

Fort Hunt Oral History
P.O. Box 1142
Interview with Dieter Kober by Brandon Bies
Chicago, Illinois
January 17 and 18, 2008

INTERVIEWER: I think we're rolling, so we're going to go ahead and get started. Today is January 17th, 2008. This is an interview with Mr. Dieter Kober, formerly of P.O. Box 1142 [00:18]. This is part of the Fort Hunt [00:20] Oral History Project for the National Park Service. We are here in Chicago at the Union League Club, and this is National Park Service Historian Brandon Bies, and with that we're going to start the first of a series of interviews with Mr. Kober. If you wouldn't mind just starting off with your most basic information such as when and where you were born. I told you we'd do this chronologically so we'll start at the very, very beginning.

DIETER KOBER: That's very -- I was born on January 2nd, 1920 [01:00]. And very shortly after my birth I began a life that was dominated by travel from one place to another. And also not necessarily forced travel or enforced travel as took the place after the Hitler regime [01:24] took over in Germany [01:26] and I came to the United States, but throughout my life I always loved to travel, and I'm happy that Brandon has traveled to me, but I'm intending to travel back to him a few months from now. Starting from the very beginning, my early travel was as a baby when the native -- my native town -- was then Germany [01:58] town of Posen [01:59] became Poznan [02:00] and became Polish territory. And my parents were refugees before I became one, and they refuged to [unintelligible] in Germany [02:16] -- central -- east central part of Germany. That's where I grew up and lived and received my initial education including a bit of military education, and then proceeded to the United States, where, for this project, I landed at Post Office Box 1142 [02:48].

INT: Fantastic. If you don't mind me asking, was your father involved in the First World War?

DK: Oh, yes. That was the main reason for getting the hell out of Poland [03:00] because my father was in the German army and he wasn't turned. And unfortunately, I know very, very little. I've never asked, but I remember that while he was in internment, my mother hid some of the sword and some other armor -- armor or weapons that he had in the house -- took it out and threw it out in the fields so that he wouldn't get into more trouble. And then, since he was a German national, and I suppose like in every war internees are prisoners he was released and just took off with all they had and went into the interior of Germany [03:51].

INT: Growing up, did you have any siblings, or were you an only child?

DK: I have a brother, yes, who's deceased [04:00].

INT: And so, you're -- you said you went to your -- your initial schooling, obviously, was in Germany [04:07].

DK: Yes.

INT: And could you mention -- we spoke just a little bit over lunch, but would you mind -- you inferred just now to your early military education. Would you mind talking about that a little bit?

DK: Well, I went to -- in my hometown, I went to secondary school. Not quite -- a little bit above the American high school. Very intensive academic training. And in 1933 when the Nazis [04:39] came to power, the emphasis of all education and academic training shifted to the physical. That meant, as I recall, as early as '34, physical education [05:00] was every day. And it began with -- I think when Hitler [05:10] said how tough he

wanted the German youth to be that was pretty -- was taken pretty literally. We had to run around the track every day whether it was rain or snow or shine and all we were wearing was just the -- less than a t-shirt, and that was that. And some people got pneumonia, I suppose, but that's where we were toughened up. And then of course, as the system became more and more military, this kind of military education was also practiced in the secondary school. For example, we [06:00] -- you were given dummy hand grenades, learned how to count to ten, and then throw them into the particular goal, aim, or circle. We were also connected -- I wouldn't say connected -- but made aware of the importance of the military. For example, I was present when Hindenburg [06:31] died, which I believe was in the middle of '30 -- end of '33 -- and the German army was sworn in loyalty to Adolf Hitler [06:47] preceding the loyalty to the constitution of Germany [06:52]. I was right there. We were taken there to the [unintelligible] [07:00] and witnessed that -- the students witnessed that. And I must say, at that time there was -- I felt no discrimination. There was a feeling of, "Oh, Germany's [07:17] going to be equal to other countries again. We've been cheated out of victory in the First World War and Hitler [07:26] has given us pride again. But, it didn't take me long to find out that if you just had one Jewish grandmother you were just out of luck. And, I could not join the Hitler [07:45] youth as all my other comrades, and I was very sorry about it. But, the -- my big experience was -- it changed my life, really, was, I believe it was in '36 [08:00]. It was at the time of the Olympics, and we had the sort of minor Olympics among the youth. And, well, through the school we had teams, et cetera, et cetera. In fact, I was outstanding in swimming. But anyway, when the time came for the open athletics, I was called by the -- my class teacher as well as a coach, "Please come over here, Kober," and

waved at me. “We don’t believe that this is right, but we’ve been told that you cannot participate in this.” And then I just immediate -- I was really shocked. So the -- I said, “Well, boy, no matter what I don’t want to stay in this country and be a second-class citizen [09:00]. And worse would happen later. So, anyway, my parents -- my father --

INT: And you were about 16 years old at this time?

DK: Yeah. So, my parents, they didn’t want to leave Germany [09:13] so they -- most of our relatives are Americans -- most of the family. So it was relatively simple to obtain through my relatives permission Visa, but even at 16 you were registered with the army. I was still registered in [unintelligible] the reserve two. And, when I left Germany [09:41], I went to this army place and got the release to leave. So that was my first -- you might say the first military background. And, I came to New York [09:58]. In New York [10:00], I got another hit on the head because after I finished high school there and went to New York City College [10:13], because I was not an American citizen or because I was a German citizen, after my first class I went through the same story again. “Please go to the registrar. I’m sorry, you can’t go to this college.” And, so what happened then I just said the hell with this. I go somewhere else. And there were from my hometown people in the state of Nebraska [10:41], and in the state of Nebraska I joined the University of Nebraska Music School [10:54]. And since the music school had some sort of arrangement with the state [11:00], I became -- though not a citizen of the United States -- a member of the ROTC [11:08] if you know what that is.

INT: [affirmative]

DK: And that was then -- well, what I remember -- the thing I absolutely didn’t like was these old-fashioned, rough uniforms you had to wear. Just it felt terrible on the body. But, at

least, what I remember we had -- I think we had Enfield rifles at that time. And so I only had one year of that by the way. Because that was a minimum. It was an arrangement, I believe, with the government. The government sponsored. The colleges have to have to get -- support the ROTC [12:00]. And, well, besides you probably know what goes on. You learned also theory and [unintelligible] and all that. Battle of Cannae [12:10] -- I remember that American Army officers should know about. So, anyway, I didn't finish my two-year stint there because I had to transfer, play in the band. So -- but I learned how to march. In fact, I was a very important part of the band because I played the bell lyre if you know what that is? It's a thing you bang the -- like a -- like a lyre. You -- and --

INT: And you march around with it? Yes.

