

Fort Hunt Oral History  
P.O. Box 1142  
George Washington Memorial Parkway  
Interview with George Mandel  
by Brandon Bies Sam Johnson, Sam Swersky,  
Matt Virta, Vince Santucci and John Bardar  
July 13, 2006 and January 29, 2007

INTERVIEWER: Okay. All right, today is July 13, 2006. My name is Brandon Bies, Cultural Resource Specialist with the National Park Service, George Washington Memorial Parkway. I am here with Park Service intern Sam Johnson, and we are interviewing George Mandel, who is a World War II veteran of Fort Hunt on the George Washington Memorial Parkway and served as an interrogator at Fort Hunt, and we're going to go ahead and get started. George, if you could just start off by telling me a little bit about when and where you were born and a little bit about your family and growing up.

GEORGE MANDEL: I was born in Berlin, 1924, and my parents were Jewish. The -- everything was fairly [01:00] uneventful for a young kid. I thought that the way things were was the way that life was everywhere else. I didn't like school. I thought that I did all right in school. I did, and I had a bunch of friends, some of them Jewish, some of them not Jewish. It didn't matter, and my father was employed with the German Deutschmark [phonetic], and he had been a World War I [01:32] veteran, and so even though he was Jewish people told him, "You don't have to worry about a thing in Nazi [01:38] Germany. You were decorated in World War I [01:43], and so don't worry and just keep going," but my grandmother on the paternal side had 12 brothers, all of whom left Germany to go to the United States. [02:00] Most of them settled around Philadelphia and were architects, engineers, and so forth, and they had a strong affiliation still to see their sister and also to see my parents. They came over fairly regularly. In those days, the Americans thought that the German education was superb and that

Germany was a great country and that they therefore had a strong affiliation towards maintaining relationships with the German part of the family, but then they explained to my parents, “Do you realize what’s happening in Germany?” and they said, “There’s no [inaudible] or any sort of people with Jewish backgrounds. It’s a very dangerous place to be. We read it in ‘The New York Times’ and I read about the things that are happening there’ and that tells us” --

INT: Things that are happening there?

GM: Exactly. “Oh, you’re aware of it at least because you read the German newspapers, [03:00] but we think you ought to make a major effort to get the hell out of Germany,” and so they invited my parents in ’35 to come to America and have a visit, and they went there and went to New York where they knew these people lived, in Philadelphia, and they thought it was a very attractive place, and they thought that maybe they should reconsider the guarantees that their friends had made that nothing would happen to them, and when they came back they decided that they were going to get out of Germany. I was not happy with that because I didn’t speak anything except German.

INT: Sure, and all your friends --

GM: Right, and so I thought that was unfortunate, but I went, of course, and when we came to the United States in 1937, we stayed in New York for a little while, and then we moved back to Scarsdale, where my family bought a house [04:00]. I went to Scarsdale High School largely because at that time it was an exceptionally good school, and I thought that they thought that this would be a good opportunity to go to a very good school. Of course, everything was conducted in English, and I didn’t speak English, but you learn very quickly. Young kids have no problems with language. Within a couple of months, I

could understand what people were saying, and I would contribute with a terrible accent, but after a while, it was very easy and the language did no bother

INT: Did your parents still speak German --

GM: To each other.

INT: --in the home and it was --

GM: Yes, yes to each other, they did, and I actually didn't like that. I spoke English to everybody, and so they spoke English to me, and that's probably how they learned English.

[laughter]

And then so I was in high school, and I had actually skipped a year because German [05:00] schools are very good, although they're very annoying, and, well they're very authoritarian, and they still had corporal punishment. They make you learn by rote, and so the school is no fun. And I find that going to the American school was fun; they made it very pleasant. I had a nice relationship with the teachers, I had a very nice relationship with the students, and I thought school could really be fun, in total contrast to what my old opinion was about German education and school. I think you learn a lot in German education. I took a couple of courses in French, which still, I think, has been a very good background for me, trying to speak French. Well, they say I speak with a German accent.

[laughter]

But in general I thought that school was fun, and in -- I graduated from high school [06:00] in 1941. At that point I looked for different colleges. I was very naïve in what colleges I went to look at. I looked at Yale [06:11], and that was conveniently located because Yale [06:14] is about an hour away from Scarsdale. And I looked at Columbia,

except that I wasn't crazy about Columbia because I thought New York City was not a great place to move to [inaudible], but then Yale [06:30] took me, and I said, "Okay, so I'm going to Yale [06:32]."

INT: I'm going to go --

GM: Unlike now you choose a college. You didn't look at 20 schools. You hope that you could get into two or three, so this was a different time. This was in September of 1941, and I was interested in chemistry when I was in high school, largely -- and this is quite typically what happens with young people -- because I liked my chemistry teacher [inaudible], [07:00] and he also taught physics, and so I thought that, "Well, I thought I'd [inaudible]. When I get into college I'll go into science." I took chemistry, which I thought was divine. I took physics and I hated that, and so I realized that I was stuck with chemistry, and then, of course, just a few months later, Pearl Harbor [07:25] was attacked.

INT: Right.

GM: This was in the same year of 1941, and things began to change very drastically.

INT: What were your -- if I can interrupt, what were your immediate impressions upon Pearl Harbor [07:38] and the Japanese bombing us and then Germany quickly coming in and joining with the Axis?

GM: It was total chaos.

INT: Did you -- so you didn't necessarily see it as inevitable that the United States would --

GM: Not at all, not at all. I think that America had been edging closer towards the war in Europe. That started in 1939, and people felt [08:00] that it would be nice to stay out if we could, but they weren't sure that America could, so America had all sorts of relief

programs --

INT: Right.

GM: -- for the Brits and so forth, and we had a strong affiliation to the Brits, especially when they were bombarded and I think that people felt not only sorry for the Brits, they said, "Is it possible for America to stay out of this war?" and the focus was on Germany. Nobody ever thought about Japan [08:26] exactly, and, of course -- I was 16, I guess. I wasn't really worried about world affairs all that much, and I listened to the radio. I still remember one morning when Mr. Kaltenborn, who was a major commentator that day, talked about the fact that on a Sunday morning, Pearl Harbor [08:48] had been bombed and that we were in terrible shape, and the next day we declared war against Japan [08:56], and [09:00] immediately after that the Germans declared war on us, so we declared war on them. That's how it began, and it was a very frightening time because there was nothing we could do [inaudible] war was going to happen. I think people who remember -- those people who remembered World War I [09:16] realized that the Americans were very helpful in winning World War I [09:19], and you look at this data now of what happened in World War I [09:23], it was a forensics war.

INT: Yeah.

GM: It was a forensics war, and so people who were -- didn't know exactly what was going to happen this time, either, but as soon as war broke out, the situation in the universities changed a lot. A lot of people felt that they should participate in the war. A lot of people were embarrassed to not participate in the war. Being a science major, we were told, "We don't want you to do anything drastic. We think that it's important for the country's efforts that we have scientists who are trained [10:00] to handle technical and especially

chemical, physical aspects,” and so we were deferred by the military and that was the way [inaudible]. I think maybe 20 of us were majoring in chemistry at the time.

INT: And how did you feel about that? Was that fine with you, or did -- were you caught up in this gung-ho spirit, or were you --

GM: No, I wasn't gung ho. I was fairly scared about the whole thing, and I thought that since there was little need for chemists, that that would be the easiest thing to do, so I decided to stay out of it. Now, I remember people who joined the program -- I think it the number was seven --

INT: Was that the Navy V-12?

GM: V-12, or one of those.

INT: Oh, yeah, the V-12 program was a Naval Officers [11:00] Program.

GM: I don't know. V-something.

INT: Okay.

GM: And a lot of people were -- especially in college -- were members of the Navy and I wasn't a citizen, so I had no choice. I was what was called an enemy alien --

INT: Yeah.

GM: -- and then -- so I couldn't enter the military, and so a group of us stayed together for quite a while. Every now and then somebody would get shipped out. A lot of people were told that if you join the military, they'll send you back to college and pay for it. The class spirit was not decimated but suffered from that fact that we were a class of 1,000, and I bet you no more than maybe 200 stayed behind. That would be the science majors, people who were ineligible to join the Army, for health reasons and it changed the [12:00] complexity of the color very much. A lot of our professors were involved in the war

effort. They may have stayed behind in New Haven, but they didn't spend too much time teaching, so we got a lot of the graduate students and other young people to do the teaching for us, which probably lowered the standard of teaching --

INT: Right.

GM: -- but we were largely on our own, and it picked up until we graduated. In some of the programs, the decision was made that we would go summers, and so in two and a half years, or two years and seven months, we got our degrees, which at the time was good because we were all anxious to get it over with, and we were all getting a little older, and we didn't know how much time was going to be taken away for all sorts of things, so the fact that we could accelerate and graduate in May or June of 1944 we thought [13:00] was great. As a chemist -- you know chemistry, but you really don't know a lot about other science, and I was drafted in August of 1944, and I assumed that because I'd been deferred for two years that I would be used as a scientist somewhere, but that was not to be, and the decision was made that since I was 18 or 19 that they would send me to military training in infantry, and so we went through all the normal routines of becoming a soldier. It was fairly demoralizing because including the smaller among high school juniors, and [inaudible].

INT: And where did you go to basic training at?

GM: In Fort Wheeler [13:55].

INT: In Camp -- Fort Wheeler [13:56] [unintelligible], okay.

GM: [unintelligible] in Georgia --

INT: Georgia.

GM: [14:00] I became a citizen when I was down there, and then the one thing led to another.

It was found out that I spoke German, and the military at that point said, "In that case we're not going to send you to Europe to fight with the infantry. We have a special idea for you." I should mention that previously, before I graduated from Yale [14:27], a lot of my friends went to a scientific place -- went to a place called Oak Ridge, Tennessee [14:35] where they worked for a company called Kellogg [14:38]. You've heard of Kellogg [14:40] cornflakes? Well, this is where they went to, and they were all going there, and I said, "Why can't I go?" And they said, "No, because you're not an American citizen," so they went to Kellogg [14:52], and it turned out not to make cornflakes. But [15:00] what was -- and I had no idea what they were doing there. The fact that there was an atomic bomb project, it was totally unknown to me, at least, and I think that had I known, I think I would have liked to have participated in the project with my other friends --

INT: Sure.

GM: -- and I could have been useful, probably, instead of being in the infantry.

INT: Right.

GM: So, then one day I was told that instead of being sent overseas after finishing basic training, that I would be going to a place called Columbus -- Ohio State University [15:39], because they have a program.

INT: Sure.

GM: They wanted to teach us about German history, German language. They wanted us to be able to understand problems that Germans faced, and it was a three-month program --

INT: Three months.

GM: -- [16:00] and at the end of that time, we were sent to a place called Camp Ritchie [16:04]



in Maryland [inaudible], Camp David [16:09]. And there we had the Military Intelligence training. We thought that the time at Columbus, Ohio was okay, but I don't know how much we learned because we all spoke German -- or I should say there were a number of other colleagues who were sent from heritage-based knowledge at Ohio State [16:32], and then various places after that. Some went to Camp Ritchie [16:36], others went elsewhere, and then in Camp Ritchie [16:42], we learned how to turn -- use our German language to ask questions and how to deal with prisoners. I assumed that at the end of that time that I would be sent to Germany to interrogate the prisoners, but for reasons which [17:00] I will never understand, the military decided to send me [inaudible]. My parents had helped me, but I would not be sent overseas, that I would be going to a place in Washington, D.C. to [inaudible].

INT: And then before we get onto that, with Camp Ritchie [17:19], at what point did you find out that -- did you assume right off the bat that you were going to be used as an interrogator because of your German speaking skills, or did you find that out when you were at Ohio State [17:32] or when you were at Camp Ritchie [17:33]? At what point did the whole concept of you being an interrogator first come about?

GM: I think it actually happened at Camp Wheeler [17:40] --

INT: Oh.

GM: -- because I'm looking over the records when I was at camp there. Isolated a lot of the German program. Now, I assumed that I would be useful in some sort of scientific program, but that was not to be, and [18:00] I had indicated that I was a typist, but I typed a lot of stuff very poorly. That's when they caught the mistakes. He told me what a typewriter is.

[laughter]

I [inaudible], and so I assumed that my transfer was related to that. I had no idea what Washington, D.C. was like. I'd never been to Washington, D.C.. I thought it was marvelous opportunity because whoever thought I would be going back to Washington again [inaudible]. I've been here for mostly sixty years [inaudible]. [laughter]

INT: What kind of interrogation-like tactics that they teach you at Camp Ritchie [18:50]?

GM: Tactics?

INT: Yes, sir.

GM: Where is the machine gun? Where is -- where is your headquarters? Who is your commanding officer? [19:00] Where are they located? That sort of stuff. Of course, none of that was particularly useful at 1142 [19:09]. 1142 [19:11] was a strange operation. It was -- I don't -- I never did figure out all the things that happened there. We didn't talk about it --

INT: Right.

GM: -- because that was kept very well a secret, and we realized this was a secret program. That we couldn't talk.

