard about it.

BB: Okay. So from your recollection, it was pretty successful?

AS: Yes, it was.

BB: Great. Do you remember about how many people were there writing letters like yourself?

AS: I would say about 30.

BB: About 30?

AS: Yes. A roomful.

BB: A roomful, okay. Were these same people working on the packages, or were those different people?

AS: Different people completely.

BB: Any idea how many people might have been working on the packages?

AS: Oh, I'd say 20, maybe.

BB: Okay [16:00]. Was there anybody else in the X [16:03] Program that was doing any other work?

AS: I didn't know of any. Might have been, but I didn't know.

BB: Okay. So from what you remember, the two main jobs were writing letters and sending packages.

AS: Yes, that's right.

BB: Okay. Do you remember how many buildings? Were you in a building there at 1142 [16:25]?

AS: That's where I spent the night, yes. There was a bunkhouse where the enlisted men slept, where I slept, and headquarters building and there was an office building where I went every day to do my work.

BB: Okay. So you slept in a bunkhouse, but you were doing your work in an office building?

AS: I was, yes. It wasn't really an office building. It was just an old ramshackle house there.

BB: Okay. Was that how [17:00] a lot of the buildings were?

AS: Yes. They looked like they were going to fall down.

BB: [laughs] Does the name of a building -- one of the buildings that we think was used by the X [17:12] Program was called the Creamery [17:14]. Does that ring any bells?

AS: Doesn't ring a bell with me.

BB: What about a building called the Warehouse [17:22]?

AS: No, never heard of that.

BB: So you remember there was an office building and then a bunk building.

AS: Yes, and headquarters.

BB: And then headquarters, okay.

AS: There must have been other buildings for Y [17:36]. I never saw them.

BB: Okay, was there -- did you eat in a mess hall?

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: Okay. How was the food? Do you remember anything?

AS: Fair. Better than regular Army food.

BB: Oh, that's not bad then. Good. Were you briefed while you were there about the secrecy of everything that was going on? Did they have to explain [18:00] to you not to tell anyone?

AS: No, they didn't say anything to me. They just said, "Write this letter." That's all I ever heard. I guess I just sensed that I shouldn't tell anybody, and I didn't.

BB: Okay. In the X [18:20] Program, I'm sorry, going back, you mentioned there were some people writing letters, some people making the care packages. Were there officers that were in charge of the whole operation?

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: Do you remember anything about who was in command of the whole operation?

AS: Colonel Walker [18:37]. I can't think of his first name. But he was our colonel the whole time. He had several people working for him, officers. I don't know who they were.

BB: So Walker, he was the commander. Was he the commander of the entire post or just of the X [19:00] program?

AS: Yes, the X Program.

BB: His name was John Walker [19:06]. Just to let you know, we actually -- we haven't interviewed them, but we're in touch with a few of his children. He's passed away. He's

passed away, since, you know, he would have been much older at the time.

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: But several of his children are living and they're in contact with us.

AS: Good.

BB: So you remember, so he was in charge. Do you remember anything about him, what kind of guy he was?

AS: Well, he wasn't a brainy kind of guy. He'd been in the infantry, I figure. He was not right for the job, but he just kept track of us, that's all. When we went overseas, he made sure we didn't run off somewhere.

BB: You had mentioned before Catesby Ap Jones [19:53]. Was he there at 1142 [19:56]?

AS: No. He had his own house somewhere [20:00]. I think he was in the Pentagon [20:02]. That's where he was. Catesby Ap, Catesby Jones [20:07].

BB: Catesby Ape --

AS: Ap, A-P, Catesby. I don't know who he was, but it'd be the son of Catesby.

BB: Okay. I've always wondered, because I've seen his name and I've always wondered what it meant.

AS: Well, that's what it means, I guess.

BB: Great. Do you remember who your officer was that you reported to?

AS: I didn't report to really anybody. I don't know if they were -- when we wrote a letter, it went into the typing office and they typed it. I had to make sure the message was all right, but then I never talked to anybody else about it. They said it was a good job; that's all they said.

BB: And so would you handwrite the [21:00] letter?

AS: Yes.

BB: And then give it -- so there was a typing office?

AS: Yes, that's right.