DK: You march in front of the band. And it is weekly. Between the football games [13:00] the whole band marches around you and if you're supposed to march in a circle you have to -- they'll all go in a circle. If you march in a big egg, they march like a big egg, which happened, and for which I got hell on the following Monday. We saw our maneuverings on the screen. So, that's my initial military experience. The thing became serious when I first learned about administrative difficulties not only in the preparation for Army service but also within Army service and even afterwards -- Veteran's Administration. They're always [14:00] certain administrative shortcomings that perhaps at the time are overestimated. But that's life. So my difficulty was I was very anxious to fight Hitler [14:18]. I was particularly anxious because I had that particular semester where most -- it was in '42 -- where most of my classmates were already in the service and they didn't --- I was registered but I didn't get called. So I was very unhappy about that. So I went

there and said, "What's going on?" "Well, we can't find your records. We have to look for it. So, after [15:00] a while -- it took a while -- for Christmas, around Christmas time. Most young people wanted -- still wanted -- to be with their parents. I said, "I'd like to go as soon as I can." As I said, one of the reasons was I had that semester assembled all the -- my undesirable courses at the college. Because if you were called to the Army within that semester, you got full credit for it without having to finish them. So that was that. And then came the U.S. -- my first experience with the U.S. Army at the Lincoln Bus Station [15:52] I believe. And after I received this beautiful -- everybody gets [16:00] greetings from the President of the United States. My girlfriend was at the station and there were other people. Tears and good-byes. Nobody knew what's going to happen. And, well, it's a strange feeling when a young man goes off to war. And I was sent to Camp Kearns [16:27] in Utah. And there I learned what real Army tough training is all about.

INT: And if I could just stop you real briefly there to just ask you a couple very brief follow-up questions. When you came to the United States with your family, did you --

DK: I didn't come with my family.

INT: Oh, you didn't come with your family?

DK: No.

INT: So did your parents -- were your parents already here? Or did they stay --

DK: No, they stayed in Germany [16:58] and they came later.

INT: They did [17:00]? Okay. Okay. Do you remember what year it was that you came to the United States?

DK: '36.

INT: '36? Okay. And, so -- did you speak English at that time?

DK: I had more French than English, but I picked up very, very quickly because I was very serious about it. So even in school -- people that knew me -- I became very quickly known as a man who always had a dictionary in his pocket and I would constantly consult my dictionary. And I made very, very strong efforts to learn that. I was very anxious to learn the language, so that's what -- as a matter of fact, when I first [18:00] came here and went to Benjamin Franklin High School [18:04] in New York [18:05], I took English six, seven, and eight at the same time. And what amused me then -- I don't think it has much -- you might what to cut this off later. What amused me there tremendously is I wrote the same essay for all three classes. And in the lower six I think I got a C. In the seventh I got a B. And for the same essay in the eighth, the top class, I got an A where the instructors had marked, "This is actually adult writing." The highest praise. So, that gave me an impression of the educational system [19:00] having its flaws.

[laughter]

INT: And so, you went to the University of Nebraska [19:08]. About how many years were you there prior to being inducted into the military?

DK: So I -- well, 38 -- 40 -- about three years.

INT: Okay. And so -- and what year were you?

DK: '42.

INT: '42.

DK: Yeah.

INT: And to make it clear, were you drafted or were you --

DK: I was drafted, yes.

INT: As an enemy alien you could not volunteer, correct?

DK: I suppose I could have. Yes, yes.

INT: Okay. But you --

DK: But I was drafted. I had what was an -- as today -- Green card. And as a matter of fact, I had prepared for my citizenship to learn -- to learn what was necessary. But then after you were in the Army you [20:00] -- it was very simple. They just took you to the courthouse in Hagerstown, Maryland [20:07] and all the soldiers were sworn in and it was okay.

INT: And do you remember Pearl Harbor [20:17] -- when that took place and America --

DK: Oh, well, I do. And then I was still in college.

INT: Right, right.

DK: Yes, I remember. I was in the practice room. I don't know who -- at the School of Music [20:35], I remember very, very distinctly when Roosevelt [20:41] spoke. Day of Shame or something?

INT: Oh, Day of Infamy [20:46]?

DK: Day of Infamy, yes.

INT: And, what were your feelings? Obviously this was an attack by the Japanese on us, but at the same time we were declaring war on Germany [21:00].

DK: Germany was declaring war on the United States.

INT: On us. Pardon me. Pardon me.

DK: Yeah. Well, my feeling was, well, I was happy. Because at least this guy's going to get it. But it was never -- in fact, that was the sense of purpose of the allies was very

impressive. Because, we felt -- honestly, we don't want war. I knew I was in England where the populous -- and so I worked with soldiers of other nations in England. And what I -- the impression I got everywhere was we've got to do it but let's get it over with. And [22:00] in contrast -- I recall from my own experiences and also from what I read and what I'm sure you know -- is that the Germans were so -- I can only say crazy. We were fighting for our country and to save ourselves from Bolshevism [22:26] and all that bull. And they believed it. So it was an entirely different ball game to be an American.

INT: And so now -- and I'm sorry for cutting you off earlier. Now, you've brought us up to where you were drafted. You said good-bye to everyone at the University of Nebraska [22:49], and you went off to Utah.

DK: Yeah.

INT: So do you want to cover a little bit of what you remember about basic training?

DK: Okay [23:00]. Well, two sad things come to my mind. One was it was so tough. To toughen -- to toughen up the soldiers, you had to sleep in a barracks with open windows and we tried to close them again, but then the MPs would come and open it. And one guy -- or one comrade or one soldier -- caught pneumonia and died. And then I knew of another soldier who was a very -- not a very strong looking or strong person -- was not born to be a soldier who was of three cases I remember. He -- only information. I didn't experience it [24:00]. He just died. I think he was -- the strain was too much for him. And then I know of one person I believe that was already in Camp Ritchie [24:17]. On one of those marches we'd march up a hill and it was an elderly man who collapsed, and then there came the medical car, and as we heard later, his heart gave out and he was dead. So these impressions I had the beginning that this thing is no -- is no hail ride. But

it didn't bother the attitude at all because attitude was sort of revenge; let's get back at them now. That's our chance. And I would say everybody you talk to in your project [25:00] who were involved must have felt the same way. They don't deserve any better. We're really beat to hell -- get beat to hell over. So, those were my -- that was my apprehensions let's say -- observances. But, Camp Kearns [25:24] was a huge camp. The first impression was you were nothing. We were just -- and you come in, you don't get time off, you can't go out like other -- you're just, I believe, for certain peers was four weeks or six weeks. You'll just stick to business, that you learn how to crawl on your belly, and that you know how to take care of your Enfield -- old fashioned. Later on we had -- no [26:00] -- M30 --

INT: M1?

