

Fort Hunt Oral History  
P.O. Box 1142  
George Washington Memorial Parkway  
Interview with Howard D. Nottingham  
by Brandon Bies and Matthew Virta  
April 19, 2007

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Today is April 19th, 2007. This is part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project with the National Park Service. This is Brandon Bies, as well as Matthew Virta from the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and we are here in Richmond, Virginia, interviewing Mr. Howard D. Nottingham, who was in the Army Corps of Engineers [00:27] and had a lot to do with Fort Hunt during World War II [00:30]. So with that, we'll go ahead and get started. And Mr. Nottingham, if you wouldn't mind just telling us a little bit about yourself, like, where you were born. And if you don't mind telling us how old you are, when you were born.

HOWARD D. NOTTINGHAM: Okay. My name is Howard D. Nottingham. I was born in Clinton, Georgia, which is just outside of Atlanta about 30 miles, near McDonough. I was born on April 5th, 1913; I'm 94 years old [01:00].

INT: So we just missed your birthday, then, so happy belated birthday.

HN: Thank you. Anyway, my father worked for the railroads, so I lived at several different places in Georgia. And we settled down in Chester, South Carolina, in 1925, somewhere along there. I finished Chester High School in 1930; went to -- attended Clemson University [01:35] 1931, graduated in 1935.

INT: And what was your area there?

HN: BS in Civil Engineering. When you graduate from Clemson [01:50], it was 100 percent military prior to World War II [01:55]. So I became a -- I was a -- earned a commission [02:00] as a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry. I graduated; I studied Military Science, and everything else to do with the military during that time. So I kept my commission up,

some accounts and so forth [phonetic], and in December 1940, I was called on active duty. Prior to being called on active duty, I had considerable strokes [phonetic] and experience with the South Carolina Highway Department; a large construction firm in Greenville, South Carolina; and an engineering firm in Charlotte, North Carolina. My last job was resident engineer on the [03:00] construction of the New Presbyterian Hospital in Charlotte, which was a large project at that time. End of that job, I received a call from Washington [03:16] from a Major who was a construction quartermaster at Fort Myer [03:25] who was a captain on construction [phonetic] in the Washington [03:31] area. He said they're getting ready to the large Walter Reed Hospital [03:38] and several other places. He had no construction experience, and he had selected me to replace him. He wanted me -- this was on a Thursday afternoon, he wanted me in Washington [03:54] on Monday morning to replace him. I indicated [04:00] I wasn't too happy about moving overnight, but he insisted that I would be in with troops Monday morning, unless I did it [phonetic]. Training troops in Fort Benning, Georgia [04:12], so I was up there Saturday, Sunday. And he -- on Monday, he took me over to the War Department [04:22], and orders issued. Relieving himself and replacing me, I was a first lieutenant at that time, then promoted up to full, triple year [phonetic], and made construction quartermaster for Washington [04:41] and vicinity. I had Fort Myer [04:45], whatever, all the commanders at Fort Dodge [04:51] [phonetic], and the whole Washington [04:52] area. But the biggest job was at Walter Reed Hospital [04:55], where I built psychiatric wards and various [05:00] things.

INT: And so your role during all this, were you engineering how they designed these structures?

HN: I was the engineer also in charge of design and construction. And also, the contracting

officer. I could award contracts up to \$200,000 anytime. Otherwise, I'd deal with \$10-million projects, if I wanted; \$200,000 [unintelligible]. But at Fort Myer [05:40], why, I did miscellaneous jobs there on the base. Jeff Caliber [05:46] [phonetic] was there at the time; Colonel Dwarf [05:48] [phonetic] was commanding officer. General George Marshall [05:54] was stationed there; so was Major [George] Patton [06:00]. The only job I recall doing -- two jobs while I was there at Fort Myer [06:07] for that base was -- one was a comfort station in Arlington Cemetery [06:16], and the other one that I was called one night -- one day -- before Pearl Harbor [06:24] I had a call from George Marshall [06:26], who was there then [unintelligible]. He wanted to know if I was construction officer in Washington [06:34]. I just told him "Yes, sir." He said [Franklin] Roosevelt [06:37] [unintelligible] across street bridge [unintelligible] in Washington [06:44] undercover by Monday morning at 8:00. He wanted to know if I had any questions. I told him, "No, sir." And he said, "Repeat what I said." So I repeated, you said, "Call me [07:00] Monday at 8:00." Well, I had the authority and special use these days, got all the supplies, built the -- I had lots of help. The officer in charge of the 10th Cavalry [07:21], he helped me lots. I have a large construction force. Everybody has helped me; they did go by Washington [07:29] and all that [phonetic] [unintelligible]. As it turns out there were 52 guard stations. So I went, Monday morning, 8:00, I called him back. I said, "Sir, the job is completed, and all guards at the Washington [07:53] undercover." He said, "How many were there?" I said, "52 [08:00]." He said, "To hell there were." I said, "No, sir." He said, "We'll need 100, just in case." We all know he wanted the spares [phonetic]. He said, "That's right." I said, "Thank you." He hung up. That was -- I had the sensation that [unintelligible] Commander Joe at Walter Reed

[08:25]. [unintelligible] One night, I was seen -- I guess that's when I was in John Paul [phonetic]; in the meantime, I went to a football game on December 7th out at Griffith Stadium. During the game, they announced the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor [08:49], during the Redskin game. And it said the war was all lost [phonetic] [unintelligible] active duty, to have uniforms on [unintelligible] [09:00]. At the time, we did not wear our uniform in Washington [09:04]; the military did not. My sister was visiting [phonetic]. I received a call that Major [Leslie] Groves [09:18], who later became the Major General Groves [09:20] in charge of Oak Ridge [09:21], he called down to Fort Belvoir [09:25], and he was very unhappy with the project under construction there. The general apparently pulled his knife on him down there, told him to get off the base and they won't -- but they wanted me to go down there and relieve the colonel and just take over constructions. I told him I'd be glad to go off with him [phonetic] the first lieutenant going down to [unintelligible]. They said we don't want you to, captain [phonetic] and I did anyway, so it wasn't very [10:00] hard to go back to check the flap [phonetic] with the colonel and relieve him. He was very polite at this. I think they had 21 permanent buildings, which are still there at Fort Belvoir [10:15], the laboratory research center --

INT: Okay.