BB: So you would insert the code into the letter?

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: Okay. And then somebody else would actually type it up and send it?

AS: Yes, that's right.

BB: Okay.

SS: We want to find more about Catesby Ap Jones [21:24].

BB: Sure. Anything other information? So Catsby Ap Jones.

AS: Catesby.

BB: Catesby?

AS: C-A-T-E-S-B-Y.

BB: Catesby Ap Jones [21:34]. It's a tongue twister. Catesby Ap Jones, he was at the Pentagon [21:39], but was he a commanding officer of the whole X [21:43] Program?

AS: X and Y [21:46].

BB: Oh, X and Y. Okay, so he was high up for all of the -- for MIS.

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay.

SS: A family friend?

BB: Would he come and visit at 1142 [21:59]?

AS: Off and on. I saw [22:00] him about twice when I was there. He'd come all by himself in his staff car and leave. I wasn't looking for him. I never saw much of him.

BB: Did he ever meet you? Since he was a family friend, did you ever have any words with him?

AS: Never. I stayed away from him on purpose so I wouldn't injure his reputation any.

BB: But he had been kind of a career military man?

AS: I think so. He was probably in World War II.

BB: In World War I?

AS: One. Yes, right.

BB: Do you remember anything about him? Was he a likeable guy?

AS: Yes, he was a southerner, I remember, and very friendly, and where he got his training from, I don't know. He must have [23:00] been at least 70, I think, when I was there.

BB: Oh, really? So he would have been a good bit older.

AS: Yes. Oh, yes.

SS: Your family met him at the beach?

AS: Yes, at our summer place. He'd go there every summer, Catesby [23:17]. Nobody knew what he did, but I just knew he was in very secret. He was [unintelligible] my father right away.

BB: Got you. What did your father do that he knew Mr. Jones [23:37]?

AS: Nothing. He was just a summer resident.

BB: Just a summer resident, okay. So it wasn't through work or anything like that?

AS: Oh, no.

BB: So any other officers or anyone else that you recall from 1142 [23:55]?

AS: Well, a fellow called Ralph Thompson [24:00]. He was an editorial writer for the New York Times. I saw a lot of him. He was always the lowest -- I was the lowest; he was

the next to the lowest.

BB: Okay. So he was not an officer, then?

AS: No.

BB: He was enlisted? Okay.

AS: There was a Lieutenant Cole [24:26], C-O-L-E, I remember, a southerner, and he was very friendly. I don't know what he did besides write letters.

BB: So did both Cole and Thompson write letters?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay. Was Thompson [24:47] there the whole time that you were there?

AS: Yes. Ralph Thompson.

BB: Great. We'll have to check to see if his name is on that roster, that list of names.

AS: It must be, I think [25:00].

BB: And so do you remember who -- you mention there was a Lieutenant Cole [25:07]. Was he your officer?

AS: No, I didn't have an officer.

BB: You didn't have a commanding officer?

AS: No.

BB: Okay. Anybody else? Any other names of people that you remember?

AS: I can't get them out of my mind too quickly.

BB: Take your time.

AS: There was only one man who had combat experience. I can't remember what his name was. He was a wild man. No, I don't remember anybody else. Most of them either had not seen any combat, like me, but I can't remember their names.



BB: The gentleman that you said had -- the one who had [26:00] seen combat, do you remember what his job was, what he was doing?

AS: Same as me.

BB: He was writing letters?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay. You had mentioned a couple names. I jotted down a few names when we spoke on the phone that you had mentioned. One of them was, I think, an officer named Davis.

AS: Could be. I don't recognize that. Could well be.

BB: Another couple names that you mentioned before is someone named Borman [26:38].

AS: Yes, Alvah Borman. He was in charge of the packaging, in a separate unit he was at.

BB: Was he an officer or an enlisted man?

AS: He was an enlisted man.

BB: And he was in charge of the packages?

AS: That's right.

BB: You said his first name was Alvah?

AS: Alvah, A-L-V-A-H [27:00].

BB: Great. Fantastic.

SS: When you say packaging, was he packaging the letters or the packages that went --

AS: The packages that went -- the pistols and what else. Where he got them, I don't know.