DK: M1 -- yeah. So anyway -- and one thing what I did. You were tested there. And I was really surprised because I thought my I.Q. was pretty high. But it turned out that my I.Q. was not as high as my technical ability. So, what happened after basic training there, I was assigned to become an x-ray technician and be assigned to a med company and -- well, first you have to learn your trade that would fit. Even at that time I wasn't quite sure because I felt, "What's going on there? How do they pick their people?" I just thought, "Gee, with my background [27:00] from Germany [27:03], and fluency in the language, and having some experience with the German army -- did they want me in X-ray? But, it didn't take very long before they even could take me to X-ray school, you know, very quick in the Army. A few hours. I don't remember. It was tomorrow morning off you go on a train to Camp Ritchie [27:27]. I did not know what Camp Ritchie was. It was in Maryland, and I always liked to travel. I enjoyed going to some

other -- was particularly interested in seeing the country. It was -- actually, I remember it was a real pleasure traveling to Camp Kearns [27:54], seeing the Colorado Mountains, and going through Salt Lake City [28:00] and peeking through the window and see the Salt Lake tabernacle. I would have loved to have seen all of this. But no -- no such thing. And then went back to east of Cambridge. And there we were.

INT: And real quick, before we get to Ritchie [28:18], just -- when did you become a U.S. citizen? Were you a citizen?

DK: After Ritchie [28:24].

INT: After -- okay.

DK: No, I was not a citizen. I was an alien.

INT: Okay, so all of Camp Kearns [28:26] you were still an alien?

DK: I was a foreigner, yeah.

INT: Okay.

DK: But, I'm sure there were many others, too. So, that's your answer.

INT: When you were at Kearns [28:39] and you left to go to Ritchie [28:40] were there others like you?

DK: No.

INT: So you were by yourself?

DK: No, I didn't meet -- I don't recall anyone. There were all kinds of people. There may have been, but I was not -- I don't remember.

INT: Okay.

DK: I was not aware of that. Only thing I'm aware of I had to sleep in a bunk [29:00] with another soldier whom I never knew before. Something I can't imagine doing now -- it was strange, body, body, on body. But that's the way it was in those days.

INT: And so, you took the train back across the country to Camp Ritchie [29:17].

DK: Camp Ritchie, yeah.

INT: And you -- but you had -- and you'd never heard of Camp Ritchie before? You had no idea --

DK: No, I had no idea what that was.

INT: Okay. So, if you'd like to take us to your initial impressions of Camp Ritchie and what that experience was like.

DK: Well, the first thing I remember about Camp Ritchie is that I needed something to eat after this long train ride. Get a square meal. That's what I -- there may have been other things -- you're assigned your quarters, et cetera. But I remember my first meal. My great astonishment when we entered the mess hall and I saw about one quarter of the mess hall [30:00] filled with a bunch of people in German uniforms. That struck me. So that was my very first impression. The next impression -- the next impression of course was my curiosity. What the hell is this all about?

INT: [affirmative]

DK: And that we found out very quickly because we were told then that you're being trained to be IPWTs [30:37]. They made it very attractive. They would first talk about you'll be very well equipped. Yeah, IPWTs [30:53] of two Jeeps. You probably know that story from the --

INT: No, but please tell it.

DK: -- from the Camp Ritchie [30:57] --

INT: Please tell it yourself.

DK: -- film [31:00]. And it will take that long -- I forgot -- six or eight weeks -- till you know your stuff. And then you will be attached to a field unit. And then your job will be they'll bring in the prisoners from the front and then your job will just counter their -- just rank -- name, rank, and serial number. You learn here how they will say more than just rank -- name, rank, and serial number.

INT: [affirmative]. Just one second because this tape needs to be flipped.

DK: Yeah. How is --

[End of Tape 1A]

[Beginning of Tape 1B]

DK: You get a copy of the film.

INT: No, we can arrange for that.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Oh really?

DK: This is Miss Rosney [phonetic], and this is Brandon from the --

FS: [unintelligible] he would love to --

INT: No, that's fine. This all becomes a part of a public archive eventually. It'll all be available to the public.

FS: So cool.

INT: That's fine.

FS: Okay, awesome.

INT: No, that's no problem.

DK: So where were we?

INT: We were just -- you were talking about you were initially briefed at Camp Ritchie [00:36] about what your role was going to be --

DK: Yeah.

INT: -- during the war. And so I guess, you know, this incident with the German.

DK: Yeah.

INT: I guess you soon realized --

DK: Oh, yes. Yeah.

INT: -- that these were Americans dressed in German uniforms.

DK: Yeah. Yeah.

INT: But I guess that must have been a little bit startling to you at the time.

DK: So, let me explain the mystery.

INT: Sure.

DK: It didn't take us long to find out [01:00] that these were Americans and not Germans. And, of course, it puts really a -- you can imagine -- it was really an impression. It's the last thing you expect. And they were actors, and a little later I found out even more. That of course we were to keep absolutely secret. They had all kinds of German weapons. For example, I knew what a Tiger tank [01:34] from a distance of one mile looked like because they had them there.

INT: So they had actual Tiger tanks?

DK: Yes. So, they went [unintelligible] but we had to do -- identify all these different weapons and vehicles we had to learn how to identify. I'm going over the head of our story, but before you were really ready to do it, you had to learn things that you did not learn in basic training [02:00].

INT: [affirmative]

DK: And the best way I could say is they didn't screw around. Example -- in an unbelievable short time -- I think maybe a day, you had to learn to handle all different kind of weapons just like that. This is if you wanted to stay in the school and be promoted to get into the IPWT [02:27]. It was a goal. Otherwise, they'd just send you off to some infantry unit and that's that. So, people were anxious. This was something very special to get into. You were lucky in the first place. And then after that -- that was one example. Another example I could give you -- I think I learned in -- at the most 48 hours -- two days -- to do Morse code just like dah, dah, dah. Just like that. You just, you get so many letters, you learn them, you learn how to use it. And I remember it was -- I couldn't believe it [03:00]. We went into one huge barracks -- a huge -- like a big assembly room. And we see all these people there going, dah, dah, dah, dah -- just like that. That's something I believe should be remembered as a testimonial to American organization here. In Camp Ritchie [03:22], I have to get back to this. At Kearns [03:27] I remember there weren't enough rifles. I think we still had wooden rifles there. But in Camp Ritchie [03:32] everything was for real. I'm sorry if I -- it was just coming back on my mind.