HN: -- that's still there. And the field hospital, and other major buildings. So, contracting [unintelligible] I believe, was raised about \$100,000. I'd have to go look through my files. So while at Fort Belvoir [10:38], I received lots of calls. A file come to my attention. The people in -- two things: they didn't say -- cost was never mentioned, never an item, get it done. One was to build a German [10:59] P.O. Box [11:00] which was

intended to be [unintelligible]. One was to go to Fort Washington [11:05], meet the colonel there [unintelligible]. One was to go to Vint Hill [11:13] [phonetic], and then on to [unintelligible], and that was a big job there, big communications office.

INT: Is it Flint Hill?

HN: Vint Hill [11:25]; it's down near Washington [11:29].

INT: Oh, okay.

HN: Took over [unintelligible], I had built this huge communications center inside the fort building, to not touch anything, and put in the barracks and the woods around there [phonetic]. But that was [unintelligible] before there's a dog training center. Called Fort Hunt [11:55], meet Colonel Ferrell [11:55] [phonetic] and Mr. Bills, John Paul Bills [11:59]. [12:00] He was a student architect, so up at [unintelligible]. And Colonel Ferrell [12:09] wanted a -- told me that that they expected to get a submarine [12:18] crew captured; they wanted a German [12:20] submarine [12:20] crew. They were hoping to [unintelligible]; they were sinking our ships off of the coasts very rapidly. And he wanted us to build this -- a facility, a temporary facility, in two months. Well, we built it in six weeks. We built -- we worked around the clock, night and day. It was not built from plans; it was built from sketches. The sketches were made by this John Paul Bills [13:01], this architect. He made the sketches. Anyway, by the time some plans were made, the buildings, everything was finished. Now, the plans were made later, I understand, by an additional [unintelligible] in Washington [13:20].

INT: Hmm.

HN: And, evidently -- I don't recall this perfectly -- evidently, they had a side plan made, but that was on the map [phonetic]. And they had [unintelligible] because a German [13:41]

lady called me up in 1978. My first wife had just died and I'd just remarried. And she asked to speak to Captain Nottingham, Corps of Engineers [13:54], and she had my serial number, and I got on the phone. And [14:00] she said her father had been killed at Fort -- he died at Fort Washington [14:04], and she wanted to know the circumstance. I told her that I was only in charge of building it, but I did hear a rumor about it -- told her it was second-hand information. And I would meet her down at Fort Hunt [14:26], which I did, and she had the plan that my wife and me would sit down at the end of a park bench and explain to her what I knew. And I told her a fib, which I [unintelligible]. Going back a little bit, when we built the facility, they had a [15:00] colonel, major commanding officer, Colonel [Edward] Hubbs [15:04], from Philadelphia. I have a letter from here him. Colonel Hubbs [15:10], I believe, was chief of police in Philadelphia; I'm not sure. He was a built [phonetic] person, full colonel. We fixed up a house while I built -- of course, it existed, the house, built a [phonetic] new kitchen and a new bathroom in for him, while we built it -- well, we did it -- we did that over a weekend [unintelligible]. And we built this thing, and I left. They put it all together and sent me to Andrew's Field [15:52] to build [unintelligible] Camp Springs [15:56], a command station there. They would [16:00] that to [unintelligible]. Well, I went by the town to see Colonel Hubbs [16:06] one day, and he thanked me. But this fellow John Paul Bills [16:10] decided to just get to the office. He stayed there until the job was finished, so did my construction engineer, Mr. Bills [16:24]. And their names [unintelligible]. So, when I went into business for myself in 1955, I hired John Paul Bills [16:39] as my chief architect. So I got somebody that [unintelligible] the first chance I had. And so, they told me that all of the first -- they had the first prisoners out, the first submarine [17:03] crew there, but I

won't try and tell you all --

INT: Just going to --

HN: And he insisted on that and [unintelligible] big slug of whiskey [unintelligible] he was at von Braun [17:18] [phonetic].

INT: This was Colonel Hubbs [17:18]?

HN: Hubbs, yeah. So he said he had the first crew there, and that he was going to get the officers out of the first crew and go flog them all. And people didn't admire this, I'm sure, but he said he was going to bring a bunch of women and girls over from Baltimore, gave the prisoners [17:43] all that whiskey, if we want it [phonetic], he was going to get the answers. And I called up to my architect; he got down to the first schoolhouse [phonetic] at night, said he went through the procedures, most other people [18:00] would get the answers or whatever right there. I think the answers were worked [phonetic] in the submarine [18:06] code; I don't know.

INT: [affirmative] So Hubbs [18:11] told you this, or Bills [18:13]?

HN: I'm not sure which.

INT: Okay.

HN: Well, one thing Hubbs [18:17] told me, well, we had the drink, he went up there, and everybody's standing at attention waiting to come in and wanted to sit down to eat. I start [unintelligible]. And the guys were young there; I guess they were interrogators. He didn't introduce me to them. But it was about 15 of them, and he was about five years younger than I was, I guess, some of them might have been; some of them my age. And I don't see how in hell that its 30 or 40 of them still living. Out of my class at Clemson [18:58], it's just five of us still living [19:00].