INT: And they told you -- did they essentially tell you that upon arriving there?

GM: Yes, absolutely, that we couldn't discuss it, and they told us you couldn't discuss it with your family, your wives if you have -- you had one, none of this was mentioned, and the name of Fort Hunt [19:41] was not even used because we used the code name, which was 1142 [19:49], and I mentioned to you that every now and then I would go and visit my family and I came back to Washington by train, took a taxi, and said I wanted to go to 1142 [19:59] [20:00]. They said, "You mean Fort Hunt [20:02]."

INT: So, it was all over.

GM: It was a very secret place that a lot of people knew about, but a lot of people didn't know about. I mentioned the fact that it was a very quiet neighborhood except for 5:00 in the morning when the shout-out began, and you get used to that eventually, but it was an anachronism, really. You find out that they really were making a lot of noise and telling you to be very secret about it. The interrogations that I was involved with were on a very comfortable level. None of the things that you hear about now in Iraq. None of that took place, but of course the situation was different. The people who we interrogated were people who even before [21:00] the war was over had the opportunity of being flown to America to learn a different lifestyle, to be taken out of the country that was slowly defeated in World War II [21:15], and to be avoiding the Russians, naturally, so that for these people, they were very grateful to be here, and there was no animosity. There may have been some animosity on the part of some of the interrogators, all of whom were German-speaking, like me. Most of them I think were Jewish, and by that time, of course, we learned about the concentration camps, which we didn't know about before the war or even during the war, and so there was a fair amount of hostility against the Nazis [21:48], and a lot of these guys who were brought over, especially the ones who were involved in German rocketry, were former Nazis [21:56]. [22:00] Is that surprising? Probably not, because had they not been Nazis [22:02], the Nazis [22:02] wouldn't have used them for these projects. [inaudible] people will react differently -- they don't care if you objected - - they say, "If everybody else around me is a Nazi [22:14], I want to be a Nazi [22:14] too," so it doesn't speak well for human nature that independence is not one of their [unintelligible] strong points, but a lot of these people that we interviewed had strong

Nazi [22:27] backgrounds, and we were a little disturbed that they would be given a tremendous opportunity to do well in the United States, better than a lot of other people, and the people I interviewed-- I think, if I remember correctly, the first people who were involved in a number of projects, one was the jet engine [22:51], which was new at the time -- the Messerschmitt [22:55] had jet engines [22:56], our American plane didn't [23:00] -- and our pilots couldn't figure out why it was they were suddenly so much faster than we were, so we interrogated about jet engines [23:06]. Something called a proximity fuse [23:09], which is a device that blows up near the airplane without hitting it and brings it down.

INT: I read about that. I think [Heinz] Schlicke [23:21] might have been involved in that.

INT: Right, yeah.

GM: Were they [inaudible]?

INT: I think -- I think it was definitely, and I think there was definitely some on U-234 [23:30], too, like test and [inaudible].

INT: Yeah, they -- on -- this German submarine, U-234 [23:35] actually was carrying a batch of proximity fuses [23:36], so it may not have been him. So -- and there may have been other folks other than this Schlicke [23:43] --

GM: This was all 60 years ago, so --

INT: Sure, absolutely.

GM: A lot of this is not clear anymore.

INT: Right.

INT: When you go back, let's see if you remember something 60 years ago.

INT: Right, I'm trying to remember this interview like it was an interrogation, see what I can

remember.

GM: So, and then the atomic energy project [23:58] [24:00], and this is before Hiroshima [24:01], and maybe I was especially naïve, but I never expected the atomic energy [24:07]. Like I said, I wasn't crazy about physics, and I didn't know what other people were doing, and it was a highly secret program. I think that it was -- I was reading the book on [Julius Robert] Oppenheimer [24:22], the guy that led the American efforts, and something [inaudible], but it was a very major secret, and I think it's amazing that the secret was so well-kept. A major concern at the time was the leakage of information to the Russians, and Oppenheimer [24:47] was not involved in any sort of activity like that, but as a young person, he's quite intelligent, like so many young people, and they thought that things could be better under a more socialistic [25:00] system. In any case, I interviewed a number of people on the atomic energy [25:07] program, and the one I remember particularly was a professor of [unintelligible] who was not a physicist, but I think he was a biochemist, and he talked about atomic energy [25:21] and what the Germans had done on atomic energy [25:23] and had failed because the Germans hadn't been too privileged [inaudible] atomic success. They had a bet on the wrong horse for the spectrums programs [phonetic], and characterizing uranium isotopes, pure [inaudible]. They relied on heavy water to be brought to Germany through [inaudible]. The British got wind of this and bombed the ships that carried the heavy water, and so they had no heavy water, and so the program covered over. On the other hand, the Germans had so many other programs that this was just one [26:00], and the other program in question was rocketry [26:02], but some of the people because we brought them all over, and [inaudible] has his -- methodically pushed to be sure that we had most of the people who

were in rocketry [26:16] over to the United States because -- largely because we didn't want them to go to Russia [26:24]. Secondly, maybe they could be useful to us, but rocketry [26:27] became an American achievement which we didn't follow up, and so we rapidly got into this, and it turned out that these people were extremely helpful to us. They were involved in sending a rocket [26:44] to the moon. That came in the late 1960s -- yes, late 1960s. When [Dwight] Eisenhower [26:56] was president, the Russians had built a [27:00] cruising vehicle in space, and they realized we had nothing, and so we said, "By God, let's push ahead with this rocketry business [27:10]." That must have been around 1953, 1954, and they put -- first they put a dog into space, and they were successful, and undoubtedly they were successful because they got the remaining members of the [inaudible] German team, who [inaudible] they didn't have what they needed. So the joke at the time was, "What happens when an American rocket [27:43] meets a Russian rocket [27:45]?" And the answer is, they say, "Guten Tag."

[laughter]

INT: But with the interviews that you were doing, do you remember [28:00] were you -- would be the sole person to interview someone, or were you in a team, like we were talking about Oberlander [phonetic] earlier, working with him, or would they pass people along? Would you interview them from a chemistry perspective, and then somebody else would interview them from an engineering perspective? Would there be a series of interviews --

GM: Yes.

INT: -- or would you be the sole interviewer?

GM: No, I think all of the above, but I think that it was up to us if we didn't understand something to talk to our colleagues, and that was very helpful because potentially we

didn't know about this stuff, so we asked somebody. It could be such and such, and they asked me about chemistry stuff, and as I mentioned, we had a very good relationship amongst these people at Fort Hunt [28:45], even the interrogators. We felt that we had lots in common, that we were very lucky to be in a place like Fort Hunt [28:55] to do interesting work instead of being shot at, and we [29:00] thought that there was something to learn and that what we were doing was probably important. These important aspects are what you do, and I was a 21-year-old kid and what did I know about world affairs? So, I think that this was quite exciting. The fact that it was secret -- it's intriguing and not everybody knows, but the fact that you were learning some amazing things that you had no idea could exist in this world, like a jet engine [29:37]. Now, we take a plane with [unintelligible] local, but a jet engine [29:44] -- and in 1945, there were hardly any in the war on the German side, maybe '44. [inaudible].

INT: So, your interviews -- [30:00] before we try to get into any level of specifics or talk more about Waigon [phonetic], were most of your interviews with German scientists or specialists, or do you recall ever interviewing just regular German soldiers or sailors?

GM: Not at 1142 [30:19].

INT: Okay.

GM: Now, I was sent to a couple of other places. I was sent to Boston [30:24], where I think we may have met some of the first people from the German rocket [30:30] program, but I wasn't there very long, and I was totally unprepared to do anything, so I don't remember exactly what we did in Boston [30:41], but it wasn't very much, and I was sent to Maine [30:45] in December, which is not my favorite time of year to be in Maine [30:53], and there I think I have interrogated soldiers at some point [31:00]. Why me, I don't know. I

was only there about a month.

INT: One month?

GM: I was pretty desperate because -- have you been told --

INT: What?

GM: Have you been told --

INT: No. It's still just [inaudible].

GM: Yeah, yeah. There's a very funny -- well, I guess the reason they chose it -- two reasons.

One because it would be a good place to have a prisoner of war camp because it was so isolated, and the other one is it was a military Air Force base near there, where they used that to transport planes from the Boston [31:40] states, through Holden, Maine [31:41], through Newfoundland, Iceland, to Britain, so that's --

INT: It's here and started.

GM: Yeah, that's why Holden, Maine [31:52], I think. So, the only time I interviewed the ordinary military prisoners [32:00] I think it was if I remember correctly in Maine [32:02], and I was only there a month, and then I went back to 1142 [32:07], and I think at that point -- I don't know whether Boston [32:14] was still open. I think [unintelligible] and a lot of these people were transported through Washington, D.C. and 1142 [32:20].

INT: Okay, and when you were at 1142 [32:27] the second time around, were you again doing pretty much the same stuff that you were doing the first time?

GM: Yes, different people, of course --

INT: Sure.

GM: -- because they had a new wave. Different objectives. I think that things like the proximity fuse [32:43] were no longer interesting.



INT: Okay.

GM: The jet engine [32:46] was no longer interesting. The rocket [32:48] industry, if I remember correctly, was [unintelligible], and I think that when I first got there, the rocket [32:59] -- the atomic [33:00] energy program [33:02] was still a simple interest, but it came as a shock to me when I heard about Hiroshima [33:09], and nobody knew about the atomic bomb, the atomic weapon [33:13]. I remember we discussed who did they get these bangs [inaudible]. I remember that we weren't sure [inaudible].

INT: That's right.

INT: So, you were at Fort Hunt [33:28] again then for the second time until -- when did you say that you were discharged about?

GM: Well, I calculate that -- I must have gotten there in February of '46, and I was there -- I was discharged from the military June of '46, and then I started working for two months in the city in the same sort of capacity, [34:00] and then I went back to graduate school.

INT: And how -- do you remember at all how that worked out? You working as a civilian -- were you asked to stay on, did you volunteer to stay on?

GM: There was tremendous interest in having us stay on. There was a concern because most of the enlisted men tried to get out of the military as soon as they could, and I think that if you miss the opportunity [inaudible] military, and I didn't have anything to do for two months because college didn't start until September, and so I thought, well, why not continue this. I enjoyed it, it was fun, and I think that it was useful to -- I thought that this was fun, but most people were quite anxious to leave the military. That's not true for a lot of the officers. The officers who did not speak German, who barely caught on [35:00] what was happening at 1142 [35:02], with a few exceptions -- notable exceptions

-- but for the most part a lot of these people they -- it was very [inaudible] there, and they could have been assigned to [inaudible].

INT: Sure, right.

GM: But then the CIA [35:15] began to move forward, and a lot of the officers decided this would be a good opportunity to step into the early stages of the CIA [35:25] because this was a new government function. They could come in at the ground floor, and this is something that they knew something about because they had been in Military Intelligence, and so they thought this was great. Interesting enough, after I finished my PhD, I came back to George Washington [35:48] to start my professional work. I got continuous calls from the CIA [35:53]: "Now that you have a PhD, we really want you to join the CIA [35:57]."

[laughter]

[36:00] I don't know why, but they -- I guess they needed some scientific expertise. I wasn't interested at that point because I thought I could continue professionally, but the CIA [36:17] kept interest in me for a long time. I did a lot of traveling as a scientist -- I think I mentioned this to you -- and I went behind the Iron Curtain [36:28] quite often, largely because I was involved in teaching about cancer research in my field and training physicians in other countries, and so I was sent to Poland. At the time, Poland was a poor state. I was sent over to Russia [36:47] to have talks with Russia [36:49] on highly scientific topics like cancer research, and I kept meeting a couple of Russians and so forth. We got on very well, [37:00] but every time I came back from a trip, I was -- I got a call from the CIA [37:04], saying, "What'd you learn?"

[laughter]

It's amazing how they can track you.

INT: Yeah.

GM: And I had no problems with that. I must say that in my -- Moscow where I stayed for a few days, I stayed with a member of the American embassy, so they knew about that, and they wanted to know how the embassy was working and what the --, what the embassy knew about Russians, and I said, "I have a Russian friend." But they never met him.

INT: I guess since we're going through briefly your history with Fort Hunt [37:41], if you just want to discuss now briefly what you did after the war. I know that you said you were working at Fort Hunt [37:48] for two more months as a civilian and then after that, you went back to Yale [37:52] for a PhD?

GM: Yale [37:53], yes. Fortunately, I had made arrangements to go back to Yale [37:57] for graduate school before I left, before [38:00] the army, because in 1946 everybody wanted to get back to school.

INT: Oh, sure.

GM: Everybody was in a rush. To get in was very difficult, so I never had a choice. I said, "That's great," and I decided that the easiest thing was to go back to Yale [38:14], get my PhD there, and then in 1949, I was ready to graduate with a PhD when I was looking for a job. Jobs in 1949 were very hard to get. A lot of people were going back -- a lot of people were promised opportunities, but opportunities were limited, and so it was a tough time, and one day -- my interest was in chemistry, but also in medicine - I applied to medicine and I discussed the opportunity to go to medical school, and they offered me a year at the Yale [38:51] medical school, and I turned it down because I couldn't stand any more being in New Haven.