INT: That's fine. It's okay.

DK: And I don't know whether we ever would need it, but we had to spend some time how to work with carrier pigeons.

INT: Really?

DK: Yeah. It was a very -- it was a very intensive training, and when I nowadays hear how many demands are made on students I just laugh at them [04:00]. Later on, maybe we talk [unintelligible].

INT: Sure.

DK: Interesting things along that -- so those were some of my impressions of Camp Ritchie [04:10]. But I think I found very interesting that people learned very soon that in order to be an intelligence person because you know the German language that isn't by far enough. [unintelligible]. And I remember, we went to a class of military German. I can't recall exactly, but I know the officer who taught the class said, "Don't you think because you are German that you know -- you will pass this test or get -- nobody's ever got an A." Well, I'm proud to say I did get an A [laughs], which I think helped me in my further career.

INT: Were most of your colleagues fellow -- at Ritchie [04:57], were almost all of them German born? Or were there some American born [05:00]?

DK: There were some American born. But, I would say the -- it's so long ago -- very many of them spoke German that I remember. But many of them I never saw again.

INT: Sure, sure. But almost everyone there had some grasp of the German language?

DK: Some German background I would say. But it's hard to say. It was an interesting phase that I [unintelligible] what would interest you in the training I should mention is -- when you become an interrogator, how do you become an interrogator? You must practice. And that's where the acting people came in. You were first trained by intelligence officers just a routine -- what do you ask, how do you ask, what do you do in order to force people to speak? Use a system -- the good guy and the bad guy. And [unintelligible] keep them writing and we had these interrogation tents for instruction. I don't remember how many but this was part of -- an important part of the training. And, well done eventually -- I just want to say one more thing about Camp Ritchie [06:00].

You would have some -- of course some recreation besides the military. If you want to know anything about the military training, please ask me. I'll tell you about the other thing, also.

INT: Fantastic -- well, I'd like to know about everything. So we can spend quite some time on Ritchie [06:14] if you'd like to. That's just fine.

DK: I'll do what you want. For many of the young people -- at least for someone like me -- I'd been a college boy in Nebraska, okay? I'd been a German -- young German -- and from there I'd come into the American Army. I was relatively innocent. Now, what do you think I thought the first day you get a pass to get to go out. You come to the gate and see all the whores there inviting you to go with them, right? And next to the entrance there's a barrack with a blue light on that when you come back among the kit you get you'll get a rubber and this medication. This was all somewhat new to me. But then you go and go in the town [07:00]. I don't want to give any personal details, but there is also impressions of Camp Ritchie [07:04] when you first get there, and I thought this would be part of the story. These young men who were for the first time exposed to this kind of environment. After all, they won the war.

[laughter]

INT: So this was right outside of Camp Ritchie [07:16]? Right outside of Camp Ritchie?

DK: Yeah. You come out of the gate and then let's say the girls that give you disease stand in front of the gate and right on this side, inside the gate is right when you come back, go get yourself inoculated. So, that's a -- I don't want to [unintelligible]. There were plenty of -- put it this way -- there were plenty of opportunities and plenty of stories that don't belong on this program about the adventures of the young soldiers only, [unintelligible]

on the go. But perhaps was a bit dramatic in present, let's put it this way. On the one hand, among some of the trainees I remember they were wild and others just the opposite, so [unintelligible].

INT: So we can talk for a little bit now about some of -- if you want to elaborate a little more [08:00] on some of the more military training aspects from Ritchie [08:03]. You mentioned a little bit about the interrogation training you got, and name, rank, and serial number but also how we get information from a prisoner. You mentioned good cop, bad cop. Did they -- did they tell you to also play up the German's fear of the Russians?

DK: No.

INT: No? Okay.

DK: No, that was a -- I don't recall that. One thing I should mention -- that was [unintelligible] was quite a bit of prominence that was also trained at Ritchie [08:26]. You know that? There were prominent people there. I think -- I think [unintelligible], son of [unintelligible] was there. And I would like to find out there were any number -- or in the day room William Warfield, Metropolitan Star -- he was playing the piano there and entertaining and sweeping the floor. But if you check this out just generally from other sources there were quite a few people of prominence that were trained at -- that were trained at Ritchie [08:52]. So, you want to know more specifics about the training for the IPW [08:56]?

INT: Yeah, that'd be great.

DK: Well, one thing I know is [09:00] at the time -- there was no graduation ceremonies. You were finished and you were assigned to a unit, and the first thing that was your first active

duty in your position is you were immediately made sergeant or staff sergeant about -- was it six people -- so two Jeeps -- and sent on maneuvers down to Louisiana [09:16].

INT: Oh, really? And you -- so you went to Louisiana?

DK: No, I didn't. I was -- I was already assigned, and one of the things that I was very proud to be given with this assignment was a watch -- a chronometer, whatever you call it -- where you can -- you know where south and east and west is. And, well, then came the shock. As I was already assigned to IPWT [09:40], promoted and -- so I was told to go to Louisiana [09:44] where my father lived and had a filling station. [unintelligible]. "Gee, there is Sergeant Kober with his Jeep driving to his dad's filling station when he gets off from his maneuvers in camp." But that never came to be because the last-minute I was called off [10:00] and somebody else took my place. I was substituted. And this young man who took my place went through heavy battles in Africa and was a very important, [unintelligible] in France where the [unintelligible]. They were fighting for the last drop of blood. He was in that engagement. I would have been in there if I hadn't been pulled out. And [unintelligible]. Something occurs to me that is also in the film that Ritchie [10:26] boys mention. We would sometimes be waked up in the middle of the night and set and told, "Get on the truck." "Here's a card, here's a map with foreign indications. Here's Camp Ritchie [10:40]. You find your [unintelligible]. By 6:00 in the morning you're back in camp. Find your way back. And [unintelligible] about a half a dozen up here and the truck just dropped us. And I will say I wasn't very honest when I was there. And whoever wasn't in the group, they were back in Camp Ritchie [10:55] in no time. Because I would always had a god notice to spot the next farmhouse [11:00] and get the information I needed to get back to camp real quickly. I don't think this was actually

very illegitimate because [unintelligible]. So I thought that was an incident that might be of interest. But, the real story of my military engagement and where I am very proud, where I contributed something in the pursuit to the victory in these wars. I [unintelligible] I was sent to Washington, which was preceded to a very vigorous training at the [unintelligible] battle school in Camp Ritchie [11:27].