INT: Wow.

HN: So --

INT: Where are they?

HN: Three of them can't walk, so I just can't understand how you all could have a reunion.

INT: We --

HN: People that were -- after that, and I said, "Well, I'll procure them [phonetic]."

INT: Well --

HN: Well, they had to speak German [19:21] to be there.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: So I'm not saying that there were none, but anyway, this is a side thing, and I don't know whether you want it in there or not. But one of the guys, while we were eating, come in and told Colonel Hubbs [19:43] that there's some noise going on in one room, and he didn't know what it was. And Hubbs [19:49] said, "Why in the hell don't you know?" He said, "Well, I'm not used to this," but [unintelligible] joined this job, I guess. Well, they had listening devices, so [20:00] they had slots in the door. Hubbs [20:02] said, "Did you look in the slot, there, in the door?" He said, "No." He didn't know what he should do. So Hubbs [20:11] excused himself and came back and said, "Oh, hell, they were just bug holes [phonetic]."

[laughter]

And that's -- I think that's the last time I saw Hubbs [20:24]. But after that, I received a letter from him [unintelligible], a real basic letter -- here -- a basic letter [unintelligible]. Hubbs [20:44] wrote to his chief of engineers telling him that what a good job everybody had done, and right there, he refers to me as Major Howard [21:00] Nottingham --



INT: [affirmative]

HN: He reached me, and Mr. Nelson [21:04] is superintendent, he and John Paul Bills [21:09] built the place. And they all wanted Mr. Bills [21:12] and not him. They mentioned him [unintelligible]. Well, those two guys, they did all the work, with the men. I mean, all these other people that signed those plans, and all that other stuff, they had nothing to do with it. That was after the fact.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: So the corps chief engineer sent this letter to the division engineer, who sent it to the district engineer, who sent it to me. In those days, they didn't write letters; they just put endorsements on it.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: And so, after endorsement, which was for my file -- see in there --

INT: Yep [22:00].

HN: See in there --

INT: Well, that's fantastic. Thank you so much for making us a copy.

INT: I appreciate that.

HN: Well --

INT: Because this -- it also has all the other names that you mentioned --

HN: Oh, yeah; right.

INT: Like Bills [22:10] and Nelson [22:10].

HN: [unintelligible] those two guys did the work.

INT: Bills [22:14] and Nelson [22:15]?

HN: Bills and Nelson.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: Bills [22:17] was an architect; Nelson [22:19] was a construction superintendent.

INT: Now, you don't know -- have they both passed away?

HN: Yes. Yes, both have. Nelson [22:28] passed away before I opened my business in Washington [22:32], before I came back to Washington. And -- but Bills [22:36], he's passed away. He was older than I was; both of them were older than I was.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: Hubbs [22:43], I imagine he has; he would be over 100 if he's still living.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: So, I'm available to answer any questions if I can.

INT: Fantastic.

HN: I was only [23:00] a construction officer and a contracting officer, I paid whatever [phonetic].

INT: [affirmative] Well, sure, I do have some questions. Matt probably will, as well. Did you kind of go back and start towards the beginning of what you were talking about at Fort Hunt [23:19] --

HN: Sure.

INT: -- and see what you might remember. Prior to being assigned the project at Fort Hunt [23:26], you mentioned some of the other projects you worked on. But had you ever built a prison facility before?

HN: No.

INT: Okay.

HN: I never built any of these types of military facilities. There weren't nothing to it; it was

just like a two-story barrel rod [phonetic], just plain buildings, and mess halls and stuff. I mean, that was staffed at season [phonetic] -- I mean, for the construction, because it wasn't a tough job at all.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: It was just a hurry-up job. They worked three shifts --

INT: [affirmative] [24:00]

HN: -- around the clock. They made lots of money, these guys did. And they were happy and they did it.

INT: You mentioned they worked around the clock, and made extra money. Were -- the men doing that actual work, were they just contracted laborers? They weren't --

HN: They worked for the government. Yeah, civil service jobs. They worked for the government; not contract. We had some time left; we started work the next morning after meeting up with Colonel Ferrell [24:33]. Bills [24:36] went down there, give them the sketches; show him the sketches of what he wanted. And put in some rock foundations, and frame buildings. And some joke of showing up [phonetic] from communications and Kohlmeyer [phonetic] wanted to buy that stuff [phonetic]. But it wasn't near as complicated [25:00] as the [unintelligible] job, but it was a complicated job because it was rush job.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: That was the main thing. Get the damn job done; [unintelligible].

INT: Were you briefed at all in terms of secrecy, you're not supposed to tell --

HN: Well, I was top-secret clearance.

INT: Okay. And do you know that the workers, the folks that were doing the work on the

project, I assume --

HN: Not all of them; just a few people.

INT: Okay. Did they know they were making a prisoner facility? I guess it would be obvious

--

HN: Well, I know Nelson [25:33] did; I don't know about the rest of them. I don't think the rest of them did. But they had worked on lots of classified stuff, and we -- it was known not to talk about it. They worked on the P.O. Box [25:46] and that kind of stuff --

INT: [affirmative]

HN: -- and they told them not to talk about it.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: Lots of them were cleared, but I don't think all of them were.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: We had [26:00] plumbers, electricians, I think a little bit of everything. I think basically all of them had a main clearance [phonetic], but they didn't know what they were.

INT: Okay. And do you remember roughly when it was that you were requested to do the work at Fort Hunt [26:21]? I guess it was -- was it 1942?