[laughter]

So, I don't know, maybe that would be a mistake [39:00], but in any case, one day at the medical school, I heard a seminar that was given by a chairman from the department of pharmacology at George Washington University [39:13] at Yale [39:15], who was a graduate of Yale [39:17], and he talked about the new tablet aspirin. It happens [inaudible] what does the [inaudible] once the aspirin is ingested? It allows you to go [inaudible]. How does it work? [inaudible] does it need to have? I thought that was quite a fantastic and interesting sort of thing to do related to chemistry, and I talked to this man afterwards, after the talk, this was exciting stuff about the interesting medical applications. He said, "Well, when are you graduating?" I said, "A couple months." "You want a job?" and so I said, "Sure, tell me about it," and so he offered me a job at the department here [40:00] as a chemist. I even got a research grant, what's called a Researcher Associate Program, and my job was to work with aspirin. Interesting enough, what they wanted me to do was to make radioactive aspirin. Aspirin is -- it's a great chemical, but you can put a radioisotope into it which allows it to be used as a tracer, and that was the project that resulted from the atomic bomb project [40:33], and I'd never done that sort of thing, but I thought, "Why not?" And so we did -- we were the first people in the world to make radioactive aspirin --

[laughter]

-- and we had a lot of fun doing it, we did a lot of experiments with it -- putting it into a monkey we shot up in space --

[laughter]

-- and trying to figure out what happens to aspirin after it's chemically [inaudible] [41:00].

Anyhow, this was interesting, and after a while, a lot of the pharmacologist who worked with me at the time had left to go elsewhere, and I was stuck with a lot of the radioactive drugs that I had made, and I didn't have a pharmacologist, and so one thing led to another, and I have been doing this sort of thing ever since.

INT: And so you'd been actively teaching here at GW [41:28] for 50-plus years --

GM: Yes.

INT: -- and going on --

GM: I routinely get asked if we could have a reunion of the 50-year graduates. It would be interesting because we could catch up on the 50 years before -- 53 years before when they were just 25, and so I was very involved in cancer research and [inaudible] of medicine in a number of aspects in biochemical pharmacology, and then we can check [42:00]. The nice man recruited me, and was [inaudible] when he died, and I was the number two man in the department at that time, so I was asked to take over the department, so I ran the department for 36 years. You can check. That was fun. I enjoyed that. Then, I stepped down because I thought that I was getting too old and the department needed refreshing, and it is [inaudible], and also the university would hire replacements for people who were leaving -- who were leaving because of old age --

[laughter]

-- and so I thought at the time, it's best to have a young replacement for a [inaudible] successor because it went very well. I think he was worried at the time because I wanted to stay in the department, and it's sometimes difficult to have a former chief. He was aware that I was very active. I think we worked it out very well. So I'm still doing that. I am involved [43:00] in some research. I do a lot of the teaching, and I'm an LC head of

the project advocating more NIH [National Institutes of Health] [43:09] funding for the NIH [43:12] budget, so I think I mentioned to you that I have big projects coming up.

We just had a meeting, so I [inaudible] because we want to ensure that the deal is there for the NIH [43:25]. It's a marvelous opportunity to do something about health prescriptions, and I [inaudible] and you can't do it by cutting the budget.

INT: I agree.

GM: So, I'm involved in all those activities. We do a lot of travelling. I worked with Burt Steinfeld [phonetic] --

INT: Okay.

GM: Yeah, and I find that that's a good extra.

INT: Well, that's good, and so obviously you live life, and you said you live in Bethesda. You live --

GM: Yeah. Well, we lived in district for a number of years until -- we had two kids. I [44:00] thought, "Boy, the schooling is pretty [unintelligible] in Washington, D.C. I feel like we should move out to Bethesda." We bought a little house, just over the border, and then our kids went to college, we realized they weren't coming back, and so we decided to move into a condo in the same neighborhood, but not far from the city hospital, either.

INT: Okay, sure, sure, absolutely.

GM: So we've been living there for about 15-20 years now.

INT: Got you.

GM: It's a wonderful sight to look out and see somebody else shoveling snow, even though I barely did it.

[laughter]

INT: So, in your last 50, 60 years living in Washington, have you ever paid a visit back to Fort Hunt [44:44]?

GM: I was there once very early. I got married in 1953, and I think I took my wife here to show it to her and hardly recognized it, and I think that it was an unusual [45:00] experience but when you get to be older, you remember certain aspects of your life as being remarkable. Others you kind of forget, and I thought that this was a very good experience, largely because the friendships that you make, the fact that you're doing something that is probably of considerable value, and the fact you're learning something makes the things [inaudible] that you're going to do, too. So, this is quite great. Now, I think I -- I'm happy to take a look at again, even though I doubt there are actually [inaudible] may remember, but I saw the chart that you did --

INT: Right.

GM: -- and it didn't turn me on. You'd have to see the buildings [inaudible].

INT: Sure, right. Were they -- do you recall, were they already in the process of getting rid of buildings while you were there --

GM: Oh, no.

INT: So, until the day you left [46:00] it was still completely together, all --

GM: Absolutely.

INT: -- the buildings were there.

GM: I don't know when it was broken up. I guess it was maybe the late 1940s.

INT: Okay.

GM: Would be my guess. Because in 1953, there was nothing there.

INT: Okay.

GM: But when you -- memory is a funny thing. You remember certain things, but a lot of things you can't --

INT: Sure.

GM: -- at all.

INT: Sure. When you left Fort Hunt [46:26], were you ever sat down and told, "You will never speak of this again?" Were you sworn to secrecy? Did they -- or was it just understood that you wouldn't talk about it?

GM: We were told while we were at Fort Hunt [46:40] very clearly that this was secret stuff. We'd be in terrible trouble if we talked about things that we had actually [inaudible], and there was no question about it. We -- I never signed anything as far as I know [47:00] but it was understood that -- it is sort of generally. I don't remember [inaudible].

INT: Right.

GM: That's why I asked you the other day, "Is all this stuff available information?"

INT: Right, and --

GM: Because it's all secret.

INT: And a lot of people -- everyone that we've met thus far who worked at Fort Hunt [47:20] wants to know, is it okay to talk about this?

GM: Yeah, yeah.

INT: And as near as we can tell, the answer to that is yes, but everyone asks that to the point that I'm wondering in response what level of secrecy did they -- did they tell you that this had, and that's why I've always wondered did they have people sit down and sign something or swear to secrecy --

GM: I don't think so. I don't think so. A lot of that was never formalized.



INT: Sure.

GM: These things weren't formalized. People didn't sign everything like sign a HIPAA thing every time you have a tooth pulled or something, [48:00] and I think that the idea was that it was understood that information like this could be dangerous for everybody, and of course during the war, there was an extensive effort made to prevent people from talking about all sorts of things.

INT: I was actually just mentioning to Brandon, my grandfather before he passed away -- he hadn't mentioned it before -- had every day on his desk a -- like a thing from World War II [48:34] that said, "Loose lips sink ships."

GM: That's right, that's right.

INT: So, they're -- everybody was doing their share.

GM: Absolutely, absolutely, but it was a very frightening time. The newborn menace was tremendous, and the number of ships that were lost enormous, and I think it was a miracle that we won World War II [48:54], and it's only because we bombed the hell out of [inaudible], [49:00] not because we had any scientific expertise. We were constantly amazed by how little we knew and how developed they had been for years to manufacture new programs that could hurt other people. It was really a very wartime economy, true, and they made a major effort and were very successful at it because in those days, German science was first and we had to come to other countries, but German science was considered prime. You wanted to be known for science you published in a German journal no matter what you did. The American Journal of Biologic Chemistry, which is now one of our prime journals -- your issues were about this big. Now, they're this big.

INT: Yeah.

GM: And the Germans did publish in their own journals in English.

INT: Oh, wow.

GM: [50:00] And so did -- even the French, which is even more amazing.

INT: Wow, wow.

INT: In wrapping up right now, as I said before, we'll probably try to do another one of these sit-downs, and I'll try to ask some more specific questions --

GM: Sure.

INT: -- that I'm sure there's things that we've skipped over, but is there anything off the top of your head, anything else that you can recall that you want to say today, any other incidents or anything like that?

GM: Well, yes, I admire what you're doing. I think it would be very interesting to have a report -- a book or whatever it is, published on all the things that happened. I think you have to be careful again with security --

INT: Sure.

GM: -- but I think that it would be very valuable to realize how we did all this, and it's so very different compared to a lot of grey and unheard of. Never any physical activity or anything like that. Maybe there were, but I didn't know about it [51:00].

INT: Yeah, I don't believe we've ever heard of anything anymore than always offering someone a cigarette or something like that, and I -- occasional instances of trying to get people drunk or something along those lines, but nothing more --

INT: Nothing violent.

INT: Yeah, certainly nothing violent or anything.

GM: Of course, we offered them the future, you see, and we offered them the opportunity to take care of their relatives in Germany, and probably to bring them to this country, so that they had no reason to be angry, and I think if anybody could be angry, it would be the American interrogators, but there was never any violence as far as I know.

INT: Okay.

GM: I never thought about it.

INT: Yeah, I feel that the story of you guys -- the interrogators was -- has been missing piece of all of this. All this may -- you talk about -- there's so many books about technology that was gained, but you never talk about how it's done or -- [52:00] lots of people -- you guys --

GM: Yeah, I think in your book, one of the focuses should be what did the Germans produce that had major military value, and why didn't we do it, and how close did we come to suffer from some of these inventions that they came up with. Now, the book I'm reading by Oppenheimer [52:34] right now dealt with questions -- what were the Germans doing in [inaudible], and they never knew. They didn't think it was much, but they really never knew. Now, this would be in 1943, 1944, and they realized that the original discoveries were made in Germany, all the original work that led to the suggestion [53:00] that we should have an atomic bomb project [53:08] was done by the Germans. The things that the Germans made -- the German -- a couple plays about this sort of situation. One play is called "Copenhagen," and I had a chance to see it. It's interesting because it describes the interview of a major German scientist who developed atomic energy [53:27] for Germany. Leading this we got Bohr in Denmark and Heisenberg was the German. Bohr had been to the United States and the question is why did this German see him and was

the German involved in fostering more atomic energy [53:52], including the bomb, or was he trying to slow down the German project because he knew it could have an effect to come? So, it's an amazing story, and I think that -- I don't know if you're going to write it, but [54:00] I think it would be an interesting opportunity.

INT: Yeah, the more we get into this, the deeper involved we get, and the more -- and the more I think we're shooting for the stars in terms of the end product here, and we'll talk about this more in detail later, but the one -- what we're -- the first -- the very, very small thing we're envisioning in the near future is presenting the paper, and what we want -- what we want to do is have an entire symposium, an entire conference on Fort Hunt [54:32] and specifically this aspect of Fort Hunt [54:35], and we'd like to bring in subject matter experts, folks from the National Archives, perhaps somebody from the CIA [54:44], people who could talk about this and perhaps even the veterans themselves to speak on this and draw more public attention to what went on, and then ultimately to compile the results [55:00] from a lot of these interviews and a lot of the research --

GM: Yeah

INT: -- that we're doing at the National Archives.

GM: Well, I would -- I would encourage you to focus on the scientific or technical aspect of this because I think this is the reason that Fort Hunt [55:12] worked, and if it hadn't been for that, especially the entire interrogation aspect, was very important, but this is what made this one special, and I think that there may be a number of other activities that I certainly wouldn't mind being talked about, but your major concern -- I think a U-boat story is a little different because that's [inaudible] a mechanical program. Just try to -- they probably had special torpedoes, things like that, which I don't think I knew anything

about --

INT: Okay.

GM: -- but they probably did.

INT: I believe they had a [inaudible] had stuff about like -- apparently [56:00] the submarines gave off phosphorus that would be resting on the surface of the water so that, I guess, some planes could see them and they developed something to get rid of the -- like, I guess, the oil slick or whatever. So, yeah, I mean [unintelligible].

GM: Yeah, lots of things there, too. I didn't mention microwave, but that's another area where they were very strong. Yeah, the Brits had radar, and the Germans didn't, at least not in the beginning, and that was a tremendous [inaudible]. I don't think that I was involved in radar, partially because I think I was already finished. I hadn't already --

INT: Were you involved -- did the powers that be, whoever your commander was, try to -- since your -- since your background was in chemistry, did they try to have you interview folks more dealing with chemistry of all the -- any scientific matters whatsoever?

GM: Yeah, exactly. I'm not sure they knew [57:00] the difference between chemistry and everything else.

INT: Okay.

GM: So that I think that -- I think we worked that out amongst ourselves to a certain extent [inaudible].

INT: Okay.

GM: A lot of the people at Fort Hunt [57:14] were not scientists. Most of them were not. They happened to speak German [inaudible].