INT: Right. And so that might be a good transition. We've spoken for a little while about the IPW training school and that took about, like, six or eight weeks? So that was the initial training?

DK: The initial training, yeah.

INT: Pretty much everyone who went through Ritchie [11:37], did they all do that? That was the standard?

DK: That was the standard, yeah.

INT: Training. And in most cases after they completed IPW training would they have then gone to maneuvers in Louisiana [11:45]?

DK: I don't know. They were given maneuvers somewhere. But I do not know -- this is another thing -- I do not know for sure how many people really landed in IPWT [11:53] attached to military units. I assume so. I do know some people that didn't make it were sent to some other units -- [unintelligible]. All kinds of things happened in the war. It's absolutely possible that that personnel is needed for other purposes and other places. But [unintelligible] about initially that was the training place for that purpose.

[End of Tape 1B]

[Beginning of Tape 2A]

INT: Okay, we're all set to get going again. Today is January 17, 2008. This is an interview with Mr. Dieter Kober as part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project [00:25] with the National Park Service. We're here in Chicago at the Union League Club to learn about Mr. Kober's experiences during World War II including at P.O. Box 1142 [00:37], and this is the second in a series of recorded interviews. This is National Park Service Historian Brandon Bies, and we're going to get right back into it. Where we left off with the last tape was just a real nice synopsis of your time at Ritchie [00:55]. Could you start off by telling us how things came to an end at Ritchie [01:00] and how you found out that you weren't going to Louisiana [01:04], you weren't going overseas or to North Africa [01:07], but you were going to Washington [01:09]. How did that come about?

DK: I am trying very hard to remember -- let me tell you this. I knew that something good or bad was going to happen at the end of OB school. I had no idea where we would be sent or what job would be assigned to us except that we had very, very intensive intelligence training and that [02:00] some of us -- at one time I knew, perhaps through rumors -- that some of us would have the opportunity to be transferred directly to war department headquarters in Washington [02:19]. We were working very hard in those days and wore all day long just the Army fatigues but we were permitted for the evening classes to wear -- to dress up. And I was one of the very few people who dressed up knowing that frequently officers from outside -- and I believe they were from Washington [02:53] -- would observe the class, observe students, how they answer, et cetera [03:00]. And I had a notion it couldn't do any harm to make a good impression on those visitors. And at the end of the course, which lasted about four weeks, I was told, "Now you go." And I was transferred -- and I was transferred as I learned very quickly to Washington, D.C. [03:30].

But not to a camp or to the Pentagon [03:36], but to a very secluded place which I very soon learned to identify as Post Office Box 1142 [03:47].

INT: And, had you ever heard of this place? 1142?

DK: Heaven's no. No, nobody knew.

INT: So, what do you -- what word do you remember about your very initial impressions [04:00]? I take it you took a bus from Ritchie [04:03] down to Washington [04:04]? Is that how you got there?

DK: I don't think so. I think the -- we went by train to the main -- the main station in Washington [04:20]. It became later a very, very much frequent place of mine. And I think there we took a -- there was -- I don't think it was a bus. I think it was probably just a small carrier. I don't think -- yes, there were several other people too. And I remember my first entrance to the Post Office Box [04:51], my first acquaintance with the rules of the place when Sargent Ost [04:58] received the group of people [05:00] -- group of people -- of which I was one -- and told us the play rules for the place.

INT: And do you remember any of that talk? What exactly did he say?

DK: Yes, I do. The -- what struck me immediately was the request for absolute secrecy. This had not happened to me before in the Army, anything like that. We were -- as I was inducted at that first induction I remember you had to swear allegiance to the United States and to the Constitution of the United States as a soldier. But this and Camp Ritchie [05:51] was a different -- entirely different matter. Because first you received very detailed instruction [06:00] to the effect that this is a secret mission and that the life of the nation depended on you holding to that secrecy. Don't tell anybody where you are or what you're doing. Not even your wife or your parents. And this Sergeant Ost [06:24]

gave us a very extensive explanation of the necessity for secrecy, and after that we had to raise our right hand and swear. I don't remember what I swore, but something to the effect that we would never tell anybody. And that was really a very impressive first impression. And what I would follow then [07:00] was the assignment to where we were to -- where we were to sleep and eat. But in contrast to Ritchie [07:10], what I recall the first -- the first endeavor there was to give us something to eat. Here their first endeavor was keep your mouths shut.

INT: [laughs]. And, at this point, when you were briefed to keep your mouth shut, did they tell you what was going on at this post? Or was it still a secret? Did you have to --

DK: No, no. I didn't know anything.

INT: Nothing?

DK: We didn't know anything. I didn't even know what I was supposed to do. That happened -- that happened after we were assigned our living quarters and then we had our working quarters and our desk assigned [08:00]. And, well, and then eventually everybody had a job outline for them and that was that. Can we interrupt it for a moment? Shut this off?

INT: Sure. Okay, we're back rolling again. So, you're just talking a little bit about the conditions in your offices when you first arrived.

DK: What I was going to say is that everything was not -- when we first came -- was, let's say in the beginning stages. And, there were -- in this particular department to which I was assigned -- there were not more than about I would say 12 to 20 people. That's all [09:00]. We lived together, we ate together, we worked together. One thing we knew immediately, what our objective was, to produce what was called a Red Book [09:21].

That Red Book, which was later amended by Yellow Book [09:30] and various other books of information and instruction, was produced on the basis of captured materials from the front that were first evaluated right at the front, then in England [09:56], and eventually Washington and MIRS [10:00]. In addition to that, other sources were consulted. For example, this one person would do nothing but go through German newspapers. Get all kinds, for example, death notices. Eventually, at the beginning of the war, the Germans -- at the beginning of at least when we were in -- was still possible to deduce location of units. The Germans were so stupid to say, "Oh, Son Lewis, Lieutenant so-and-so died at the Central Front in Russia [10:49] with the regiment so-and-so." That's exactly what we're waiting for. And that would be by one source put together and [11:00] -- well, I could go into long, long detailed letters that were captured. And mostly the so-called [unintelligible] that the individual passport --

INT: Oh, really?

DK: That each soldier, we never really had such a thing, but every German soldier had a so-called [unintelligible]. Sort of a type of passport. It includes all his pay records as well as where he served. And these things were a gold mine to find out where those -- what the experience of those units was. And -- well, that takes a whole book to tell you how we derived the information on the complete composition of the German military forces in a number of informative books [12:00] -- notably the Red Book [12:02], the most important one -- that was then distributed to the fighting units where were necessary.