HN: Yeah. I have to go by the date I was transferred to Andrews Field [26:36], it was two or three months before the -- [27:00] can we [unintelligible]?

INT: Sure thing.

HN: [unintelligible] various dates --

INT: These are, yeah, these are the 1930s. The last one, the bottom page, this is 1940.

HN: Okay.

INT: All right. Move into first lieutenant, infantry reserve, November 15, at age 27.

HN: All right.

INT: The next page. And then the top of this page -- this whole page is all 1940, the year 1941.

HN: Okay; that's good.

INT: So -- I'll skip through some of the -- the last entry on the page is Pearl Harbor [27:39].

HN: All right, there's [unintelligible].

INT: And then after that, we've got February 1st, 1942, promoted to Captain --

HN: [unintelligible]

INT: -- Corps of Engineers [27:49]; March 21st, transferred to Fort Belvoir [27:53], as area engineer in charge of construction.

HN: Well, about five months after that --

INT: Okay [28:00].

HN: -- is when I worked -- we did the work [unintelligible]

INT: Okay, that's where it mentions the projects, it mentions in charge of the construction at Belvoir [28:10], Vint Hall -- Vint Hill [28:12], Fort Hunt [28:13], Front Royal [28:15], and then "plans are classified"; contracting officer with your \$500,000 award authority.

HN: Okay.

INT: Let's see, over 300 civil service employees headed by Herman T. Pock Nelson [28:31] [phonetic].

HN: Yeah.

INT: And then you've got September 26th, Fort Belvoir [28:37], promoted to Major.

HN: Well, that was a job we had to finish -- were finishing Fort Hunt [28:44].

INT: Okay.

HN: We were finishing Fort Hunt [28:46].

INT: So you finished it up in September?

HN: That's right.

INT: Okay. And you said before it took about six weeks or so?

HN: Yes, six weeks.

INT: Okay.

HN: About -- well, we went back, stayed there for two or three more weeks [29:00]. But they were occupied -- it was occupied in six weeks.

INT: [affirmative] And when you were doing this work, were you living -- you were still living on base at Fort Belvoir [29:13]?

HN: Yeah.

INT: Okay. So none of the construction crew was staying at Fort Hunt [29:18] while they were working on it?

HN: No, just in and out.

INT: Okay. And so, realizing you worked on a number of different projects, with Fort Hunt [29:30], you said you just found out -- you just got a phone call saying here's what we need you to do?

HN: That's where I got the -- like General Marshall [29:39] called me. I mean, they called once, and then said, "Do this," because I had [unintelligible]. That's the reason they called.

INT: [affirmative] And so they basically just, again, they just requested of you a prisoner [29:57] facility. They mentioned it might have something to do with the U-boats [30:00]?

HN: Sure.

INT: Okay.

HN: The colonel did.

INT: Okay.

HN: Colonel Hubbs [30:04] did. No, Colonel Ferrell [30:06] did. Said that they hoped to catch a U-boat [30:14] crew. Colonel Ferrell [30:17] told us that --

INT: [affirmative]

HN: -- and that's the reason, he said, they wanted it so soon. But the cost, they told us, they brought them in [phonetic], and so forth. He didn't say how big it was; I mean, I would guess it was 15 to -- I don't know; that's purely a guess. I don't know.

INT: Okay. And had you --

HN: I get -- for some reason, I did -- John Paul Bills [30:40] worked on lots of things, and he's like -- [unintelligible] oh, that's a routine job.

INT: [affirmative] So it wasn't anything out of the ordinary?

HN: No. Because everything was classified by Andrews Field [30:58], the same thing. We spent \$28 million [31:00] out, and \$2 billion authority now, out of \$2 billion [phonetic].

INT: Wow.

HN: Even down at the Pentagon [31:10], you could spend \$5 million because they don't know how much it cost for these things [phonetic] [laughs]. He built the Pentagon [31:21] with \$5 million.

INT: Wow.

HN: [unintelligible]

INT: Huh. And do you remember, what was his name again?

HN: Sir?

INT: Do you remember his name? The general who built the Pentagon [31:34]?

HN: What?

INT: Do you -- the name of the friend of yours who built the Pentagon [31:39]?

HN: Yeah, I knew him real well. I'd really like to see him [unintelligible]. He came to see me while I was building at Andrews Field [31:45]. He was my boss.

INT: So --

HN: [affirmative] He said he was able to [unintelligible] change the morale a little bit while I was at Andrews Field [31:57]. They were always real organized in government [32:00] during the war. The boss expend [phonetic] it.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: His name is Colonel Meyer Renshaw [32:08] [phonetic].

INT: Cranshaw?

HN: Renshaw

INT: Renshaw [32:13] [phonetic].

HN: Oh, yeah; that's it.

INT: Okay. We're going to take a 30-second break and flip the tape over.

HN: All right.

[End of Tape 1A]

[Beginning of Tape 1B]

INT: Easy enough? So, going back to some of the questions. Had you ever been -- you'd never been to Fort Hunt [00:13] before this project?

HN: The general -- I meant Colonel Ferrell [00:19].

INT: You don't remember -- had you ever heard of it or anything? Was it an active military installation, to your knowledge?



HN: No. I viewed -- when I got up there, I saw all these old Civil War [00:29] facilities.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: We used to eat at -- two women, old [unintelligible] had a little house where Cedar Knoll is right there. We used to go up there and have spaghetti [unintelligible] in the military sometime, so --

INT: Huh. So that's where the Cedar Knoll Restaurant is today?

HN: Yeah [unintelligible].

INT: Huh. And so you mentioned that you weren't shown any plans until afterwards; it was all [01:00] --

HN: All [unintelligible].