BB: So you didn't have anything to do with procuring stuff for the packages.

AS: No, not at all.

BB: Another name you had mentioned on the phone was someone named Wood.

AS: Wood. I know a lot of people named Wood. I don't remember any Wood there.

BB: Okay, well, don't worry about it then. I'd just taken some notes when we were on the phone. I might have miswritten something.

AS: Well, I don't know.

BB: So from your time at 1142 [27:51], did you get the sense that what you were doing was important?

AS: Yes, I did, although I never could prove it. They [28:00] always had plenty of rumors instrumental in getting somebody to escape, but I never heard that.

BB: Did you enjoy your time there?

AS: Yes, I did. I liked associating with the officers and they treated me very well and gave us a lot of responsibility, and the hours weren't bad.

BB: What were the hours?

AS: Oh, I'd say from 8:00 in the morning until noon. Then you'd go back about 3:00 in the afternoon till about 6:00.

BB: So did you work on weekends?

AS: No, as I remember it.

BB: So you had a lot of free time, then.

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: What did you do during your free time?

AS: I'd call up my friends in Washington.

BB: So you had some other friends in the Washington area?

AS: Oh, yes, a lot of friends in Washington, mostly in the Navy.

BB: Oh, okay [29:00]. Do you remember anything else that you can describe about 1142 [29:07], about the post itself and how it looked and what types -- you mentioned earlier

the buildings were a little bit run down.

AS: They were, indeed. Well, it didn't look like an Army post to me. Well, it didn't have any high-rise buildings. They were all pretty low, with a thatched roof and that kind of stuff. It wasn't a designer outfit [unintelligible], and I guess it had been there for a long while, but it hadn't [unintelligible] at all. I wasn't too impressed with the surroundings.

BB: Was there strict military discipline observed, or was it more casual.

AS: More casual. Well, you had to salute and all that kind of stuff.

BB: Did you have parade every day [30:00] and salute the flag and that stuff?

AS: No, didn't do any of that. No. That's why we were casual, I guess.

SS: Did you wear a uniform?

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: You didn't carry any weapons or anything when you were there?

AS: No, no.

BB: Okay. But you were just in a regular military uniform?

AS: Yes, right.

BB: Did you wear any special insignia or anything?

AS: No, not a bit.

BB: Okay. Do you remember, since it was so secretive, do you remember how you came and went? Did you have to show a pass to guards or anything?

AS: Well, I did at first, when we first got there, but after that, they recognized me and let me in. I didn't carry a pass.

BB: Okay. Got you.

SS: Were you going into Washington fairly frequently?

AS: Yes, I was.

SS: So you have a lot of friends in Washington?

AS: I do, still do [31:00].

SS: What types of things did you do in your off times?

AS: Oh, I went hunting and fishing and just talked with my friends. Whatever they happened to do, I'd do too. Nothing programmed at all.

BB: Got you.

SS: The hunting and fishing, do you know whereabouts in the area it was?

AS: Yes, it was north of 1142 [31:29] in the woods there. When I went hunting, I'd only bag one or two animals, and fishing, about three fish. That's all I wanted anyhow.

BB: After all, you said the food was fair, so you didn't need to supplement your food too much.

AS: No.

SS: Did you go into town very much?

AS: Excuse me?

SS: Did you go into Washington D.C. very much during your time off [32:00]?

AS: Not too much, no. No, I probably should have, but I didn't.

BB: Did most of the people you worked with at 1142 live on post --

(End of Tape 1A)

(Beginning of tape 1B)

BB: One of our interviews that we did just actually yesterday with someone from the Y [00:05] Program, the interrogation program, he mentioned that he had a friend who would show up at 1142 [00:12] every once in a while who was a crypto analyst. His

name was Buck. Does that ring any bells?

AS: No, it doesn't.

BB: Okay. Another name of someone -- the only other X [00:28] program veteran that we're in touch with is a gentleman named Silvio Bedini [00:33].

AS: I recognize that name, but I didn't know him.

BB: Okay. He's mentioned in this book a few times, several times, actually, as one of the chief code breakers and crypto analysts there at 1142 [00:50].

AS: I didn't know any code breakers or crypto analysts. I didn't have to.