INT: Now, do you think that's the case for a lot of the folks -- like the list of names that you've

given me here. From your recollection, were most of them everyday folks who spoke German or, towards the end of the war when you were there, did a lot of -- did a lot of the interrogators themselves seem to be -- have scientific backgrounds like yourself and Fred -- and Fred Michel [57:48] --

GM: Yes.

INT: -- had a background in mechanical engineering.

GM: Engineer, right. There were a number of people who were excellent scientists. One in particular, a guy by the name [Henry] Kolm, K-O-L-M, [57:58] I think I mentioned [58:00] the other day. He was a mechanical engineer who was interested in a new way of transporting trains, and what's called levitation. They minimized the contact between the rail and the wheel, and I think that program is still ongoing. I think he's died, but he was a very interesting person, and there were a lot of others who were [inaudible], especially college students, but in science a lot of them I don't think were chemistry [inaudible].

INT: Okay, all right. Well, I think we'll wrap up here because I think we have about a minute left of tape --

GM: Okay.

INT: -- and that's it, so this is apparently a good stopping point, so I'll go ahead and -- right now, it's about a little bit after 3:30, and that'll be the end of the interview. Thank you.

GM: Good luck.

[End of Tape 1A]

[Beginning of Tape 2A]

INT: -- and it is asking questions.

GM: It shows it should be looking at the camera the whole time?

INT: Yeah.

GM: Okay.

INT: Yeah, it's -- what I always say is, you're just having a conversation.

INT: Absolutely.

INT: -- just having a conversation.

INT: Just check the --

INT: Just the introduction and then jump right on into it, so -- are you in good shape?

Everything good. Okay. Today is January 29, 2007. It is about 2:00 in the afternoon.

We're here at the National Geographic Society Headquarters in Washington, D.C. to conduct an oral history interview with Dr. George Mandel, a veteran of Fort Hunt, P.O. Box 1142 as part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project. And we're here with National Park Service staff members Sam Swersky, Vincent Santucci, and Matthew Virta, as well as John Bardar [phonetic] and the staff from the National Geographic Society. So with that, I will go ahead and get started. And George, if you could just start off by telling us a little bit about when you were born and where [00:58] you're born, and a little bit about growing up in Germany.

GM: Right. I was born in 1924, and my parents decided in 1937 that they should leave Germany. I was born in Berlin, lived there until that time. And they decided that it was probably a good idea to leave Germany; it turned out that it was an excellent decision that they made. But a lot of uncertainties at the time. Actually, there wasn't very much information as to what was happening in Germany with respect to Jews. My family were Jewish; not practicing, but Jewish. And my father actually had served in World War I [01:45] and he was a decorated officer so people told him don't worry about a thing. And

he didn't. But then we had some relatives in America who came to visit Germany every now and then. And they, [02:00] of course, had been reading the New York Times, we realized what was really happening in Germany which a lot of people in Germany didn't know, and decided that it was time for us to look around and see if we wanted to come to the United States. My parents made a trip to the United States in 1935 just to look. And they thought that this was surprisingly a very nice place to live and to move to. My father had been very happy in his work, he was a director of the Deutsche Bank, and he had been very successful. And he assumed that, judging by what people were telling him, that nothing was going to happen to him, ever, because after all he had a very good German record. Well, on that basis, they decided with me to leave Germany in 1937 and we came to the United States, lived in New York City for a few days and then moved out to Westchester County where my father bought a house and where I grew up [03:00] for a number of years. So until that time, we didn't know too much what was happening in Germany because there wasn't that much information available. Actually, a lot of information became available during the war and after the war. With respect to Jews and concentration camps and killings, and all that sort of thing. So that when I grew up in Scarsdale, New York it was relatively quiet. After four years of high school I matriculated at Yale University [03:37]. I was interested in chemistry, so I majored in chemistry. And then the war rolled out. Just about the time that I was beginning my freshman year in September of '41. Pearl Harbor [03:52] came in December of '41 and it was a whole new world at that point.

INT: If I could just stop you right there, George. Just to back up [04:00] and go into a little bit more detail on some of those points. When you came here to this country, it was just



yourself? You didn't have any siblings?

GM: I had no siblings; just my parents and myself.

INT: Okay. And part of your family had already immigrated? I think, was it to Philadelphia?

GM: Well, that was a long time ago.

INT: Okay.

GM: My grandmother had 12 brothers and they all left Germany in the late 19 -- 1840s to come to the United States and settled in Philadelphia. But they kept close contact with my father, who was the only relative after my grandmother had died. And they came visit every now and then and told us, really, what was happening in Germany which there was very little information available other than that. A lot of people disappeared, but you never knew who disappeared or where they went to. And nobody could really fathom that things would be as horrible as they actually turned out to be [05:00].

INT: And so do you remember -- you said you came here in 1937 -- do you remember the ship that you were on, and what port you came into?

GM: It was the SS Washington. Which was an American ship and we caught it in the heart of France, and it came directly to New York City.

INT: And so then you spent some time in Scarsdale, and that's when you went to high school?

GM: High school, yes.

INT: And at this point, did you speak English or --

GM: Not at all.

INT: -- were you learning?

GM: No I speak no English at all. I was a little hesitant to go to a country where I couldn't speak a word. But as a kid -- I was 12 at the time -- and you pick it up fairly quickly.

And since all the schooling was in English, of course, you had no choice.

GM: And I was very anxious not to continue the German language and so I spoke only English, even though it was probably like typically to most people broken English [06:00]. But you eventually pick it up. And you get to be quite fluent in it.

INT: [unintelligible]

INT: Sure.

INT: Can I talk? When you left Germany, do you remember your mother and your father or any sense of trepidation or nervousness or fear that you would be perceived to be “escaping” or -- was there any sense of that? Or was it just, “This family is departing the country, no problem.”

GM: There was no -- there was really no problem with that. And there was no concern about escaping. We arrived in the United States and my father being a banker was hoping to continue his career. But that turned out to be impossible, because at that time, there was a strong anti-Semitic element in the United States. And no Jewish person could work in a bank. And so he had a very difficult time adjusting. And this turned out to be a concern [07:00], obviously, to the family. Eventually, he did get a position in a Dutch bank in New York, but it was a difficult time in the United States. We don't remember what it was like, but Jews were not entitled to a lot of normal activities in the United States. I learned about this actually when I went back to my 50<sup>th</sup> reunion in high school, in Scarsdale; when so many people complained about the fact that they couldn't join the dance course because the dance course was restricted and -- to the Jewish people. I wasn't interested in dancing so I never knew. And there was a lot of anti-Semitism at the time; if you remember the stories about some of the boats that came out in '38-'39 from

Germany, full of people who wanted to be refugees and settle in the United States, and the boat just turned back once it reached the United States [08:00]. A lot of these people perished. So it was a time that we don't remember and try not to remember it, but we had a lot of problems in the United States at the time. In part because it was a recession, but also because I think that it was sort of ingrained that Jewish people were separate, and they don't belong and therefore they have to do their own thing all by themselves.

INT: Were there other Jewish refugees do you remember being in your high school? Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood or anything like that?

GM: No, it wasn't a Jewish neighborhood. There were very few Jewish people there. There were some. But it was a very small percentage of people. I mentioned Scarsdale, New York, which now has become extremely affluent and it wasn't that affluent at the time. But it was a very pleasant place to live and to grow up and people didn't discriminate me at all. And, as I say, I learned the language though. Most of the people I dealt with [09:00] spoke only English.

INT: Did your parents speak English?

GM: They learned it. My father -- my mother had actually spent a year as a student in England while as a student. They learned some English then. And I guess my father learned some at the university. But English was a foreign tongue, but you develop it quickly enough.

INT: Did your parents speak English in the home? Or they revert to speaking German in the home?

GM: I think to themselves they spoke German much of the time. I always answered in English.

INT: So what year did you graduate high school from?

GM: It was in '41.

INT: Okay.

GM: Came over in '37 and then in '41 I graduated and then I applied to Yale [09:46] and was able to get in and completed my education there. Because I was a chemistry major, the draft board did not want to take anybody who was a scientist or training to be a scientist [10:00]. So I was deferred while in college for about three years, I guess.

INT: And if we could talk about college for a little bit: Were you at Yale [10:10] when Pearl Harbor [10:10] took place?

GM: Yes, yes.

INT: And what do you remember about hearing about that and your reaction? Was it a surprise? Or was it expected?

GM: It was a total surprise, Brandon. I remembered I had a little radio and I listened to this and I remember Mr. Kaltenborn suddenly saying that this morning, Japanese attacked a place -- our base in Pearl Harbor [10:36] and destroyed some aircraft and things like that. They didn't tell us the whole story, but much of the fleet was also destroyed. And it was very sudden. And I think nobody really expected that A, the Japanese would be doing this. There was a concern what the Germans had been doing in Europe, of course. England had already [11:00] been fully involved in the war; the war in Europe started in '39. And it started by an aggression of the Germans to take over Poland. And because of international treaties, the British and the French immediately had to join the war. But we were sort of safe in that in this country partially because we were far away and we hadn't made any contractual arrangements by Poland, but we watched very carefully to what was happening especially to the British. And then, of course, the big bombing raids over London by the Germans who were extremely terrorizing. We got a lot of reports at

that point, and there was tremendous coverage on the radio as to what was happening.

There wasn't any television in those days. And then, sooner or later, the Germans decided to invade France and the Low Countries, skirted around the Maginot Line [12:00], which was supposed to keep them out. And France fell soon thereafter. And I remember [unintelligible] escape to Dunkirk, but we weren't involved in the war at that time.

INT: As you were getting this news being here in the United States, what were your feelings as a German? At this point you were still not an American citizen, correct?

GM: No, I wasn't an American citizen, but I didn't consider myself a German, either. I considered myself an alien living in America, but hoping that at some time or other to become a full-fledged member.

INT: And so, after Pearl Harbor [12:37] in the United States there was a lot of rush, a lot of patriotism, were you caught up in that? Did you want to go off and enlist? Or did you want to continue your schooling? Did you have a "gung-ho" attitude, per se?

GM: I didn't have a gung-ho attitude. I was obviously very concerned what was happening. And I was a 16-year-old kid at the time [13:00], so I really didn't know too much what was really going on. And it was frightening, I didn't volunteer for the military. Being told that we should not volunteer because of our interest in -- training in science. I accepted that very readily. A lot of people who were in college at the same time, were enrolled in military programs. I was ineligible for these because I wasn't a citizen, but I continued and I graduated in '44. Actually it was a very quick program because we worked summers and they decided to have an accelerated schedule so that after two and a half years, more or less, I was finish with college.

INT: And so was there a particular reason -- you studied chemistry?

GM: Chemistry.

INT: Was there a particular reason why you chose that over any other subject?

GM: Well, it's like so many young people. They're influenced by a person, usually, that excites them [14:00]. And my high school teacher in chemistry I thought was very exciting, and we doing interesting things which I had no idea what was all about so that was sort of fun. And he also taught physics and I thought I might be interested in physics, but the more I learned about physics, the more I wanted to stay away from that. But chemistry I thought would be fun. And the department at Yale [14:24], it was quite good, I think in chemistry. The only trouble was that a lot of the scientists at Yale [14:31] were beginning to work on various military projects and so we had large number of graduate students who were doing most of the teaching. We probably didn't get the best of an education, but it was certainly adequate. And then, as soon as I graduated with my B.S. in chemistry, the military drafted me. And that's how I got to be in the U.S. Army.

INT: And so, we've spoken about this a little bit before in the past, but you've mentioned that while you were at Yale [15:00] and about to graduate that a good number of your colleagues were actually recruited to go work on other military programs at Oak Ridge [15:07]. Do you want to refer to that story, too?

GM: Yes. Well this was towards the end of my experience at Yale [15:15] around '43-'44. When a lot of people were making post baccalaureate plans. And there was a lot of talk at that time for other chemistry people who have been approached to work in a place called Oak Ridge [15:29]. And there was a company called Kellogg [15:32] that was interested apparently in hiring chemists. And so I said, "What about me?" And they said,

“No, you’re not eligible because you’re not a citizen.” And I couldn’t figure out what was happening at Oak Ridge [15:45], I looked on the map and I couldn’t find Oak Ridge, Tennessee [15:47]. I figured the Kellogg [15:50] company was making cereal, like corn flakes and things like that, and I didn’t know what those people were going to be doing. So I just assumed that they were going on some sort of strange project that I [16:00] would never hear of again. It turned out, of course, that they were working on the atomic bomb [16:06], but nobody at least I didn’t know that at all. I didn’t realize that there was interest in the atomic bomb [16:13], this was a well-kept secret. And the reason that they placed it in Tennessee, in Oak Ridge [16:19], was because nobody knew about that area. So that I think that there was very [unintelligible] communications and that’s the way it was meant to be.

INT: And so in the summer of ’44, you were drafted by the U.S. Army?

GM: Right.

INT: And could you describe those initial few weeks or months in the military and what you thought your role was going to be in the U.S. Army?