INT: -- sketches and concepts?

HN: Yeah. The place was built in sketches. You didn't have time. When we got a contract for a building, they usually gave you six months to decide build it, six to nine months --

INT: [affirmative]

HN: This thing was built in six weeks.

INT: Do you remember, when you first went there, to Fort Hunt [01:31] to begin construction, you mentioned some of the older buildings that were there. Do you remember anything else? Any older barracks or anything?

HN: There wasn't any barracks there. The only thing there was, as I remember, that was any good that was worth using, was a house we fixed up for the colonel, with no problems.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: It's the only thing that was there that was worth using.

INT: So did the post look run down, like it hadn't been getting used, or [02:00] --

HN: It was just vacant, like it hadn't been used at all [unintelligible] maybe people use it for picnics, but it was nothing there.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: Nothing usable.

INT: So do you -- did you know, was part of your work on the prisoner [02:20] facility in Fort Hunt [02:21], did you, or anybody else, construct any new barracks for the soldiers to live in?

HN: No.

INT: Okay.

HN: The only thing that we were in charge of building was the main building and the mess hall.

INT: And a mess hall? Okay. And when you say "main building," you're -- are you referring to the prisoner --

HN: The building that the interrogators were in.

INT: Okay.

HN: [unintelligible]

INT: Okay. And what do you remember about that building, about its -- you said -- you mentioned earlier, it was a frame [03:00] building?

HN: Yeah, framed building, Civil War [03:04] type stuff; it was just a temporary building.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: They said they were going to tear it down. Colonel Ferrell [03:10] said, "We're going to tear it down as soon as it's finished." Now, I'm not positive when they tore it down. Now, I was under the impression that they tore it down within two months.

INT: [affirmative] Yeah, I --

HN: It -- because officer told me, he was -- he'd be through with it in two or three weeks, he said they'd be through with it.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: Of course, they -- if he wasn't the big boss, I'm sure they might have told him to continue there; I don't know he stayed.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: I didn't go back; I had my hands full over at Andrews Field [03:46].

INT: So, they told you that it was initially just for the interrogation of one U-boat [03:50] crew, and --

HN: No; no. All they said to me about it was satisfactory [phonetic].

INT: Oh, okay.

HN: But Hubbs [03:58] is the one that told me that they were [04:00] going to get everybody out of there in one crew.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: Said they were smart, and educated; they were cooperating with them. And he told him that they would never go back to Germany, and he said they were cooperating with him.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: There was just one guy who was not cooperative; the guy that was hitchhiking a ride. He wanted diplomatic [unintelligible] with Hubbs [04:26] [unintelligible], he used terrible words.

INT: Who are you referring to? You said it was somebody that was hitchhiking a ride? What prisoner [04:38] was that?

HN: It was the one that was killed.

INT: Oh, the one that was -- okay.

HN: Yeah; he was killed.

INT: Okay. And so, in terms of that building, you said it was a frame building. And you -- did you guys install the microphones, or somebody else came in --

HN: No, we didn't install them; those guys did it together.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: The light [05:00] fixtures was all [unintelligible]; I put the light fixtures.

INT: So, do you remember -- was it in -- did they have ceiling tiles, or --

HN: It was ceilings, as I recall; it was the ceilings.

INT: Okay.

HN: But I'm not positive, but that's where you usually put them in.

INT: [affirmative] Were there -- did you build fences around the interrogation --

HN: Yeah, side [unintelligible] fence, and guard houses.

INT: Okay. Do you remember anything about the guard houses? I mean, were they houses, or guard towers, or --

HN: Towers; guard towers.

INT: Okay.

HN: Not guard houses; guard towers.

INT: Okay.

HN: They had a walkway between them and [unintelligible].

INT: Okay. And --

HN: I don't think [unintelligible] bring in dogs; I don't know --

INT: Okay.

HN: [unintelligible]

INT: When you were finishing the job, was there any [06:00] other construction going on by anybody else, on barracks and things?

HN: No.

INT: So, basically, you just went in to build the facility?

HN: That's all; that's all.

INT: Okay.

HN: [inaudible]

INT: Yeah. And if I could follow up on one of Brandon's early questions, he asked were there any buildings there when you arrived? You said nothing usable --

HN: No, just that one house.

INT: Just that one house. Because prior to the military taking over, it had been a CCC [06:23] camp. But none of those facilities seemed to be left?

HN: As far as I know, it was just park, like it is now.

INT: Okay.

HN: You all still keeping horses down there?

INT: The Park Police has their stables.

HN: We used to ride up there by the house. The kids used to give the horses drinks of water.

INT: Oh, yeah?

HN: Back in 1950, when I built my house there, they used to patrol on horses down there.

INT: Oh, really?

HN: Oh, yeah.

INT: Huh.

HN: Of course, the bike path wasn't there.

INT: Right.

HN: You guys weren't born then, were --

INT: That's right. I know.

INT: Nope [laughs] [07:00].

HN: It's kind of hard to explain stuff to you all.

INT: Well, that's why we're doing this, because we -- none of us were around, so --

INT: It's good to get first-hand information. Now, I won't tell you when I was born.

HN: That's all right.

INT: Let's see here. So, anything else? You mentioned there was the building where the prisoners were interrogated. Were there any other buildings right -- you mentioned the microphones in the ceilings. Do you know where people were listening in to those; was there --

HN: There was a room in the building.

INT: There was a room in the building?

HN: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

HN: [unintelligible] in that one building, as far as I know.

INT: Okay.

HN: I guess you've got my name and address, and all that sort of thing. A piece of stationery and --

INT: Oh, fantastic [08:00]. It's got your new address and everything; great.