BB: Okay. So did you consider yourself a code writer [01:00] or anything? What would you --

AS: No, I was a plain scrivener. I just wrote a letter, I made it up as I went along, but the only thing they wanted, the code word was in there.

BB: So would someone assign to you, would someone hand you, "Here's the real message we want to send," and then you would have to make up the rest of the letter?

AS: That's exactly right, yes.

BB: Okay. You said the letters essentially always said, "There will be a package coming," or something like that?

AS: No, they'd never say a thing about that. The prisoners knew the packages were coming. I didn't mention that at all.

BB: Okay. So what did you mention in the coded message?

AS: Oh, "How's your wife? How are your daughters and what have you been doing?" A lot of baloney, mostly. But it seemed to work out all right [02:00].

BB: So were passing along any special code? Was that "How is your wife? How are you

doing?" was that in code or was that in just a regular letter?

AS: Regular letter.

BB: What secret message would you send in the letter?

AS: "Look in the package for Private Jones [02:25]."

BB: Okay, got you.

SS: Would the word "Jones" be in there?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay. You don't -- you didn't save any examples of the letters you wrote or anything, did you?

AS: No, I didn't.

BB: Okay. We'd love to see what one looked like.

AS: I'm sure you would, but I can't remember a damn thing.

BB: Well, you've been doing an excellent job, so thank you. This has been great.

SS: Did you know anything about the people that [03:00] you were writing to, like whether they had a mother or a sister --

AS: No, I didn't know a thing about them, and I probably made a lot of mistakes but [unintelligible] nobody seemed to care. Just wanted to get that letter in the mail.

BB: Was there a great sense of urgency?

AS: No, didn't seem to be.

BB: Okay, and so after -- so you -- how long were you at 1142 [03:31]?

AS: About a year.

BB: Were you performing the same job?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay. You mentioned the whole time you were there, what was your rank while you were there?

AS: I ended up as first lieutenant and I started off as a PFC. I went to OCS [03:49] in the meantime.

BB: Okay, so you went to OCS and became a lieutenant. Where was OCS at?

AS: I went to -- trying to think now -- in Virginia [04:00], it was quartermaster.

BB: Oh, okay. That's not Fort Lee, is it?

SS: Fort Meyers?

AS: Near there, I think.

BB: Is it near Petersburg?

AS: Yes.

BB: Yes, I know where you're talking about. We can look it up. So you went down to Virginia, and then what was OCS [04:22] school like?

AS: That's what it was. Wasn't any OCS school; you just went to the OCS program.

BB: Okay. What sort of things did they teach you there?

AS: Not much, to be very honest with you, you know, how to stand up straight and how to write letters and things. I didn't learn much at all.

BB: So let me -- and this is jumping, going back and forth. Before -- when you first were drafted and went into the military, you never went to any sort of basic training [05:00] or anything?

AS: Oh, yes, I had the basic training two weeks, just a laugh. Wasn't anything at all, but everybody had to do that.

BB: Okay. Then from there, you stayed right up here in Boston at the camp.

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay. So this training you received in Virginia wasn't too much more impressive than that first training?

AS: No. No, it wasn't.

BB: Do you remember about how long it took to become an officer?

AS: Ninety days. I was a 90-day wonder.

BB: So did you then go back to 1142 [05:40]?

AS: I did, yes.

BB: Okay. How long were you there once you were an officer?

AS: About six months, during which I went overseas.

BB: When you were an officer at 1142 [05:54], were you still working on the letters?

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: Then how did you find out [06:00] that you were going overseas?

AS: Well, because the orders, I didn't know a thing about it until they handed me the orders, saying, "You're going." It was all right with me.

BB: Was it just you or a number of other people?

AS: Oh, a number of other people.

BB: Okay. All from 1142 [06:20]?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay. Any idea about how many people went?

AS: Oh, I'd say about 20.

BB: About 20 people, okay.

AS: Yes, including Colonel Walker [06:29].



BB: Okay. I just thought of another name of someone who was at 1142 [06:37], who may have been overseas as well. He was an officer. In fact, I've brought a picture of him. His name, I believe, was Winfrey, Lieutenant Colonel Robley Winfrey [06:52].