INT: And I'd love to go into as much detail as you would like to on this. And we could do this now or a little bit later.

DK: Yeah.

INT: But this is very, very important because again, we haven't interviewed Paul Fairbrook [12:29] yet. You're the first person -- short of taking a brief look at that history on the plane ride here -- we know nothing really about the OB section and the -- how the information was gleaned. And, you know, I found references in there to the Red Book [12:48], the Yellow Book [12:49], to a Gray Book [12:51] that was mentioned.

DK: Sort of gray-green. Yeah. That was -- that was concerned with weapons if I -- yeah.

INT: Okay [13:00]. Okay. But, so all of this information is critically important because we've never heard it before. So, don't stop yourself at any level of detail.

DK: Yeah. Keep asking. It's easier for me.

INT: Oh, fantastic. So, let me ask then, again, trying to keep the story somewhat chronological -- when you first arrived at 1142 [13:25], you were assigned to this OB section.

DK: Yes.

INT: First of all --

DK: Along with a number of other people if I remember to --

INT: So you arrived --

DK: I think I was -- this is hard to remember -- but I believe I was assigned to somehow military organizations like divisions or so. But I'm not really -- my memory a bit fails me. What is important [14:00] is that in the beginning when we got there, the general idea was there. We wanted to have books, information -- factual information -- that was assembled for the use of our fighting troops. That we knew. But, just how to do it -- I think now thinking back when you ask me -- when you first got there. I think they were still a bit swimming, "How the hell we're going to do it?"

INT: So, the section was already established when you got there but it was still in it's beginning stages?

DK: Yes. I believe there was an old Red Book [14:53] but that was completely -- they had something that's completely out of date.

INT: Okay.

DK: What they need is really [15:00] an up to date really.

INT: A revised?

DK: Now the best -- it's difficult for me to speak for other people what they were doing. It didn't take very long. Now, wait a minute. The chief originator, the brain behind all this what was going to happen, the organization of all military useful information and the compilation into such a way that it could be easily be used by any military whether you went to college or not. That was the -- this creative impulse [16:00] first came from Phillip Tucker [16:05], a civilian who had been a close associate -- or associate -- of our commander in the -- who was in the Pentagon [16:21] [unintelligible]. And, as I think I mentioned to you earlier, they had worked together at the office of the military attaché. I don't know if [unintelligible] was the military attaché. He may have been. And they worked in Berlin before.

INT: Okay.

DK: Before the war and then they came to Washington after American entered the war. And at the Pentagon [16:51], they conceived this and they led this MIRS [16:56] project together with Colonel Burley [17:00] -- Burley -- I think he's somewhere on the record -- in England. So they had two divisions working on this. The London branch [17:13] and the Washington branch [17:15]. Now, what happened -- I'm trying to recall. Very soon

after I got to the Post Office Box, I think it was Sergeant Kleinman [17:32] who already had been there and working at the Pentagon [17:40] on these field units of the German army, went on leave and I was assigned to fill in for four weeks to take his place [18:00]. And I became acquainted with his work. I became acquainted with Phil Tucker [18:09]. And while he was gone -- I don't know if it was all my doings or Phil's doings -- but we revamped his system completely.

INT: Kleinman's [18:23] system?

DK: Yeah.

INT: [affirmative]

DK: We revamped the units -- this whole system. And one thing that I thought was very good if I remember, instead of putting all these fighting units together, Tucker [18:42] and I -- and I can't say whether it was his idea or my idea, but I -- it was devised that I concentrate on units -- divisional units and up [19:00]. All the little stuff nothing. I was interested -- I would -- and I very quickly picked up from all the information the -- all divisions of the German army. I might explain to you not all divisions are the same especially during the course of the war. You could have a Panzer [19:25] division, the Panzer [unintelligible] division, et cetera. And eventually of course what happened is they would put units together into fighting because they were losing so much manpower. But, basically the Germans were quite systematic. But, I think we were more systematic in discovering that system.

INT: [affirmative]

DK: And so, the change that occurred in the tabulation was while I was taking some -- Kleinman's [20:00] place in the Pentagon [20:03] -- that was maybe four weeks. And

then I stayed there for a while even after he came back. But, I was kept in this and I kept my system there, I would say, in such a way as to make myself -- to put it mildly -- very necessary. So, I didn't want to go back to the Post Office Box. I liked it at the Pentagon [20:31]. And so I was assigned and stayed there. But what happened was -- and this is almost unbelievable today -- what happened is Kober [20:50] -- Sergeant Kober is supposed to work -- he's assigned to POB 1142 [20:58]. That's where he stays and that's where he's assigned [21:00]. But, if he wants to go to the Pentagon [21:05] and work there he can do that. So, it started out that I worked very independently. For Army it's unbelievable. So, every morning I took a bus -- Army bus -- Army transportation while I was officially at 1142 [21:25]. So I still worked at the Pentagon [21:25].

INT: So you were living at 1142 [21:29]?

DK: Yes.

INT: So this whole time --

DK: I had my desk there but I wasn't working there. I worked at the Pentagon [21:35] -- 1142. And then some person -- I'm using careful language -- decided this isn't right or he shouldn't use -- he shouldn't use Army transportation when he is assigned there. So, they -- I don't know who's responsible -- whether it was Lieutenant Kluger [22:00] or anybody else who said, "Well, you can't use it. But you can use your own transportation." So I would hitchhike to the Pentagon [22:12] every -- no objection from my superiors and on the contrary there were just two different levels. The administrative level would say, "He belongs." And the normal level, the intellectual level would say, "This man is doing a good job there. He should be doing it and encouraged." It was just like sort of a revolutionary army somewhere in a far-off country to the person that's

doing important work at headquarters has to make his way hitchhiking to the -- to the headquarters and this is what I did. And I had personal advantage doing it [23:00] of course. The facilities were far better there. I enjoyed working next to -- I could consult with Tucker [23:11] all the time. And as Fairbrook [23:11] probably told you, Tucker was an excellent teacher. Did he tell you that?

INT: No, I -- we haven't interviewed Fairbrook [23:23]. I've spoken with him on the phone.

DK: Oh, I see.

INT: But I've yet to sit down and do this with Fairbrook.