INT: So when you arrived to build this facility, there was no, like, outer perimeter defining a fort or anything?

HN: No, no.

INT: It was just -- they didn't have any fence up or anything --

HN: No.

INT: -- or controlled checkpoints?

HN: No.

INT: Okay.

INT: Was there a main gate that you entered through?

HN: I don't remember any gate. It could have been; I don't remember any.

INT: Yeah, maybe that was established later, when they came in and --

HN: I don't remember anything, and I don't think there was one around there, but I don't remember seeing any. The only thing I remember is those old fortifications.

INT: [affirmative]

INT: Did you -- since you described it as being not much going on, and kind of abandoned, for the utilities, did you have to bring in the water and the electric?

HN: Yeah, sure.

INT: Okay.

HN: [unintelligible] It was already around there [phonetic]. We had two or three -- [unintelligible] we didn't do anything overnight. I mean, it was [09:00] -- at best, we had to have [unintelligible]. We actually used the coal [unintelligible]. We built several buildings at Vint Hill [09:16]. It was complicated, because we couldn't cut down a tree, couldn't move anything. It was camouflaged.

INT: [affirmative]

INT: [affirmative]

HN: Couldn't push a cows [phonetic]. That's right; the cows [phonetic] stayed up. Almost around the building; they knew all about it.

INT: Yeah.

HN: Fort Washington [09:42] was just an average Joe [phonetic] school, [unintelligible] and officers taught people and stuff. Colonel Holdridge [09:52] [phonetic] was the guy over that; Holdridge, Fort Washington [09:55]. I'll tell you a funny story [10:00] at Fort Washington [10:01]. All these guys had something personal, you know. He was a West Pointer, this Colonel Holdridge [10:10]. He says, "Edison's [phonetic] going to talk to him." And the lieutenant colonel, he said that "Colonel wanted to talk to you about this, but he's too embarrassed to say anything else." [unintelligible] has a big ass.

[unintelligible] pot. Says [unintelligible] such a thing as you have a big pot. Well, I had a Jewish contracting officer that could buy anything in the world. He had contacts in New York, and anywhere, he'd get it [phonetic] overnight. But he comes up with a pit [phonetic] oversized bathroom -- big pot, big bathtub, big everything. So we put it in there and [unintelligible] in the bathroom. It was terrible, just [unintelligible] yourselves [11:00], see if [unintelligible]. He wanted to know if he could do anything for me. I said, "[unintelligible] you want to pop it on us?" He said, "Yep." Every day, I says, "Did anybody ever send the water pump and all this?" He said, "Hell, no." He said, "I'm [unintelligible]. He said, "You need something done?" I said, "Well, I've got a lieutenant that I put in for promotion twice; for some reason, the major don't like him in Washington [11:29]." I said, "I've promoted 50 people, and it's the only one he's ever



turned down.” I said, “I give people commissions, [unintelligible] commissions. He put down one of them. For some reason, I [unintelligible]. He said, “Give me his name and serial number.” He said, “I’ll promote him this afternoon.” So, I called up, got the boss, said [phonetic] -- gave them name, serial number. He was a good guy; I don’t know why the major didn’t like him. He’d do a good job [12:00]. Everybody else [unintelligible], he went to the University of Maryland, took civil engineering [phonetic]. So that afternoon, he [unintelligible] and another lieutenant lost the [unintelligible]. So the major called me up in about two days, and said, “God, he has [unintelligible]. “Well [unintelligible] Captain,” he says, “I thought I turned him down twice.” I said, “You did.” And I said, “You have an awful lot of papers to sign up there; you’re might as well just sign [phonetic].” Yeah, I sign lots of [unintelligible], so I guess I’ll sign it for you.”

INT: So he doesn’t even know.

INT: That’s a good story.

HN: [unintelligible]. Major was a friend of mine, always were friends.

INT: Now we’ll have to go ask our colleagues at Fort Washington [12:55] to see if his oversized bathroom’s still there [13:00].

INT: [laughs] You would think.

INT: Interesting. Getting back to talking about the structure you built at Fort Hunt [13:11], was it fairly secluded from the surroundings?

HN: Yeah.

INT: There were a few houses, so --

HN: Heavy trees all around it.

INT: Okay, so you couldn’t see it from anywhere out by the Parkway?

HN: No, you can't see Fort Hunt [unintelligible] the Parkway.

INT: Right.

INT: So was it similar to that, with the trees all the way around?

HN: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

HN: People asked me, what in hell is going on? I see your wife passing every day; [unintelligible] signs there, but they don't never been down in there.

INT: Right.

INT: And so when you were there working on this, did you say some of the interrogators and folks were starting to arrive there?

HN: Oh, yeah.

INT: Okay.

HN: He better stand at attention before [unintelligible] when he went up there. They didn't eat until he arrived. I guess that changed [unintelligible] [14:00]. I don't know. As I recall, the interrogators were not all Army; it seemed to me like one or two of them were Navy guys.

INT: Okay.

HN: Is that right?

INT: Yes. That -- Fort Hunt [14:16] was --

HN: Some of them were Navy --

INT: It was a joint interrogations center where there --

HN: Yeah.

INT: Especially with the submarines; they had a lot of Navy.

HN: I can't understand; those guys must be 90 years old.

INT: They are. Now, a lot of them --

HN: Not -- all of them are living?

INT: Well, certainly not all --

HN: There weren't many of them.

INT: Well, the one -- and that's the one thing is you had mentioned that you thought that Fort Hunt [14:38] was --

HN: Well, they could have brought them in after I was there. I --

INT: Exactly.