AS: He was a lieutenant colonel, I think. Yes, I didn't see much of him, but he was head of [07:00] intelligence [unintelligible] and that kind of stuff.

BB: He was there at 1142 [07:05]?

AS: Yes.

BB: I actually have a photograph of him. See if you might recognize him. I don't know if he looks familiar or not.

AS: Yes, he does. I'd recognize that nose anywhere.

[laughter]

BB: So he was at 1142. Did he go to -- overseas with you?

AS: I don't think so.

BB: Okay, so he stayed there at 1142 [07:45].

AS: Yes, I think so.

BB: Okay. So what were you told? Were you told why you were going overseas?

AS: No, they never told you anything. So I didn't ask any questions. I just said, "Okay, here I go [08:00]."

[laughter]

BB: Where did you end up going, and how did you get there?

AS: Well, took a train across the country to San Francisco, and we got on a special Army transport and went to the Philippines.

BB: So, on a ship?

AS: No, a plane.

BB: A plane. You flew?

AS: Yes.

BB: Did the whole group of the 20 or so of you stay together the whole time?

AS: No. A lot of them got lost. We didn't stay together, no.

BB: Did you all eventually end up at the same place then?

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: Okay. So you arrived in the Philippines. Any rough idea when this might have been?

AS: Well, let's see now. Let me see now. It was right towards the end of the Japanese war, because one of my friends was there at the [09:00] surrender, the [unintelligible] surrender. I wasn't, but that's about the time it was. So if you find out when he surrendered, that's when it was, before that.

BB: Okay. So sometime then maybe in the middle of 1945.

AS: Yes, that's about right.

BB: Okay. You were stationed in the Philippines?

AS: Yes.

BB: What was your job there?

AS: Well, that's a good question. I didn't do much. I mostly fiddled with the letters -- you see, the Japs wouldn't let any letters in the camp, so we couldn't do anything about that. But we interviewed prisoners and made sure that everything was going all right. But I didn't prove much.

BB: Was this related to war crimes or anything like that?

AS: No. No.

BB: So were you interviewing American prisoners [10:00] or Japanese prisoners?

AS: Japanese.

BB: So were you like interrogating Japanese?

AS: Yes.

BB: Did you speak Japanese?

AS: Did not. I had one of the translators with me.

BB: Okay. Do you remember what sort of information you were trying to get from the Japanese?

AS: I was trying to get at why were they in a specific place, why were they not getting the Army there, and mostly they didn't know, so that didn't help much.

BB: [laughs] So was what you were doing, was it related still to the X [10:37] Program? Were you still assigned to X?

AS: Yes, but I didn't do much X work. I didn't know if it was a waste of time, but never mind. They all wanted to get the overseas ribbons, so that's what it was for, mostly.

BB: And so [11:00] did you -- were you writing any of the coded messages over in the Philippines?

AS: No.

BB: Okay. Did you ever speak to any American prisoners over there?

AS: No.

BB: After they'd been released, that is.

AS: Oh, no. Somebody did, but I didn't.

BB: Okay.

SS: Were you sent to the Philippines after the war had ended in Europe?

AS: Yes.

SS: So there was no reason to send letters to prisoners of war [11:32]. They were all coming home, is that your understanding?

AS: Yes, that's right. I've forgotten now. You probably know how much longer the Japanese war went on.

BB: The war in Europe ended in May and the war against Japan, I believe the treaty was signed in early September.

AS: That sounds about right.

BB: So it would have been what, four or five months or so difference. The bombs were dropped in August [12:00].

SS: Where were you when the atomic bombs were dropped?

AS: Sitting in my easy chair, I guess. I had nothing to do with that.

SS: Do you know where you -- were you abroad? Were you in the Pacific or --

AS: Yes. Yes, a detachment right in Manila.

BB: Okay. So were you in Manila the whole time you were in the Pacific?

AS: Yes.

BB: Once the war was over, did you ever go to Japan or anything?

AS: Yes, but I didn't have a camp or anything.

BB: Were you there just kind of touring around or did you have a military duty when you were there?

AS: Oh, no, just touring around.

BB: Okay. So your work in the Philippines, you were with people from the X [12:55] Program, but you don't think it was really that related to the X Program.