GM: Well, this is, I guess, my first surprise in the U.S. Army. I assumed because I had been deferred from being drafted for about two and a half years that they were going to make use of my chemistry. So that isn’t the way the Army works. And they decided that what I needed was basic training [17:00]. So I was put into an infantry basic training unit and had the unfortunate name of “replacement battalion.” That gives you sort of a frightening thought. And I trained to be, I guess an ordinary G.I. as an infantryman. But all of a sudden I was given a questionnaire and it was established that I could speak German and they thought that was of interest. I also put in that I could type. And I told them I type,

but I type with only two fingers. But they thought that that would be of interest and they thought maybe I should go to Officer Candidate School [17:46], or something like that. But these were just things that were being heard about and I didn't know really what was going to happen except one day I got my orders that I would be going [18:00] to Columbus, Ohio [18:02] where there was some called RSTP Program [phonetic]. I didn't know why I would be going to Ohio, but you don't have much of a choice. In the Army you're being pushed around and they decided what's best for you. This was a place where they taught a lot about Germany and a lot of help with the language, and so forth. Of course I didn't need help with the language because I had spoken it for 12 years. But they told us a lot about history and so forth. And it was really a way to get a lot of people who had a German connection to reestablish themselves that perhaps as interpreters or something like that.

INT: At this point, were you still an enemy alien or did you become a citizen once you were in the U.S. Army?

GM: I became a citizen right away in basic training. I was at Fort Wheeler [18:56] in Georgia and we were taken to Macon, Georgia [19:00] at one point and told that as of today, you will be an American citizen.

INT: And what was your reaction to that?

GM: I liked that. I thought that was great.

INT: And so after training at Ohio State [19:15], did you feel -- did you actually learn something there? Or was this all a kind of a joke to you because you already knew how to speak German?

GM: I don't remember too much that I actually learned there. I think it was a good way to



think about what was happening in Germany from point of view of history, and so forth. Not recent history, but history. And I suppose to brush up on the language a bit because they wanted to make sure that people haven't forgotten their German. And a lot of the kids who were there were kids very much like me who had lived in Germany, grown up in Germany, came to the United States, spoke German and were willing to do whatever was necessary.

INT: And so --

INT: Can I chime in? Back, Dr. Mandel, when you were [20:00] talking about citizenship and [unintelligible], did that come as a surprise? Did they let you know ahead of time? And was it a relief? Or for you is that an emotional thing?

GM: Well, I was very pleased to hear about it. You don't get much notice maybe on a Thursday they'd say that tomorrow we'd go to Macon, Georgia and you'll become a citizen. And that time you accept it. I liked the idea because being an alien separates you from a lot of the other people that you're always around. And so I thought that this would be just fine.

INT: And so from Ohio State [20:42], where did you go from there?

GM: Well after Ohio State [20:45], I went to a place called Camp Ritchie [20:48]. And this was an interrogation school center. We now call it Camp David [20:58]. And Camp Ritchie [21:00] was a training ground for a lot of people who were going to be interrogators; interrogators mainly for military activities. The idea was that we would be sent to Germany or to Europe and we would be, because we spoke German, able to know what captured German prisoners would be saying. And we could communicate with them and we could ask questions of the German military, the German soldiers, as to

where was the fortification? Where were the machine guns? Where was the large portion of the military establishment? And so forth. And this turned out to be I think an interesting experience, right? I fully expected that I would be then sent to Europe to advance with the troops. This of course [22:00] came at a time when the war was still going on heavily and Germans had, at that time, started the Battle of the Bulge [22:09] which was a very serious affair because I think that it was unexpected on our part. We thought that the war was almost over. And we thought that we had won. And suddenly there was this tremendous counter attack in Belgium. And so there was obviously a need for interpreters and I assumed that I would be one of those. But to my great surprise, while a lot of my colleagues and friends did go to Germany at that particular time, I was sent to a place near Washington, and it didn't have a name. They said, "You'll know when you get there." And this turned out to be 1142 [22:54]; 1142 [22:56] was a military camp outside of Washington, D.C. [23:00] not too far from Mount Vernon. I'd never been to Washington. So I thought this would be exciting. I thought that I'd probably never be able to see Washington again. And so I thought this would be sort of an interesting experience. And so we were transported from Camp Ritchie [23:17], which is in Southern Maryland -- Northern Maryland, I guess. And came down to Washington, D.C. and that's where I spent a good portion of the remaining war-time.

INT: And, again, to go back to Ritchie [23:35] before we leave there, was there any indication, did you receive special training at Ritchie [23:40] for what you were about to do at 1142 [23:43]? Or was all of your training focused on so called front line interrogation?

GM: It was the latter. It was all related to front line interrogation. And I never had any idea what was happening at 1142 [23:55]. And our role really was to go over [24:00] to the

war area and to deal with captured prisoners, but to ask them very specific questions about war-related activities.

INT: And so, what was your attitude? At this point you assumed that you were going over to the --

GM: Yes.

INT: -- European theatre. Were you looking forward to this? Were you apprehensive? Or were you just going along with it as you had the rest of your Army career?

GM: I think you're apprehensive. You don't have any idea what's about to happen to you. You know that a lot of people were getting killed. You know that it would be a rough time. You know that you're going over by boat with certain hazards, plus it's extremely overcrowded. And you realize that it was not going to be a joy ride. You don't have any questions to really ask at that point, because nobody could tell you. In the military, you were told what you had to do and this is what you did. You didn't necessarily [25:00] like it, but there really was very little opportunity to do anything else.

INT: And so you found out that you were going to this place, Post Office Box 1142 [25:09], were you singled out? Or where there a group of you from Ritchie [25:15] that all went there?

GM: There was a group of people. I was always with a group who had been treated similarly. And so we arrived in Virginia as a group. But there was already a group here. And it was a very large place. I never saw all of it, as happened matter of fact. We were told not to put our nose into everything and to restrict ourselves to those things that we were supposed to be doing.

INT: Were you given an initial briefing or welcoming, or told what your role was to be there?

Or did you have to figure it out for yourself?

GM: I don't remember if we were told anything, as a matter of fact. We were just told that we would be talking to people who spoke German who had been coming from Germany.

And that we needed to talk to them to ask them specific [26:00] questions.

INT: Was is a rather secluded setting? Was it open? Could you tell right away that it was a prisoner facility? Or was it tucked away? Could you describe it a little?

GM: It was tucked away, Brandon, it was tucked away. The official name for it was Fort Hunt [26:17], but all the signs had been removed so that only those people who had lived there a long time before remembered that it was Fort Hunt [26:24] and it was very much tucked away and it was very secretive. You had to leave the main road to, I guess, Mount Vernon. And suddenly you found out you were at an Army checkpoint.

INT: And so when you arrived there, your first day or so, what were you led to believe that your role was going to be while you were there?

GM: We didn't really have any idea. We were told that there'd be select prisoners and that some of them were [27:00] scientists. I assumed that perhaps I could use some of my knowledge base in science because of the fact that some of these people were scientists but I didn't have any idea what they had done, why they were here. I also didn't know very much about what they had accomplished before they came here; why they were chosen. And there were many different programs, too, which I learned about either at the time or more likely, more recently, about people who say -- came off German submarines because that was a major hazard to traffic at the time. And some of these people were captured as they captured submarines. I was not aware of a lot of that activity. At least I don't think I was.

INT: And so there -- when you found out that you're role was going to be interrogating these prisoners did you receive additional training at 1142 [27:56]? Or did you just kind of go with the same methods you've been taught when you were at Camp Ritchie [28:01]?

GM: Well actually none of this really they taught us. I think that we were told that Mr. So-and-so is here. And he has done such-and-such. And so find out what this means. How it works, how effective was it? Is it something that is of interest to the war department in this country? Is this something that could be a critical item with respect to the war?

INT: And so these questions were given to you in advance? You had a file with some sort of information?

GM: Well you sort of made it up as you went along. You could figure out -- you knew what the overall purpose was. But there were no specific questions that I remember that we asked. But there was so obvious that you figure out that this is how we do -- how to proceed.

INT: Now, your background was in chemistry. Were you primarily asking questions relating to chemistry? Or to all of the sciences and all levels of technology?

GM: It turned out to be largely all of the sciences [29:00]. Only a relatively small amount actually related to chemistry. But having had a background in chemistry and somewhat in physics and so forth, you could figure out some of these things. But we had no idea what to expect and what was going to be the object of some of the questions that I would be asking. But you develop that as you continue. For instance, one of the people that I interrogated had been involved in developing the jet engine [29:34] for military airplanes. I didn't know what a jet engine [29:38] was, I assumed all airplanes had propellers which I think was also the assumption of the war department with respect to it. And here, all of

a sudden, the Germans came up with Messerschmitt [29:53] that had jet engines [29:55] which were so fast that we could no longer destroy them or shoot them down [30:00].

And I think this was a clear hazard because the war in the air and to remove or to have air coverage was essential. And suddenly this was a challenge which we didn't know how to work out, because these planes were far faster and better than anything that we had. Now in retrospect, it's quite possible that we have a few of these jet engine [30:26] planes, too. But we never heard about them. And we don't know how well that they were developed. All I know is that it's a terrible shock to our Air Force all of a sudden to find out that these planes were faster than anything that we were used to.

INT: And so when you would go into --

INT: [unintelligible]

[End of Tape 2A]

[Beginning of Tape 3A]

INT: You ready? All right. Okay. Again, this is the second of a series of interviews today on January 29th, 2007 here at National Geographic Society with Dr. George Mandel, a veteran of Fort Hunt, and this is Brandon Bies of National Park Service as well as Sam Swersky, Matthew Virta, Vince Santucci, and John Bardar of National Geographic, and we'll go ahead and pick up the rest of the interview. So, George, where we left off here, we were just talking a little bit about some of the fascinating things you were learning while you were there at 1142. And I'd like to get into some of this shortly, but can we back up just for one second and could you walk us through what a typical interview or interrogation would be like, what the setting was. Was it one on one? Were there two of you and [01:00] one prisoner? How did it really work and how was it set up?

GM: It was relatively informal, if I remember correctly. There was a table and you had prisoner of war sitting across from you. Usually, one or two or three people perhaps on the American side. Actually, one person was doing, asking a lot of the questions, and the other person would be preparing the report and so forth. Actually, the person who was asking questions had no knowledge of science whatsoever, but was an excellent typist, and I had understanding for some of the science, but could only type with two fingers, so I was able to persuade our lieutenant that the two of us would switch roles, and I should do the interrogating and he should do the typing. And he agreed. He thought that was a pretty good idea.

INT: And so were you aware at the time that a lot of the interviews were being recorded or that they were being bugged [02:00]?

GM: Well, I expected that. I expected that everything would be recorded because I think the tape recorders were relatively new but we had them. And so I'm sure that a lot of this was recorded, but then we had to write out our reports, and I think that we wrote the reports without re-listening to the tapes usually.

INT: Would most of the interviews take place -- just take a few hours or would you sometimes deal with the same prisoner day after day?

GM: It would be some of both but it would usually be the same person day after day, and we'd reconstitute some new questions. And we discussed some of this, and the people said you might have asked about such and such and so forth. And most of these people were my colleagues in the Army. Sometimes the military officers would participate in this, but mostly it was the young GIs who heard about some of this and suggested [03:00] that the next time you see him this would be an interesting topic.

INT: And so would you usually be taking notes while you were there or did you try to -- I know you said it was informal. Would you be actually typing up the interview there while it was taking place?

GM: No. No, that was done later. You took notes and then you typed up the report afterwards.

INT: And you mentioned that it was usually a friendly setting. Did you ever have instances where prisoners were not friendly or not cooperative? Did you dismiss them or how did you deal with the prisoner? Or did you not have prisoners that weren't cooperative?

GM: Actually, most of them were very cooperative. It depends on where during the war when this occurred. Much of this occurred towards the end of the war, and at that point the prisoners realized that they had nothing to hide, and they also had no place to go [04:00], and we did not have to push them to do anything. They were perfectly willing to reveal everything that they knew. In part because they were proud of what they had done and had accomplished. And I think that they were so pleased to be in the United States compared to the alternative, which was to be in Russia [04:22]. And at that time, the reason that these people were eager to come to the United States and volunteered to come to the United States was because they thought that if they couldn't come to the United States the Russians would get them. And I don't think people now understand that there was not a great deal of friendship or cooperation with the Russians. On our part, they had been very instrumental in helping us win the war, but it was not a close friendship. And as far as the Germans were concerned, they were absolutely terrified that the Germans [05:00] -- that the Russians could take them out of Germany and take them probably to interrogation centers in Russia [05:08], which would be far less benign than what was happened to these people. And so those people who came to the United States, we took



care of their families, and in many cases they were encouraged to immigrate into the United States and to perhaps set up shop based on their science experience – scientific experience.

INT: Was any of your role to try to actually encourage prisoners to do this, to immigrate to the United States, or --

GM: No, we didn't get into that. We didn't get into that, and we were not terribly enthusiastic about that, either, in part because a lot of these people who we interrogated were ardent Nazis [05:51], and so they were very thrilled with what the Germans had done. And we didn't think they deserved to get the kind of beneficial [06:00] treatment that we offered them. There was a lot of concern raised to that particular time because a lot of these people who had been captured then went on to very comfortable lives in the United States after having had a major role in the war against the United States.