INT: And it's interesting that your story about how -- at least your impression was Fort Hunt [14:47] was going to be used for the one submarine crew --

HN: Yeah.

INT: -- get the answers, and then shut it down.

HN: [unintelligible] they kept it going.

INT: Well, they kept it going all the way through October of 1946.

HN: Good God.

INT: And there were over -- there were roughly 4,000 prisoners [15:02] --

HN: Good God.

INT: -- who went through Fort Hunt [15:04].

HN: They sent them to Fort Meade [15:06].

INT: And right; some went to Fort Meade [15:08], and a lot of them went through Fort Meade [15:11]. And we have a roster that we've gotten from the National Archives of the names of all the intelligence personnel. And there's almost 600 --

HN: Where'd they live?

INT: -- almost 600 names.

HN: Where'd they live?

INT: They lived there on the base. And that's why we're asking some of the questions about the barracks. No, they weren't all there at one time.

HN: They weren't in the barracks.

INT: There wasn't --

HN: They couldn't have lived there.

INT: Well, some of them did commute from Alexandria.

HN: [inaudible]

INT: And don't -- all 600 were not there at one time. They came and --

HN: Well, I don't think there were --

INT: -- they came and they went. But we -- it sounds from talking to other folks, that there might have been, at any given time, between, maybe, 50, maybe not quite 100, maybe 50 or so people there at any given time [16:00]. What we think they might have done was have folks do a few interrogations and then maybe send them overseas.

HN: Well, I don't believe I'd seen a thing like that, but I don't know. But I just don't believe that. [unintelligible] were the only people interrogating, I guess [phonetic]. I hope all the -- well, I do. I hope all of them enjoyed the girls. I wondered if the girls ever got to the prisoners [16:26], whether the interrogators took them over or not.

INT: Or just kept them for themselves?

HN: Yeah. [inaudible]

INT: Would now be a good time to show him these plans? Later on, they must have --

HN: [unintelligible]

INT: Okay; sure thing.

INT: Later on, they did a larger build-out of a fort, probably after your involvement was over with.

HN: Yeah.

INT: We think this was probably the one you were talking about building. But they -- all these other [17:00] lines here, these are indicated as being barracks; there's officers' quarters --

HN: There's nothing like that; they had no part in [unintelligible], but I don't know anything about that.

INT: Right. So this was after your involvement. I guess you came in, and came out.

HN: They just don't know a thing about it.

INT: Exactly.

HN: People that lived there -- were living there don't know a thing about it.

INT: Right. A lot of them don't. That's why we're trying to get histories from you guys.

HN: I don't think that was ever built.

INT: So this is your copy to keep. I don't know how much you'll be able to see it, but this is for you to keep. So this is what you remember building?

HN: That's right. That's all it was.

INT: Over here? Because Fort Hunt [17:41] got so large later in the war, that later on they built a second prisoner [17:46] facility, over here.

HN: [inaudible]

INT: Okay.

HN: And he came -- and all that came out of his office [phonetic]. Sorry, what -- [18:00]

[unintelligible].

INT: Yeah. Maybe it's possible that what you were involved with, the early preliminary efforts, they decided that this was worthwhile, so they decided --

HN: [unintelligible]

INT: -- to invest more time --

HN: But I think I would have heard about; I wasn't too far away. I mean, people who worked on it [unintelligible]. But that's [unintelligible].

INT: Okay.

INT: And so, I'm just trying to think. I know you need to get going shortly, here, if we have any other questions. So after you left Fort Hunt [18:41], you worked, it sounds, on a number of other projects.

HN: Yeah.

INT: And you said you also were promoted to colonel?

HN: Yes.

INT: Okay.

HN: When I left there, I went to Andrews Field [18:53]. While I was at Andrews Field [18:54], I have an awful lot to copy [phonetic] out there, people who were interested in it because it was built -- people [19:00] wanted to see it [unintelligible] --

INT: [affirmative]

HN: -- [unintelligible] 52 of them down to Fort Washington [19:05]. And 52 marched down to [unintelligible] camouflage. Four runways [phonetic], we had all kind of visitors; chief of engineers. Major Groves [19:20] came out there several times before he went to Oak Ridge [19:24]. In fact, he almost take me with him. He gave me a choice of two

different places. He didn't know where he was going or what he was going to do, so I didn't want to go with him since he didn't know what the hell he was going to do.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: I believe it was classified. He had to be two sides [phonetic]. He was a major then.

Then I went to -- the Air Force was expanding like hell, and [unintelligible] construction was ending --

INT: [affirmative]

HN: -- so the Air Force requested --

INT: Put a rubber band on that [20:00].

HN: -- the Corp of Engineers [20:01] to give a dozen officers up at Wright Field [20:06]; I had contract for [unintelligible] Air Force up there. [unintelligible] 1945, Jones, Major Jones [20:22] [phonetic] called in [unintelligible] and said, "Where's your clearance? I've never seen it before." Two-star general, he says "Where's your clearance, Nottingham?" My military clearance. I said, "Top secret Q." Q is [unintelligible]. He said, "Sit down." He said, "I'm going to try to meet General Doolittle [20:51]. I just turned into [phonetic] General Doolittle [20:52] in Okinawa [20:53] Wednesday." He said, "I'm getting together a little staff, so I want you to go and be my engineer [21:00]." He said, "You've got to deal with the Army; I can't deal with it." [unintelligible] To make a long story short, we had two B-17s; I flew the nose on one of them all the way to Okinawa [21:16]. Flight times, 50 hours -- 52 hours.

INT: Wow.

HN: Went to the West Coast, Honolulu, Johnstown [phonetic], and one stay in Guam. I put in machine guns in Okinawa [21:31] [phonetic].