AS: No, I don't [13:00]. In fact, I don't think I did much of any good for anybody. It was mostly to get your ribbon, I guess. I hate to say that, but that's what it was.

BB: Do you remember the names of any of the people who were with you in the Philippines?

AS: Let's see now. Thompson [13:22] was with me, and I remember him very distinctly. And Colonel Walker [13:29] was there. That's about all I can remember.

BB: Okay. Do you remember when you were shipped back to the United States?

AS: Well, it was after the war was over. I came back on a plane. I wasn't shipped back, but anyhow. No, they were very quick [14:00] about that. There were signs that we got ordered to go back to Fort Hunt [14:05].

BB: Okay. So did you go back to 1142 [14:10]?

AS: Yes, I did.

BB: Okay. So you went from the Philippines and you flew to the United States, and then did you take a train back to Fort Hunt?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay. What did you do there once the war was over?

AS: Very little. They said, "You want to go and get the physicals," and I said, "Sure." I don't think I was there more than two weeks after I got back. Then they said, "You're going to get discharged," so I did.

BB: So were you discharged directly there from Fort Hunt [14:41]?

AS: No, I had to go to Belvoir [14:44].

BB: Okay. I think that's where a lot of folks went to get discharged. That makes sense.

AS: Yes, I think so.

BB: When you returned to 1142 [14:52], after having been in the Pacific, did it look different?

Had [15:00] anything changed?

AS: I didn't think so.

BB: Okay. So all the buildings were still there?

AS: Oh, yes.

BB: Okay. But was there much of anything going on?

AS: No. I don't think I had anything to do at all.

BB: Okay. So things just kind of winded down since the war was over.

AS: That's right.

BB: Okay. When you were being mustered out, were you ever briefed again on the secrecy of what you had done, or was it just kind of understood?

AS: No, not a word. Yes, that's right.

BB: Okay.

SS: Mr. Soule, before you entered the Army, you had just graduated from Harvard Law School, after going to Harvard for four years. The people you were working with in the MIS, in the X [15:54] Program, were they educated? I mean, were they --

AS: Yes, I suppose they were, college.

SS: College [16:00] educated?

AS: Yeah. How they were chosen, I don't know. There were quite a few college boys in there.

SS: So basically it was like a different culture, as opposed to the regular Army? It wasn't --

AS: Yes, I think so.

SS: More literate?

AS: We didn't have to parade or stand up straight or any of that stuff. You wouldn't know we

were in the Army at all.

BB: The one thing -- what I'd like to do is we have some more photos that we can show you to see if anything else rings any bells or anything.

AS: All right, sure.

SS: Do you want to just show him an example --

BB: Sure, great [17:00]. First, I've got a few pictures of what some of the escape devices might have looked like. I'm just going to show it to the camera real quick. These are examples. There you can see in the upper right corner there are some of those chess pieces.

AS: Yes, right.

BB: You had mentioned a chess set, and some playing cards. We've understood that they would sometimes put a map in the playing cards.

AS: I guess that's right.

BB: Okay. They would also sometimes take radios and hide them. That's an x-ray of a cribbage board.

AS: I'll be darned.

BB: They would hide a radio [18:00] inside the cribbage board.

AS: I didn't know that. That's very interesting.

BB: There's a couple of pictures like that in this study that we're leaving you. You can look at it there.

AS: Thank you, sir.

BB: And then just a picture of what we have. This is what the post looked like long before you got there. That's actually a picture from about 1907, which would have been before

you were there, so it probably looks a lot newer there than when you were there. But I don't know if that rings any bells.

AS: No, it doesn't. I can tell that's where we were, but they changed the buildings.

BB: So the buildings look a little bit familiar?

AS: Yes, right.

BB: When you were there, do you remember there being any gun batteries that were there?

AS: No, I don't remember.

BB: Okay [19:00], because that was the original purpose of the fort, was to guard against ships going up the Potomac River.

AS: I didn't know that.

BB: The last thing I'll show you, in fact, you can keep a copy of this as well, this is a photo of a number of people there at 1142 [19:15] taken towards the end of the war, but a lot of the people in that picture were from the other program. They were from the Y [19:36] Program. But we think there are a couple of X [19:38] Program gentlemen in there as well.