DK: Well, I would think the man was intellectually a genius. But otherwise, he smelled of liquor and he looked it. And the highest praise you could obtain from him is when you come with your work and showed him and he'd grab open a drawer and pass a bottle to you. But, again, he was tolerated [24:00] simply because he had what it takes. That was war. And to some extent, I took advantage of the situation. I enjoyed my work, and it was very much appreciated. And it was just -- if I may be a little bit detailed -- just think how exciting it is. You get to have these -- this material came in big sacks -- and you just go through the sack. Sergeant Schmidt [24:40] did that at the P.O. Box. He went through that big sack that came from overseas and then he would say -- go through that sack and says, "Okay, divisional units -- that goes to Kober [24:56], Sergeant Kober. Here's something about Howitzers [25:00]. That goes to Sergeant so-and-so." And then that person -- it was very well done because people were smart. If the guy who got for the Howitzer [25:12] saw something that would be good for another department, he would transfer it. We had first class people working there that weren't just doing a job. They were really thinking it. So, that's how it worked and just think how exciting. You

get a letter and all kinds of information. We are in Russia [25:34] and [unintelligible] be captured and you know, and [unintelligible] was in there and how he finally fell in love with a Russian woman and how he slept with her. All kinds of information that -- but we had to just take that because from the prisoners they just took everything. And, well, that was only one source of information [26:00]. I can think of many other sources. I could go on. For example, you have no idea how the subdued populations helped us where they could. For example, you would have any hospital in Poland [26:24] where they would use the Poles to do their dirty work -- do work there. And they would just copy whatever they could get, the documents, I don't know how they hell they got it to us, but we got a lot of information on casualties in the hospitals from the occupied people that gave it to us. And eventually it got to us on Post Office Box 1142 [26:54] where I could just tell this regiment was there and there and [27:00] approximately we were not so much concerned with that. But it was important to know were they decimated to a large extent, or? Then the next thing you get information from somebody else -- their brother or their kids, they were drafted and going to Dresden [27:24] or [unintelligible] somewhere. There's a new unit -- the [unintelligible]. Well, that would go to Sternbreck [27:33] in the Yellow Book [27:35] and so we kept a good track. And for me it was intellectually very stimulating.

INT: Sure.

DK: Because it was not just a question of numbers and what regiment and what the total war power of a divisional unit or commanders. And there was another [28:00] department that was only concerned with -- that was not my business -- with military personalities who are all the generals and divisional commanders I would get but all other essential

commanders. And so, all that information and just the -- the stuff that came out of the sacks. That was all very exciting work. What is just, I think, also would be very interesting is at that time, as Paul [28:43] told you, it was pretty well known that I was a musician as you will hear later on too. And, anything with music always came to my desk [29:00]. So --

INT: What would come to your desk along the lines of music? I'm just trying to think --

DK: That was just for my private use.

INT: Oh, okay. So you wouldn't be trying to figure out military information?

DK: No, no, no, not that. It was just for my private amusements. We had one other -- one other person who did not stay with us very long. He was transferred later. I think he came -- was one of the people who came with me from Camp Ritchie [29:36]. He's dead now. I just talked to his wife on the telephone after I found his address on the Internet. His specialty was sex -- anything on sex.

INT: Oh, really?

DK: And so -- well, anyway, mine was -- side specialty was music. I was totally absorbed in my -- in my -- in my job [30:00] as with divisional units. And I didn't do very much up above divisional units. Because I -- I think I passed it on to somebody, whatever I had, but it was included in that Red Book [30:18]. You have a Red Book.

INT: A few -- not a whole Red Book, we have just a few pages.

DK: You don't have a whole Red Book?

INT: No, no. A few of the veterans that we've interviewed who were front line interrogators have their original Red Books [30:33], but we've flipped through them, but we don't have -- we don't have a complete copy.

DK: You're going to get a complete copy.

INT: That would be unbelievable if it's not to have a copy of it or --

DK: There are a few outside pages that are loose I believe. I think it has everything in it. It may --

INT: That would be outstanding. A couple very quick -- this is outstanding. I don't want to derail you by any means, but a couple of quick [31:00] clarification questions. You mentioned -- this is fascinating that you were getting information from the hospitals about German casualties. Could you go over again how exactly were Polish, Jewish, you know, people in working -- that were being basically forced to work for the Germans -- how did they get that to you?

DK: That I do not know. That I really do not know. I know we got simply lists that would say from hospital in Brezlikopf [phonetic] or something like that. And somebody else had looked at that before and that was just part -- it was a copy but I got these lists and they were extremely useful for my purposes.

INT: But they were perhaps more useful -- well, for other people. I just don't know [32:00]. I just -- I can't -- you can imagine all kinds of fantastic stories of people obtained information from the -- from the Germans. But it would have been -- I imagine it could have been pretty simple for Polish personnel in a German hospital for -- with casualties to just make copies of the tools there and meticulous as the Germans were just get the information. He was wounded there and there. And --

[End of Tape 2A]

[Beginning of Tape 2B]

DK: You want to go back just to catch that?

INT: Sure, sure.

DK: How did they -- how was that information obtained and how was it used, I simply have to imagine that these Polish or whatever non-German personnel that when they had a chance they will just copy these lists, whatever they had. The Germans were very meticulous in putting down everything. I suspect that some of them got caught and were killed. That's absolutely positive. Many I'm sure produced such information at the risk of their lives. That I believe. But the -- what I also think that the extent of casualties [01:00] pertaining to units that they were evaluated right then and there for those that you know. There were only so many people left in that regiment. Good to know. The one thing that I -- in that respect that I also know -- I used to have -- especially when I was in the Pentagon [01:27], I used to have the opportunity to -- or in fact, I was given the minutes of meetings between the military emissaries from Russia [01:44] and United States. And at that time, I, as a -- just a little Sergeant -- I felt it absolutely -- it disgusted me [02:00]. And it disgusted also many Americans. That information that you obtain from the Russians -- which for us was pretty important -- what's the strength of the Germans? Eventually what they had to do, what they did, they transferred German units to the west -- western. We had to bargain with them, did you know that? I know I've seen the documents. We bargained -- the American would say, "I can tell you so much about so many divisions of this and this." And the Russian would say that and then they would get together and bargain just like you sell hogs or something. I tell you this if you tell me that. Now, some of the information got back to me eventually, but I just thought this is an interesting fact.

INT: So, this is during the war in terms of the sharing of information?

DK: Yeah. Yeah. That [03:00] -- I was very disgusted. What the hell? He knows more but he's only going to tell us that much. That's a -- but those were -- we were allies. And of course, if you go further on this they were -- later during the war -- especially after the end of the -- at the end of the war when I was in Camp Ritchie [03:30], there was certainly indications that there may be a conflict between United States and Russia [03:40] after we won. With our allies. So --

INT: These sacks of documents -- you mentioned that there was -- there was one person there in the office that would distribute everything on out.

DK: That was a -- this is in your book. Sergeant Schmidt [03:59]. It was his job [04:00].