INT: And a related question to that, and you probably see where I'm going with this, but you were -- you and your family were of Jewish descent, and were a number of the other people there at 1142 [06:33] also recent immigrants to the United States of Jewish descent?

GM: Most of them I think were, yes. Most of them I think were Jewish people, who had left Germany, perhaps sometimes earlier, sometimes later, who wanted to get out mostly were Jewish, and they felt that this was the only way to go.

INT: And what did [07:00] -- did you remember having any reaction yourself -- at this point in the war had you heard about some of the atrocities that the Nazis [07:07] had committed, and did you and your colleagues, again many of whom were Jewish, did you feel that impacted what you were doing? Or did it just give you more of a sense to duty and to get

the job done correctly?

GM: It was more a sense of duty because most of the information about atrocities were not available until actually either the Russian or American armies captured places like Dachau [07:33] and found out what was happening there, and that came as a shock, I think, to the whole world. That was towards the end of the war, in May of '45, and we had no idea that this was happening. I had just been at 1142 [07:50] for a few months, and after that, of course, the whole situation changed because the war was over, and then all the information on the way that the Germans had treated [08:00] all of their Jews and prisoners became clear.

INT: And one last question related to this is, again, you mentioned a lot of the prisoners had been rather ardent Nazis [08:13]. Do you think they realized that they were being interrogated by immigrants to the United States, many of whom had been Jewish?

GM: Yes, but I don't know if it registered very much with them. They wondered how come all these Americans spoke such good German, and I think -- we explained it to them, so that I think that it was quite clear what the history had been with the interrogators. And we got a long very well with some of these people. Not all of them, but most of them because they were very anxious to cooperate, and I think that they hadn't been any threat that they could go back to Germany and the Russians would get them was enough to be extremely cooperative in the United States.

INT: It sounds like there was a -- you described the [09:00] interview process, an interrogation process as informal, and I know that you can kind of develop a rapport, but did you find yourself resisting that rapport in some ways because you knew you were probably dealing with at a minimum a Nazi [09:17] and perhaps an anti-Semite, and somebody

who had been very recently at war with your country? What was that dynamic like?

GM: I don't think that really was a major concern to us. At this point we were most interested in getting the information out of these people. We didn't form any friendships with these people. The people that we dealt with were, came from a different world, but they had a lot of scientific expertise or technical expertise, and we wanted to find out as much as we could what this expertise was.

INT: And so were there ever cases that you recall [10:00] of any level of physical coercion having to be used against prisoners?

GM: I was not aware of anything like that. The stories you hear now what's happening to Iraq prisoners and so forth, none of that as far as I know was being practiced in the United States at the time. I think that -- it's just a total shock really to hear what was happening at some of these places in Iraq, but I was totally unaware if there was anything like that, and I doubt it occurred. I think the situation was different also from point of view of time. The war was essentially over in Germany. They realized that the Germans had lost, and there was nothing to be gained by resisting the Americans because what were they going to go back to? And if they had a chance to make it in the United States that will be a benefit to them. Plus the fact that if they did go back and the Russians [11:00] caught them, this would be total hell. So that they were extremely cooperative. They told us everything that they knew.

INT: Can you give any sense or do you have any recollection of the number of prisoners that you interrogated while you were at 1142 [11:16]? I know you were at some other installations and we'll get to that in a moment.

GM: I don't remember. My guess would be about six or eight, something like that, of people

that I'd talked to. Some for a longer period of time, some for shorter period of time, and each one had a special technique that needed to be described in detail. And sometimes I had to learn what this technique really meant so that it took some time to write a report, which was meaningful because a lot of things that they were telling me I had no idea existed. For example, they talked about what's called a proximity fuse [11:58]. I didn't know what a proximity fuse [12:00] was. It's something that if you tried to use anti-aircraft to shoot down a plane, it doesn't have to hit the plane. It can get near the plane and then blow up and destroy the plane. Now whether we had this or not, I don't know, but I thought this was an amazing idea, a technological feat, which could be extremely effective and destructive, and so I thought it was an important thing, and of course I reported this. I don't know whether the war department at the time was fully aware of these things or whether we had it or not. I probably had more information as to what the Germans had than what we had.

INT: I have the impression that you're sitting there listening to some of these things and kind of being stunned that we're actually winning. Did you ever have that impression?

GM: Absolutely. And the more I heard what they were doing from a technological point of view, the more concerned I was [13:00] that we had always assumed we would win the war, but it began to be a question whether if these people had developed a lot of these technological advantages that if they carried them out in a larger scale, this could be a major destruction to not only the United States, but to the whole world. And I'll give you an example. Now I'm not sure whether my interview with the rocket [13:29] people came before or after 1142 [13:32], but I did meet some of the people who had developed the very successful V-1 and V-2 bombs [13:40] that was catastrophic for London. And

when the Germans bombed London in 1940 they used conventional planes and they were eventually shot down by the RAF [13:55] and the bombing stopped. But then towards the end of the war back in '44 [14:00] and '45, the Germans developed very fancy rocketry [14:03] and again hit London, and I think the British at that time thought the war was already won only to find out that all the sudden it had started all over again. And if that had continued more successfully for the Germans, I'm not sure the British could have kept up the war. If the Brits had folded, this would have been a major catastrophe for the American effort. The French had capitulated, and if the British also capitulated, and there wasn't anybody else in Europe, this would have been a very destructive thing for the war, and could have meant a very severe lengthening of the war or, more likely, even the possibility of defeat. Now I think the way that we overcame that was a very successful bombing. At that point we had so many bombers that we blasted everything that related to the rocketry [14:59] that most of that had no place to go. If it hadn't been for that I think the rocketry [15:05] could have had a major change in the way that the war ended. Something we don't consider now. We also assumed that we must win the war, but as we've learned in Iraq that is not always so simple.

INT: Did you have the same sense when you interviewed the guy about the jet engine [15:22]?

GM: Well, it was a very frightening thing to realize that they had technology, which could easily wipe out most of our bombing fleet, could easily destroy all of our fighters, and could, again, be a major factor in turning the war around. And I think that -- now we did have some jet engines [15:45], as I mentioned, the jet engines [15:47] were discovered -- invented in the United States but the military didn't think it was necessary to have by military planes. So that here again was the possibility that something could turn [16:00]

the way that the war was going, much like I think the concern that happened earlier during the Battle of the Bulge [16:07] when we thought the war was essentially over and then we would be in Berlin very shortly, but it took a long time to get to Berlin after that, and it was a horrendously costly fight and a bout

INT: With the German rocketry program [16:22], I understand you had run-ins with Wernher von Braun [16:26]?

GM: I was one of the people who interviewed with Wernher von Braun [16:29], and he was extremely proud of what he had accomplished. From the point of view of rocketry [16:34] he wasn't so concerned as to what it was doing to the Brits, but he was a very strident German, who took great pride in what he had done. And of course I think that from a technological point of view it's quite clear they had made major progress in rocketry [16:53]. We had nothing like that. And of course the risk was, what if they succeed [17:00] even further and start developing long range rockets [17:04], which, say, could hit New York or Washington? This is something that never was thought about as far as I know in this country, but that could have, again, had a major impact on the way the war was run.

INT: So besides technology in rocketry [17:21], were you able to learn anything about locations or anything or was that a different set of interrogations--

GM: That was already known. That was already known. The location, I think, was clear, and I think that our bombers took care of that. And that was fortunate because, again, I think that if they hadn't destroyed all that, I think that they could have built a huge war machine in a short period of time. And of course now 60 years later, we don't remember how close we came to losing the war. And I think that it was largely because of the fact that

even though the Germans had tremendous technological superiority [18:00], just by force alone and force of bombing, we prevented them from really going ahead and winning the war, but it was no certainty that the Germans were going to lose. And the Germans felt the same way.

INT: Are there any other programs at 1142 [18:19]? We mentioned rocketry [18:20], jet engines [18:21], proximity fuses [18:22]. Does anything else stick out in your mind or any other important aspects of the actual interrogations, things that were learned through them?

GM: Yes, I wanted to tell you about one aspect that came as a total surprise to me. I interviewed a German chemist, who had been involved in the German atomic bomb project [18:48], and of course the atomic bomb [18:51] hadn't been discovered yet basically because I think it surprised many when Hiroshima [18:58] was the first place that atomic bomb [19:01] was dropped. This happened after the war in Europe was over. And here I was interviewing somebody who mentioned all sorts of things that they were trying to do to use atomic energy [19:15] for war-like purposes, and then it came to me all of a sudden that that was what the Oak Ridge Project [19:23] was all about. And that's what these people had been doing in Oak Ridge [19:28], some of my colleagues, and again, in total secrecy, but the Germans had done the same thing. And actually the reason for the development of the atom bomb [19:41] was largely because a discovery was made a long time ago in Germany about atomic energy [19:46]. And these people left Germany and went to various other places, but some of them stayed behind and were interested in developing a major weapons program. It so happened that they were not successful [20:00]. They made a couple of wrong moves. They thought that there would

be a ways of reeling atomic bomb [20:07] with heavy water, for example, which we had also considered as well but dropped because we thought it was ineffective, but they continued to use that as their major source. And when the British heard about the fact that there were ships in Norway that were transporting heavy water from Norway to Britain -- to Germany, they decided that they would just bomb these ships and destroy them. As a result, the German atomic energy program [20:40] came to failure. But you know they were ingenious people and they could have thought of some other way like we did in Oak Ridge [20:47] to develop an atom bomb [20:49]. Again, if they had been successful, you can realize that they could easily have bombed certain areas in Britain, perhaps even the United States, although to fly directly to the United States from Germany at that time was impossible. But you can tell that they might have thought of some way of getting a couple of bombers, they didn't have to come back necessarily just to deliver an atom bomb [21:16] over, say, Chicago or New York or Washington. And that would have had a major impact not only on the conduct of the war, but it would have brought the war to tremendous anticlimax and could have gotten a major review of what we should be doing with respect to the war. So that if the Germans had been successful on this, it could have been a catastrophe. Fortunately, they weren't.

INT: It's rather fascinating that you were dealing with these highly trained German scientists, who were the heads of their nuclear program, and that you [22:00] yourself had no actual formal training in nuclear science or anything like that. Did you find that the prisoners were actually trying to help you understand, that they wanted to make you understand?

GM: Absolutely. They were good teachers. They explained it to us in such a way that we could figure out what it was all about. And they had no hesitancy in providing all the



details because in the first place there was no place for them to go back to, and in the second place they thought that this might be helpful to them personally. And I think that -- I don't know how much the war department at that time learnt from the German atomic bomb project, I recently read a book by Dr. Oppenheimer [22:47], who is really the inventor and the brains in the atomic bomb project [22:54] at Oak Ridge [22:56], and he says we had no idea what the Germans had been up to in their own atomic energy program [23:01] except that we knew they had one. But we assumed that we were ahead, but we had no information.

INT: Did you get the sense that at 1142 [23:11] there were any actual gizmos and gadgets and the actual physical technology was actually brought there to 1142 [23:20] to be examined, or was it all literally brain and mental information?

GM: I don't know of any actual material that was delivered there. Now that could have been delivered elsewhere because I think that from the discussions we've had recently is that apparently a lot of the information was brought over on a submarine that the Germans had developed, they were going to ship to Japan [23:43], that submarine was captured, so there was a lot of material that must have been caught at that time. I'm sure that some of the German planes like the Messerschmitt [23:58] were transported to the United States for detailed investigation.

INT: One thing [24:00] that strikes me about this is that maybe in a stronger way than today there was kind of an inherent respect for age. You were, what, 18, 19, 20, interviewing these guys who were essentially at the top of their field and probably 20, 30, 40 years your senior?

GM: Many years older, yes. These were senior people. I think that most of our group, the

interrogators, were probably in their early 20s. And a lot of the people who were experts, technologic experts from Germany, were probably 30, 40 years old.

INT: Could you give any sense of the numbers? You gave an idea of how many folks you spoke with, but in terms of the overall numbers of German scientists, which sounds like - - maybe I should ask that question first [25:00]. Did you find yourself primarily dealing with German scientists or with German military personnel or a mix?

GM: I dealt largely with the German scientists or engineers, and those were the only ones that were assigned to me. Now there may have been others assigned to other people. Not everybody at 1142 [25:21] was a scientist. As a matter of fact, I would think most of them were not. They all probably had some kind of college experience, not necessarily finishing college, but they had some experience, but probably very limited in science.

INT: And do you have any real sense of the numbers of German scientists? Again, you just spoke with a handful of them, but could you get any idea or did you not really know how many other German scientists were being brought through 1142 [25:53]?

GM: I had no idea. I had no idea. I even didn't know all the other activities that were going on at 1142 [26:01]. I learned about these most recently in our discussion, and I think there were other projects, which we were told not to get into and keep our noses out, which we did. And so there were all kinds of activities at 1142 [26:15] that I was totally unaware of. I only learned about our little section and what we were doing.