AS: Let me look to see if I can find any.

BB: I'd be very curious if you saw yourself in that picture. I don't know if you'd be there or not.

AS: No, I wouldn't be. I'd remember that.

SS: There were no pictures taken at Fort Hunt when you were at [20:00] 1142?

AS: I guess so. I don't remember much of it.

BB: I'll put this with your stuff because, like I said, this is an extra copy that you can add to your collection of things.



AS: Good.

SS: Want to talk about the picture [inaudible]?

BB: Great. I'm going to -- the picture of you in the Officers' School [20:27], I'm just going to show that to the camera real quick and then talk about it for a second. So could you point to yourself in that picture?

AS: Yes, I have to find myself first. Here I am here.

BB: Right there?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay [21:00]. So this was your Officer Candidate School [21:03] down there in Virginia?

AS: Right.

SS: Could you point one more time, Mr. Soule?

AS: What?

BB: Could you just point one more time?

AS: Yes, be glad to. Right here.

BB: Fantastic. Do you remember anybody else from your Officer Candidate School [21:27]? Were any of them in the X [21:29] Program?

AS: No. No, they all went on to be quartermasters. I was glad to get out of that.

BB: So was it largely training for the quartermaster school?

AS: Yes.

BB: Okay. So you were being trained to be a quartermaster?

AS: Yes. I didn't have [unintelligible], but I could have, I suppose [22:00].

BB: All right. Well, I want to try to think of any other wrapping-up questions. What did

you end up doing? You were discharged from Fort Belvoir [22:09].

AS: Yes.

BB: Where did you go from there? Did you return to Boston?

AS: I returned to Boston and I stayed on in the reserves for quite a long while and went once a week to the Army base for training. That's about all we did. But I did stay in, yes.

BB: But nothing you did in the reserves had anything to do with the code breaking or anything?

AS: No, not at all. Complete waste of time, again.

BB: [laughs] So then when you returned, you went ahead and did you open your own law practice after the war?

AS: I went back to my old law practice.

BB: Oh, you went back to your old one?

AS: Yes.

BB: So had you been practicing before you were drafted?

AS: Oh, yes [23:00]. Oh, sure.

BB: So I take it as -- after the war, you really didn't really keep in touch with anyone from 1142 [23:11].

AS: No, I didn't.

BB: Okay, all right. Any other questions? Is there anything you think we've left out? Any questions we should be asking you?

AS: You asked me how I got into 1142 [23:28]. That shows the answer to that.

BB: Right.

AS: A question you asked me, did I have to prove myself capable in any way. No, they just

took me.

BB: Okay. And as near as you were told, you were doing a good job a couple of times?

AS: Yes, that's right.

BB: Okay. In the setting that you were writing these letters in, were you in a private room by yourself?

AS: No, about 30 others.

BB: So they were all in the same room.

AS: Yes they were.

BB: Okay.

SS: Did they sit at one [24:00] long table or did you --

AS: No, a lot of little tables.

BB: Lots of little tables?

AS: Yes.

BB: Do you remember receiving any -- were they intercepting any enemy radio messages or anything like that?

AS: I didn't hear about that. They must have been, but I didn't hear about it.

BB: Okay.

SS: Did you have any interaction with anyone outside of the program, the 30 other people on the base?

AS: No.

BB: Did you -- you knew -- did you think you knew about the prisoner program that was there?

AS: Only by word of mouth.

BB: Okay. But do you ever remember seeing any prisoners?

AS: No. They hid them out of sight.

BB: Okay. Again, we've been meeting with a lot of folks who were interrogators for that program, and they were all [25:00] -- most of them were fluent German speakers.

AS: Yes, right.

BB: So you don't remember folks going around 1142 [25:08] speaking German or other languages?

AS: I do, yes.

BB: Oh, you do?

AS: Oh, yes. Oh, we knew who was at Y [25:16] as opposed to who was at X [25:18], but it didn't make any difference to us.

BB: Okay. Did you interact with them much?

AS: No.

BB: Okay. So you just interacted with the X people, really.

AS: Yes, right.