INT: So they put machine guns in the plane once you got to Guam?

HN: Yeah. [unintelligible] Okinawa. Then we had to [unintelligible], got to Okinawa, there was [unintelligible] dropped down, and got out of those airplanes because usually our planes landed first. And this guy sitting over by the Jeep -- two guys sitting in the Jeep; one of them got out [22:00] and stuck his hand out and said, "I'm Jimmy Doolittle" [22:03] [laughs].

INT: That's neat.

HN: He had a little GI outfit, three stars.

INT: [affirmative]

HN: "My name is Jimmy Doolittle" [unintelligible] I never did know where he slept [phonetic].

INT: Huh.

HN: But then we was supposed to be in the landing invasion, which, fortunately didn't happen.

INT: Right.

HN: And I was promoted to a colonel right then. That's it. It's sure nice to see you in person.

INT: Well, thank you. I appreciate you taking the time.

INT: I appreciate your time.

HN: And I'm sorry that I can't give you more time, because they've got very strict rules here about --

INT: Well, any time you can give us is better than nothing; I mean, that's great.

HN: Well, you can come back and see me anytime you want to.

INT: Sure. This has been fantastic.

INT: Great. Thank you very much [22:00].



[end of transcript]

Index

10th Cavalry, [Tape 1A] 07:21

Andrew's Field, [Tape 1A] 15:52, 26:36, 30:58, 31:45, 31:57

[Tape 1B] 03:46, 18:53, 18:54

Arlington Cemetery, [Tape 1A] 06:16

Bills, John Paul, [Tape 1A] 11:59, 13:01, 16:10, 16:24, 16:39, 18:13, 21:09, 21:12, 22:10, 22:14, 22:17, 22:36, 24:36, 30:40

Caliber, Jeff, [Tape 1A] 05:46

Camp Springs, [Tape 1A] 15:56

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), [Tape 1B] 06:23

Civil War, [Tape 1B] 00:29, 03:04

Clemson University, [Tape 1A] 01:35, 01:50, 18:58

Corps of Engineers, [Tape 1A] 00:27, 13:54, 27:49

[Tape 1B] 20:01

Doolittle, Jimmy (General), [Tape 1B] 20:51, 20:52, 22:03

Dwarf (Colonel), [Tape 1A] 05:48

Ferrell (Colonel), [Tape 1A] 11:55, 12:09, 24:33, 30:06, 30:17

[Tape 1B] 00:19, 03:10

Fort Belvoir, [Tape 1A] 09:25, 10:15, 10:38, 27:53, 28:10, 28:37, 29:13

Fort Benning, Georgia, [Tape 1A] 04:12

Fort Dodge, [Tape 1A] 04:51

Fort Hunt/ P.O. Box 1142, [Tape 1A] 11:00, 11:55, 14:26, 23:19, 23:26, 25:46, 26:21, 28:13, 28:44, 28:46, 29:18, 29:30

[Tape 1B] 00:13, 01:31, 02:21, 13:11, 14:16, 14:38, 14:47, 15:04, 17:41, 18:41

Fort Meade, [Tape 1B] 15:06, 15:08, 15:11

Fort Myer, [Tape 1A] 03:25, 04:45, 05:40, 06:07

Fort Washington, [Tape 1A] 11:05, 14:04

[Tape 1B] 09:42, 09:55, 10:01, 12:55, 19:05

Front Royal, [Tape 1A] 28:15

German, [Tape 1A] 10:59, 12:20, 13:41, 19:21

Groves, Leslie (Major General), [Tape 1A] 09:18, 09:20

[Tape 1B] 19:20

Hubbs, Edward (Colonel), [Tape 1A] 15:04, 15:10, 16:06, 17:18, 18:11, 18:17, 19:43, 19:49, 20:02, 20:11, 20:24, 20:44, 22:43, 30:04

[Tape 1B] 03:58, 04:26c

Holdridge (Colonel), [Tape 1B] 09:52, 10:10

Jones (Major), [Tape 1B] 20:22

Marshall, George (General), [Tape 1A] 05:54, 06:26, 29:39

Nelson, Herman T. Pock, [Tape 1A] 21:04, 22:10, 22:15, 22:19, 22:28, 25:33, 28:31

Oak Ridge, [Tape 1A] 09:21  
[Tape 1B] 19:24

Patton, George (Major), [Tape 1A] 06:00  
Pearl Harbor, [Tape 1A] 06:24, 08:49, 27:39  
Pentagon, [Tape 1A] 31:10, 31:21, 31:34, 31:39  
Prisoner, [Tape 1A] 17:43, 29:57  
[Tape 1B] 02:20, 04:38, 15:02, 16:26, 17:46

Renshaw, Meyer, [Tape 1A] 32:08, 32:13  
Roosevelt, Franklin, [Tape 1A] 06:37

Submarine, [Tape 1A] 12:18, 12:20, 17:03, 18:06

U-boat, [Tape 1A] 30:00, 30:14  
[Tape 1B] 03:50

Vint Hill, [Tape 1A] 11:13, 11:33, 28:12  
[Tape 1B] 09:16  
von Braun, Wernher, [Tape 1A] 17:18

Walter Reed Hospital, [Tape 1A] 03:38, 04:55, 08:25  
War Department, [Tape 1A] 04:22  
Washington, [Tape 1A] 03:16, 03:31, 03:54, 04:41, 04:52, 06:34, 06:44, 07:29, 07:53, 09:04,  
11:29, 13:20, 22:32  
[Tape 1B] 11:29  
World War II, [Tape 1A] 00:30, 01:55  
Wright Field, [Tape 1B] 20:06