INT: Did you speak with your colleagues there, your fellow interrogators, about how an interrogation went or who they were interrogating? Or, again, did you keep that to yourself?

GM: No, we compared notes, but it was not particularly important what came out of those

discussions. I think that you compare notes of how things go, what was peculiar, what they told you, what they didn't tell you, and so forth how cooperative they were, but nothing that was certainly that was majorly important.

INT: So for instance, after you learned about something like a jet engine or proximity fuse, [27:00] or something dramatic like that, wasn't there a kind of urge or tendency to go, "This guy's talking about stuff that I only read about in comic books?"

GM: Yes, absolutely, and sometimes not even that. I think that for the most part these were things that, because they were not broadcast frequently, you had no idea that they existed. And I mentioned the jet engine [27:30]. It took us a long time really to develop the jet engines [27:37] that we now have, and now you rarely see a propeller plane, but that took a long time, it's been 60 years since 1142 [27:46]. And here in about '43, '44 the Germans have these Messerschmitt [27:51], which I think were really a revelation, and I think very frightening to the air force – air corps at the time [28:00].

INT: Just one or two last questions and then we're actually going to have to change our tapes in a minute or two. With the size of the program, could you give any sense of how many Americans were involved there at Fort Hunt [28:17]? Did you have any idea? I know you said there were other programs going on, but both in those other programs and in your program, the Y Program [28:24], any idea just how large it was or how small it was?

GM: I only knew our little group, which was maybe 25 or 30 people, something like that, and it kept changing. People were leaving, people were coming in, and there was always reassignments and so forth, but our group, I think about 20 or 30 or something like that, were housed together. And we realized what we were doing at 1142 [28:52] other activities I never learned about.

INT: And for example, were there buildings that were off [29:00] limits that you could not go to or, again, was it just a simple matter that it was understood? I mean, was it posted "No Trespassing," "Do Not Enter," or where you --

GM: I don't really think there was any formal posting. You just kept your nose out of it, and I don't know of how many other activities were going on. I think in the meantime I've learned that they had a large group of people interested in providing information and actually material so that American people captured by the Germans could escape. I was totally unaware of that.

INT: But if there 20 or 30 people that you talked about a moment ago, were they all interrogators?

GM: Yes, they were all interrogators. Yes, they all did the same sort of thing, and sometimes they worked in small groups. And they dealt with the people that had been brought to this country from -- I think the term "prisoner" has [30:00] to be more defined because these were not prisoners that wore prisoner garb or anything like that. They were essentially people whom you talked to, who had come out of Germany, we had brought them over, and it was not a situation where we were enemies at this point.

INT: Okay. We'll go ahead and take a quick pause and switch things up again. [inaudible]

GM: You'll be editing this I presume because it probably needs a lot of editing.

INT: Well, you're extremely articulate. It would be great if we could just play it straight. [inaudible] Yeah. [31:00] Is that okay?

GM: Oh, fine. Oh no, this is great, thank you. I'm enjoying myself. I'm probably not supposed to, but I am.

INT: Sure.

INT: Well, we'll try not to treat it like it's an interrogation. [inaudible].

INT: How would you rate Brandon?

GM: Excellent questions. Excellent questions.

INT: I have a question regarding the relationship between your superior and the work that you did, was it just a matter of typing things out and handing the paperwork on? You don't have to respond now.

INT: Don't ask -- I said don't ask your question. Ask it.

INT: I mean, yeah, no. You didn't have to ask it. I mean, when your relationship, for example, when is it that you [32:00] ran out of the room and down the hall and said, "Guess what I just heard?" Was there something of such excitement that you did that or was it always more of a bureaucratic exercise, and are there times that your superior officer then would clue in to say "Hey, this is good work; continue to dig in this direction." This is the kind of information we're interested in.

[End of Tape 3A]

[Beginning of Tape 3B]

INT: Okay. All right. Today is January 29, 2007. This is the third in a series of interviews here at National Geographic with Dr. George Mandel, veteran of P.O. Box 1142. This is Brandon Bies of the National Park Service for the Fort Hunt Oral History Project, as well as team members Sam Swersky, Matthew Virta, and Vince Santucci, as well as staff from National Geographic led by John Bardar, and we're going to pick right up where we left off. George was talking a little bit about the techniques of an actual interrogation. I know we touched upon this a little bit earlier and you'd emphasized that -- maybe I shouldn't say emphasized, maybe. I don't want to put words in your mouth. A typical

interrogation, was it just friendly banter back and forth or did you have a preset series of questions that an officer had handed to you and said, "Ask these?" Or did you come up with the questions ahead of time or off the cuff?

GM: Actually, the way it worked out was that usually the prisoner volunteered very much of the information that we were seeking [01:00] so that there was no question that we were trying to get at that they were hiding. Our offices did not, as far as I could remember, prompt us to ask any specific questions. I think it just came up in what turned out to be a very friendly discussion really with these people. Now, I think some were more friendly than others, but for the most part, they were very eager to tell you everything that they knew, and they had nothing to hide. Also, I think that there was no question of patents or anything like that that they were getting involved in. That wasn't really part of the scene at all, so that I think they were pleased to tell you any information that they had that was of technological or scientific expertise.

INT: So then, did you find there was ever any need for any coercion, verbal coercion? "Oh, it's okay to tell this to us?" Or, as you said, it -- was it generally they'd just volunteer?

GM: I had no trouble at all. It was always volunteered, and there was no way to put pressure on these people [02:00], and I don't think we did put pressure on these people because they were very open. And -- but again, you see, the war was essentially over. This depends on when particularly the interviews took place. Some of them took place before the end of the war -- just before the end of the war, others after the war, so that they realized that there was no future in anything except to cooperate. And they were very helpful about it. At least that was my experience.

INT: During the break, Vincent asked a question which I'll just go ahead and ask him to repeat

now.

INT: This was just your relationship between your commanding officer or superior. Were there certain kinds of information that they sought from you through your interrogations? Or were there times where you had information that you felt had a level of urgency that you needed to share immediately?

GM: I don't think that there was that much contact with our officers. They were not scientists. They did not speak German for the most part [03:00] and they had a very different history really. Most of them were people who'd just come back from the war front and they were assigned to 1142 [03:11] because there was a need for officers. We did not have a very close relationship to most of them. And they had very little influence in the kind of interrogation that we carried out. I may be doing them an injustice but for the most part they thought that what we were doing was interesting and important and they reported it to the War Department [03:36] at the time.

INT: Did you feel that your relationship with officers and other people of higher rank at 1142 [03:44] -- was it -- was it still considered a strict military base where military courtesy was paid? Or was it relaxed? What was the setting?

GM: It was kind of -- it was still very military. These were -- the officers and we were the enlisted men and you would not share a lot of jokes or anything [04:00] like that with them. There were a few exceptions but for the most part it was a very standoff relationship.

INT: In terms of getting into that military atmosphere at 1142 [04:10] would you have daily dress parade and inspections? Inspection of barracks? Inspection of uniforms?

GM: I believe we had some of that but not very often. That was not too military. I don't

remember really but you know you have to make your bed and it's got to be in a military fashion and things like that. But it was not a major deal.

INT: And were you housed with officers, or did the enlisted men have separate housing?

GM: I think we had separate housing. We had separate housing. I think that most of us were in one barrack. And the officers were separate.

INT: Okay. Do you recall if most of the folks in your barracks were fellow interrogators with you? Or were there also guards and cooks and other people?

GM: No, I think they were all in the same group of people who were working together. Of course there were a lot of changes. Every now and then somebody would be shipped out and somebody else [05:00] would be shipped in and so forth. But you made your friends this way and you felt that these were the people that you could talk to. And of course, there was nothing else to do so that we shared a lot of personal things with these people. Because what else was there to do?

INT: So, what did -- that leads perfectly into my next question: what did you do in your time that was off? First of all, was this more of a Monday through Friday operation or did you have to -- did you conduct interrogations on Saturdays and Sundays and in the evenings? Or was it -- was it kind of a 9:00 to 5:00?

GM: I can't remember, Brandon. I know that sometimes you had home leave and you could take a train to wherever you needed to, to see your family and so forth. And like I said, I took a train to New York a number of times. But, I don't remember whether it was -- it was a schedule. I think that most of it I think was probably done Monday through Friday. But maybe even it was done the rest of the time too when we were not there.

INT: Were you allowed to speak about --



GM: What's that?

INT: Were you allowed to speak about -- like, with your [06:00] family for example?

Especially given your family's history, connection to Germany, I'd imagine that if you were restricted the urge to tell them must have been very strong.

GM: Yes.

INT: Talk about that a little bit.

GM: Yes, well actually the whole operation was extremely secret and we were sworn to secrecy. And we realized that we had -- it was necessary to keep this whole thing very secret. I think that you may make a few comments to your family as to what you're doing. Like you're talking to some prisoners or something like that but no details. And, it was always kept hush-hush.

INT: And do you remember any kind of pushback from your father or your mother about, "Oh come on, just tell us a little bit if this is so important?"

GM: No. No, I think at that time people respected, I think, the fact that you keep your mouth shut. And I think they understood that you can't -- couldn't say a lot of things

INT: Being in Washington, D.C. did you take advantage of being so close to the city? I know you went home on some leaves, but did you also go into the city?

GM: We did a little bit of that, yes. Not too much [07:00]. We went occasionally to the city because I thought that I'd never see Washington, D.C. again. Now that I've lived here another 58 years I guess it wasn't necessary. But we did that. And I should tell you also that if you went by train to New York and then came back and had to take a taxi back from Union Station to 1142 [07:19] you would tell the taxi driver in Washington that you needed to go to 1142 [07:23] and he said, "Oh yeah, that's Fort Hunt [07:24] isn't it?"

[laughter] So much for secrecy.

INT: Did you find that was common? Did you find that even though people were trying to keep it a secret that word had gotten out? Did you get the sense that the neighbors -- there were houses in the area; did you get the sense that the neighbors had a sense of what was going on?

GM: I don't know. We had no contact -- I had no contact at all with any of the neighbors. So I never saw anybody else at all. And, again, I think that in a war, you keep your mouth shut and so a lot of people really didn't discuss too many things. And probably people didn't even realize that Fort Hunt [07:55] was a great big -- large military program going on. The only thing is that every morning at 5:00 [08:00] in the morning the Army shot out some big cannons because it was a military camp. And I suppose that some of the neighbors probably got the idea, "I wonder what's happening here?"

INT: And so we spoke a little bit earlier but I -- you ate most of your meals while you were there on the base. Was there a mess hall or a mess facility?

GM: Yes. There was a mess hall and I think some of the cooks -- many of the cooks were Germans -- prisoners of war [08:20]. And they had been captured someplace and they've decided that they would become cooks and they were cooks before. We actually ate very well. And I remember that's the first time I discovered something called a Baked Alaskan, which they served every now and then because these people, who were the cooks, you see, had no place to go. So that after 5:00 or 8:00 they couldn't just go anywhere because they were prisoners. So that they enjoyed their cooking and they enjoyed cooking well and so we were well looked after.

INT: Did you eat a lot of German food?

GM: No. It was largely military, American military-type food.

INT: In terms of the make-up -- and we've, again, spoken of this a little bit -- of the individuals that were there, the Americans at 1142 [08:55], was there a wide range of people? Were most of the interrogators from Germany? Or were there some [09:00] American born German speakers? Were there people from other countries?

GM: I think that almost all of them were from either Germany or Austria. There may have been some from other countries where they spoke German. But, I don't think there was any American there who had not been -- who had not come from Germany or neighboring countries.

INT: Okay. Well, chronologically I'm going to leave Fort Hunt [09:23] for a little while and then we'll come back to it. But, at some point when you were at 1142 [09:27] you got word that you were going to be transferred?

GM: Yes, that's correct. All of a sudden I heard that I was going to Boston [09:32]. And, I had no idea what we were going to do in Boston [09:35]. And I didn't know that it wasn't really in Boston [09:37]; it was outside Boston [09:38] on an island called, I think Long Island [09:40]. Not the one in New York but in Boston [09:42], which could only be approached by ship. And so, we would go to -- arrive at Union Station and the ship would take us to this place in -- in Long Island. And, the -- it had been used as a prisoner of war [09:58] camp and there was a large hospital there [10:00]. And they thought this would be a good place to bring in Germans from the war to be interrogated as well. I don't know whether this was influenced by the fact that it would be so difficult to get into and out of the island and they thought that this might be a good thing but I think that some of the rocket people [10:14] actually came through Boston [10:15]. And the

procedure there was pretty much the same except that it was very poorly developed.

Nobody knew that we were coming. There were no provisions. We had to construct everything there because it was totally unexpected for the Army that we would be doing this. And so I don't think very much was accomplished. And then all of a sudden I was told that I'd be going to Holden, Maine [10:34] to another prisoner of war [10:35] camp.