BB: At that time was it referred to as the X [25:34] Program?

AS: Yes, I think, MIS-X.

BB: Okay. Is that what you -- did you call it M-I-S, or did you -- sometimes see it as written as MIS-X. Would they say that, or would they M-I-S-X?

AS: M-I-S-X [25:52].

BB: Okay. And the other program was the M-I-S-Y [25:57] Program.

AS: Yes.

BB: Do you know of any other programs [26:00] besides X or Y?

AS: No, I don't. There may have been plenty of them, but I didn't know them.

BB: Those are the only ones we know about. We're just making sure you didn't know anything we didn't know.

SS: Did you hear anything about a place called Camp Ritchie [26:18]?

AS: Yes, Camp Ritchie was an intelligence camp and they did a lot of code work down there.

BB: Oh, really?

AS: So I'm told. I never went there.

BB: Do you know if anyone in the MIS-X [26:35] Program had been trained at Ritchie?

AS: I don't think so. They were all new fellows like me.

BB: But that there was some level of code breaking or --

AS: Oh, yes, very definitely.

BB: That's interesting.

AS: What that was called, I can't tell you, you know.

BB: Okay [27:00]. A lot of the interrogators were trained at Ritchie [27:06], because they were being trained in interrogation, but that's interesting that they were also training people in code breaking there.

AS: Yes.

BB: That's very interesting. We're just trying to think. I've gone through most of the questions I jotted down. I'm just trying to think if there's anything else that we might have --

AS: If there's anything else, just call me.

BB: Fantastic.

SS: Were you approached at any time after the war to participate in the intelligence service?

AS: No.

BB: So you never -- the CIA never gave you a call or anything?

AS: No, never.

BB: You'd be surprised the number of people that did happen to. Some of the interrogators were recruited by the CIA after the war, the folks in the Y [27:51] Program.

AS: Yes, right.

BB: So you had never heard -- had you heard anything about [28:00] what you did during the war? Did that ever come up in conversation after the war?

AS: No, never.

BB: Okay. Well, from the research that we've done, what happened there at 1142 [28:14] was extremely important, and was very, very successful.

AS: I gathered it was, yes.

BB: To the point that a great deal of this information and the techniques are still even being used to this day.

AS: Really? That's amazing.

BB: So in terms of the -- in fact, some folks, when this book, "the Escape Factory," was written, some folks in the military got rather upset because they thought it revealed too many secrets about what had gone on because they were still being used.

AS: I see.

BB: But we've spoken with a number of people in the military and they're very excited that we're speaking with people like yourself. This has been really fantastic, and you've given us some great information [29:00].

AS: I'm glad I did. As I said, if you want any more, you give me a call.

BB: Fantastic.

SS: Thank you, sir.

BB: Great. All right.

AS: You're very welcome.

BB: We'll go ahead and turn off the tapes, then.

AS: Well, that wasn't so bad.

SS: It was great.

BB: Thank you so much.

AS: I'm glad to do it. I'm glad you're on the top of it.

BB: Well, we think it's an important thing to just tell the story of. It'd be a shame if -- it'd be a shame if 20 or 30 years from now, everybody forgot about what had happened.

AS: Yes, right.

BB: So we really think it's important, and we're planning in October -- and we'll send you some of this information, even if you aren't able to attend; we're planning on having the first ever reunion of people who were stationed at 1142 [29:52]. We're going to have some guest speakers and maybe even some active-duty generals coming to speak [30:00], folks with the CIA, all sorts of guest speakers. We're going to be taking tours, a trip down to Fort Hunt [30:09] to show what it looks like today, and have a trip to the World War II Memorial. We're going to invite all of the veterans that we've interviewed. So we'll send you some information about that in May.

AS: I'll be glad to get it.

BB: We're going to be getting that sent out probably in the next week or so.

AS: That'll be very interesting. Who dreamed up this project you're on? Who would

[unintelligible] heard about 1142?

BB: Well, we knew that it was -- that the fort was there and, like I said, this little study that I've given you, it was published about six years ago.

AS: Oh, I see.

BB: Someone went and did some research, but again, their research was on the whole history World War I, World War II [31:00] --

AS: I see.

[end of transcript]



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