INT: Before we get to that I just want to ask a few more questions about Boston [10:38]. Were you transferred up there by yourself or with another group of individuals from 1142 [10:42]?

GM: It was a sub group. It was a group of people who were coming to Boston [10:45] and I think we expected a number of additional people to arrive in Boston [10:47] as well.

INT: And how long were you there in Boston [10:50] for roughly?

GM: I think about two, three months, something like that.

INT: And, were you, again, interrogating as you had been at 1142 [10:55]? Or did you have different roles --

GM: It took us a long time to get organized because nothing was ready. And, then finally when we did get [11:00] organized it was the same sort of interrogation program, yes.

INT: And again, primarily dealing with scientists as opposed to military --

GM: In my personal role it was largely scientists. I believe it could have been a lot of the people who were captured because of the German rocketry program [11:10]. And I think that -- because that would be just after the war you see and I think a lot of them came over at that point including Wernher von Braun [11:16]. I don't remember whether he came to Boston [11:17] or to 1142 [11:18]. But, he was certainly interviewed and a lot of these people were then shipped off to Texas where they were told that they were going to

work on a rocketry [11:25] program in Texas, which they did. And this eventually led to the development of the moon rocket [11:30], so that Wernher von Braun [11:31] I think was the major instigator and developer of the program that led to the man on the moon.

INT: And so, you had been in Boston [11:38] for a few months and as you described it was very similar to Fort Hunt [11:41] in what the goals were there. Was it just scientists? Were there actual family members being brought to there?

GM: No, it was only -- it was only scientists. It was the same group of people that had been at 1142 [11:50] but not so many.

INT: Okay.

GM: And I think that there was probably some rotation back and forth.

INT: And so after having been there for a few months you were then transferred to Maine [11:56]?

GM: Holden, Maine [11:57]. That was just a regular prisoner of war [11:58] camp and I don't know why I was picked [12:00] but here again we did some interrogation. But these were mainly people who had been actually involved in the war. And I wasn't there very long and I was transported back to 1142 [12:07].

INT: If I could ask, what time of year was it that -- when you were stationed in northern Maine [12:11]?

GM: Well, it was really not the best time for Maine because Maine in December or January is not the ideal tourist time. And so it was freezing cold and very desolate. There was a jumping off military air base there where a lot of the planes that were being shipped to Europe had to stop and refueling. So that they went from wherever they came from in the United States to Maine [12:30] and then to probably go to Newfoundland and then

eventually over to Iceland and Europe -- London.

INT: And so here you were primarily working with German military personnel?

GM: Mainly military personnel but I wasn't there very long. And that was a very different experience and one that I think I had no special expertise with.

INT: And so, the questions there, were they more just debriefing information before these prisoners were sent back to --

GM: Yes. Yes. I don't know what ever happened to the people. I imagine they were probably sent back whereas a lot of the people that I interrogated at 1142 [12:52] stayed in this country, not all, but many of them did stay. And also the ones I think in Boston [12:56] stayed back in this country -- like the ones that went to Texas [13:00].

INT: And so you said then you were returned to 1142 [13:02] for a while?

GM: Yes.

INT: And, do you remember -- had the role changed when you returned to 1142 [13:06]? Was it a different place or was it the same operation?

GM: Well, it was constantly changing because it was changes in personnel always. And so it was always different but the general purpose was still pretty much the same. But one of the things that we were told to do was also to deal with censoring the mail for the people that we had interrogated because they had the right to write to their families and we wanted to make sure they weren't giving information to them that might be hurtful with respect to the war effort. Even though the war was over at that point, there was still secrecy involving 1142 [13:30]. And we wanted to make sure that they didn't reveal any information that could be helpful to any future enemy.

INT: And, about how long were you at 1142 [13:37] for the second time?

GM: Well, the war was over at one point and we were all let out-- I guess there was a period of about nine months after the war was over, and we were all taken to Fort Meade [13:47] to leave the military if we wanted to. I came back to 1142 [13:50] for a few months as a civilian because I was going to get to graduate school but not 'til September. And so I spent a few months as a civilian doing the same sort of thing at 1142 [13:59] as a civilian.

INT: Were there other [14:00] former Army staff members who did the same thing?

GM: There were a few others, yes, there were a few others.

INT: Was that -- was that meaningful to you in any way or do you think there was anything behind the fact that you were a civilian working in a military installation? Or was it -- did your role not really change that differently?

GM: Well, the role really didn't change all that much except I was a member of the civil service now. And so I was no longer under military control. The only thing is that we worked together. That hadn't changed.

INT: You spoke about the war being over and that you were questioning maybe -- with regard to a future enemy. Was there a sense during your interrogations that a Cold War [14:28] with the Soviet Union was approaching and that there was a race to get information?

GM: There was a lot of concern at that particular time as to what was going to happen next. The war of course was over in Europe several months before it was over in Japan, so the war was still on in certain areas. And I think there was a great deal of concern as to what was going to happen in the relationship with Russia [14:47]. And at that time it was hard to believe but we knew that the war was almost over. People said, "My God, we're not going to let the Russians grow to be such major powers." And so, there was a lot of discussion at the time, "Well then maybe we should [15:00] contemplate stopping the

Russians.” Because at that time, you see, they had overrun much of Europe. They had been a partition in Europe during certain parts of the European countries. In Germany there was a British sector, a French sector, a Russian sector and an American sector. The same in Berlin. And so, this was a source of concern because it was not always terribly peaceful. And if you remember at one point the Russians blockaded Berlin and so we had to fly in all of our resources by airplane and land in Berlin because the Russians wouldn’t let us. And so there was a lot of concern as to the relationship with Russia [15:34] at that particular time. And, I think this was a frightening thought. But, I think people were not sure that, even though the war in Europe --- Germany was finished that there would be no further war.

INT: In your role as a civilian were you with an identified agency or were you sort of contracted to the military? You said you were a civil servant but what branch of the government?

GM: What branch of the government? I don’t know. I guess it [16:00] was not military but it was civil service. I had a reading as a civil servant and it was for a short time period only. So, the CIA [16:15] had not been organized yet. The CIA came in about the time that the war was over and the CIA [16:22] was quite interested in what was happening at 1142 [16:25] obviously because we had been reporting to the military before there was a CIA [16:30]. And, I think that the CIA [16:33] was quite interested in hiring a lot of people who had been at 1142 [16:40] and when the war was finished and they were released from the Army. We were very interested in joining the CIA [16:46] because at that time, it was a large government agency -- brand new -- and there were a lot of places to be filled, and a lot of people felt this would be a wonderful opportunity to get in on the



ground floor of a new organization like the CIA [16:59]. Of course, they'd have some [17:00] experience at 1142 [17:01] so I think this was very welcomed by the CIA [17:04].

INT: So, were you -- at this point when you were leaving 1142 [17:09] -- were you asked to stay on either in military or as a civil servant?

GM: Oh yes. I was -- I was certainly asked by the military that, wouldn't I stay on? And, we were all asked. And I would say most of us were quite anxious to leave. Most of us were young. Most of us had interests of going back to college or to completing our education. And most of us felt that we wanted to do something else. But, a lot of the officers with me stayed behind and joined the CIA [17:36] at that particular time. Because of course for them this was a very different experience. They were also a little bit older. They probably hadn't been -- had probably either finished college and didn't have any further educational plans. And so a lot of them got -- thought this was a very good opportunity for a career.

INT: And so leaving 1142 [17:57] you had made up your mind though that you wanted to pursue your [18:00] college -- your graduate education?

GM: Absolutely, yes. I decided that -- I had already been admitted to graduate school, and I decided that I would take up the opportunity to get a degree in chemistry. In chemistry, having a bachelor's degree really doesn't provide too much of a future unless you get additional training. And so, I realized that I would have to continue on and get either a Ph.D. or a similar degree in order to be productive. And, I realized that having lost two years that I'd better get back in the swing of things. Two years at that time was a long time. And even though we were all young, we realized we had little time to waste. Unfortunately, going back to graduate school, we had the same attitude and I got out of

graduate school in a great hurry, something like less than three years, which is remarkable. We now have a graduate school at GW [18:51] where I teach and usually most of the people there five, six years. So that getting out in less than three years was marvelous. I enjoyed that because it allowed me to do more things career-wise [19:00].

INT: And so, finally, with 1142 [19:03] when you left -- I mean, you touched upon this a little bit, but were you sworn to an oath of secrecy? Were you told you can never speak of this again? Or was it understood?

GM: I don't remember if there was any official discussion about this. But it was clear that we obeyed it. And, I think that there was no question that we had to keep this information under our hats. And I think that there was no -- very little -- I don't know of any violation of this. I think that, with the war, we were told to keep our mouths shut. And I think "a slip of the lip can sink the ship;" that was one of the major concerns of World War II [19:43]. So that you really have to be very careful what you knew and what you could divulge.

INT: And so in our -- in our final minutes here, you received your Ph.D. from Yale [19:54] and then what -- a little bit about your life after the war.

GM: Well, after the -- just about as I was finished with my Ph.D. [20:00] in organic chemistry actually, in synthesis of organic chemistry, I heard a talk given at Yale [20:08] Medical School by a professor of pharmacology at George Washington University [20:14] and I was intrigued with what he was doing which was to follow what's called the metabolism of drugs after you give them to people or animals. What he was looking for was somebody who had expertise in working with chemicals and could make radioactive chemicals. And I had never made radioactive chemicals but I didn't see why I shouldn't

be able to. I thought this would be a sort of a fun project and he offered me a job. And a job in '46 was -- '49 was very hard to come by. So the idea of having a paid position, I thought would be fun. And it happened to be in Washington, D.C.. And so I came back to Washington, D.C., a place that I remembered quite well, and I've been there ever since [laughter].

INT: And so, after the war [21:00] once you had your Ph.D. you did a bit of traveling. And you've relayed it to me once before, but if you could repeat the story about the run-in that you had when you were at a conference in Paris [21:08]?

GM: Yes. This is a remarkable event. I -- my first international conference and there was some social activities involved in this. And one of the parties that I was asked to attend had a great big fountain, a champagne fountain in Paris. I thought that was wonderful. As I approached it, I saw somebody who looked very familiar to me. And, he looked at me, and I looked at him. And we realized exactly that we had met at 1142 [21:37]. And he told to his wife, "My God, there is my former prison warden." [laughter] And so, we were friends at this point. And he had become a professor of biochemistry at Heidelberg. And, we had stayed sort of in contact afterwards but this was a strange experience both for him and for me.

INT: And so, you've also mentioned this a little bit in the past. After you returned from this trip [22:00] and other trips we understand that the CIA [22:04] kept tabs on you a little bit.

GM: They were always interested in what I was doing, which was very impressive, I thought. As a scientist -- science is international. And so, I was asked to participate in many conferences all over the world and I went to Poland which is then very communist. I went to Russia [22:25], Moscow and met some Russian colleagues and so forth who were

scientists. I spent a little time in Moscow and when I got back to the United States, I got a phone call from the CIA [22:37], they wanted to talk to me. Because they remembered that I had been at 1142 [22:40] and they wondered what I thought about what was happening in Russia. Which I thought was quite amazing and I was happy to tell them what I thought, that it was largely a do-nothing country but a huge amount of military activity. And I'm sure that they knew this already, but they kept tabs on me. And, I was involved in a couple of other [23:00] trips to -- Czechoslovakia and other Iron Curtain -- behind the Iron Curtain [23:04] countries. And they usually find out what was happening. None of these was secret because there was a register of who the people were who went to these various programs. And, we were very interested at that point to become worldly and to find out what was happening in other countries. And, so I had the opportunity to go to a number of other countries and deal with some of the activities there.

INT: In the final moment that we have of this tape, is there anything that you would like to get across or anything that you think that maybe we skipped over relating to Fort Hunt or any final thoughts?

GM: Well, it's an amazing story. It's a shame that it's taken such a long time to look into this because I think many of the people who were there are no longer here. And I give tremendous credit to you, Brandon, and your colleagues for following up the story because I think that it happened right in our neighborhood and our backyard, so to speak. And I think it was a very exciting experience for those of us who were involved with it. As a [24:00] soldier you don't have any say where you go, and I know that there were many other -- far more frightening experiences that existed for many of these people. And of course a lot of them suffered very greatly so that I was basically very lucky and

grateful for the fact that I was saved some of these wartime experiences by being at 1142 [24:18]. I think that -- what I don't know is how productive were we, from point of view of delivering secrets that were essential to winning the war. Some of it, of course, was very, very late. But some of this is of importance for the military and their future planning. And I don't know how much of this they knew from beforehand because I knew more probably about the German productivity than the American productivity for this particular technology. But I think it's very important that we find out how effective this whole program was. Because I think it was a well-run program.

INT: We're going to run out. I'd like to put in one more tape if we could.

INT: Sure.

[talking simultaneously]

INT: You're saying some really interesting things here and I don't want to [25:00] lose them.

GM: I've essentially reached the end of what I wanted to accomplish.

INT: Yeah.

GM: If you --

INT: A little bit here -- but it just a little bit [unintelligible].

[end of transcript]

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