INT: How often would these -- would you get documents? Every day?

DK: Oh, yeah. It was just always plenty of service, plenty of materials. If it -- yes, I would say it was never, there was never, ever any time when there was nothing to do. Except that one time when I told you -- the blunder from the Pentagon [04:32].

INT: Now, it sounds even from reading that history briefly that there were times where you were so busy where days, weeks went by where you didn't even have a chance to look at capture documents. That there was a backlog of capture documents because there were so many?

DK: I think there was a continuous flow. I never felt that way.

INT: Okay.

DK: You see, we -- let's [05:00] -- you see, at least I knew that everything essential for our troops to know immediately -- that had been taken care of. My job was military intelligence research [05:21]. So that eventually we have an up to date totality of everything. These people when they only packed -- captured only a certain amount of

information but we had it all and it was first as I said, in Europe. And then from there it came here. We could do no peace and quiet -- do as exact a job as was possible. And I gave you that one example when we previously talked how it really worked.

INT: And do you want to give that example again [06:00]?

DK: Right now?

INT: Yeah.

DK: Very happy to.

INT: If you don't -- since it's on your mind now, and --

DK: Yeah. Sure. What happened -- we are in 2008. I celebrated my birthday just about 10 days ago. And I asked my neighbor -- I reside in Dresden, Germany [06:26] -- and my neighbor came over to celebrate my birthday with me. And usually I never say anything about my MIRS [06:34] work or my American Army work in Germany [06:40]. I'm a musician. I'm a conductor of a very reputable Chicago Chamber Orchestra. People don't expect that. So, he came as my guest to celebrate my birthday. We sat next to each other with a little wine -- and he drank wine. I drank beer [07:00]. And so he was telling me about -- get to talk about his war experiences. And said he was at the Battle of Kursk [07:12]. Very significant battle -- very -- heavy German casualties. And of course he told me about the horrors of war and about his own experiences. He was very heavily -- very badly wounded and it was a miracle that he recovered -- and so on with all details. And said he was in the 255th division [07:42]. I says, "Just wait a minute." I go upstairs to my studio, pull out my Red Book [07:49], make a quick copy of the 255th infantry division [07:54], and bring it down [08:00]. Say, "Look here, your division was formed in [unintelligible]. That's where you were trained, is that right?" "Yes." And I say, "you

must have been in one of those three regiments.” Yes, he was in that regiment. “That was the number of your reconnaissance battalion, you had -- eventually you became a Panzer [08:26] gun at your division. And you were first -- you were in the southern part of Russia [08:37] but then they transferred your division to the central part of Russia, [unintelligible]. He said, “Absolutely true.” So, after all these years, this -- only this one little incident showed that we were really doing fairly accurate work.

INT: Right, yeah [09:00]. And what’s amazing is that you had that information 60 years ago. This is before the computer age, before any -- you know?

DK: Yeah, yeah. Well, we had -- I have to show you -- as a souvenir I still have at home somewhere one file card to show you exactly how we did that.

INT: Oh, that would be fantastic.

DK: Yeah,

INT: That would just be outstanding.

DK: Yeah.

INT: That’d be great.

DK: So, that’s what happened in probation. One thing you should ask me -- just the -- well, I always saw the foolhardiness of the Pentagon [09:41] authorities. You should ask me that.

INT: Well, if it’s on your mind, like I said.

DK: It’s on my mind.

INT: Sure. You can speak about it, that’s fine.

DK: What I wanted to talk about, it’s -- we were very, very satisfied the way the war proceeded [10:00] after the June 7th invasion worked though with big, heavy casualties.

And we thought now the rest of it would be a walk in -- to Germany [10:17]. But what happened in December, January, they are then -- the SS Elite Division [10:31] -- their devilish plan of putting American soldiers -- German soldiers into American uniforms and actually succeeding beating us. So, before that happened, American authorities in the Pentagon [10:55] -- I don't know who -- somebody thought you're wasting your time on the Red Book [11:00]. Just throw out all this crap. Well, I just do what I'm told. And at the POB, we were doing nothing practically. They were doing nothing. I think I even went back to -- yeah, I went back to the POB then out of the Pentagon [11:22]. And we started doing things soldiers shouldn't do -- soldiers like us shouldn't do -- cleaning the barracks, washing the windows. We did what we're supposed to do. I wasn't too happy about it I recall. And then it happened. As I said, they are -- the counter offense -- all of a sudden we need a new Red Book [11:50]. We need to get back to the Red Book. Well, a lot or most of the material was gone [12:00]. We could use the old Red Book [12:03] as a basis, but we had to work all over again to bring it all up to date. And this was when -- what you might call my hour. Sergeant Kober was assigned to go back to bring up to date the divisional units. But not in the Pentagon [12:28], but on Post Office Box 1142 [12:31]. I didn't have the facilities at the Pentagon. I got the whole room for myself. I had about 40 people working for me -- assigned to me.

INT: At 1142 [12:42]?

DK: Yeah. And I supervised them to go through all this. Whatever there was. Old stuff that hadn't been thrown away and go through stuff that we had then. I believe the sacks were still there somehow [13:00]. It was possible to reconstitute and bring it up to date. But it took just enormous manpower to do it and somebody from [unintelligible], so pretty

brainy to supervise all this. And, if I may say that, it was appreciated enough by the -- by supervisors. And I believe it was at that time Lieutenant or Captain Hubbuch [13:28] who did not object and said, "If we have to work so hard day and night, my men may be permitted to drink at the job including myself." At that time I was very much inclined in that direction and so we did. But we did the job. And I thought, that is an interesting incident or story of P.O. Box 1142 [13:57]. And I don't know what happened to all those people that worked there [14:00]. Just generally, as I had said previously, they came and went. Some people went to pretty important positions like SOS -- S --

INT: OSS [14:13]?

DK: OSS. And eventually as civilians continued. But I thought this should be part of the story of what happened at P.O. Box 1142 [14:28].

INT: And these 40 or so people you mentioned they were suddenly there -- were these complete strangers to you? Or were they --

DK: Yes.

INT: So they weren't previous members of the OB section?

DK: But we're all qualified people.

INT: So they weren't just soldiers off the street?

DK: Oh, heavens, no. No, they had the -- just like what happened to me later on during my stay at POB 1142 [14:56]. One day at -- really it was right after breakfast [15:00]. I was told, "Your plane leaves at noon at the airport." It was Army airport in Washington [15:11]. I can't think of the name right now. "So, get yourself packed up." Nobody told me what to do in London or anything. "You go to London. No, you go to England. Don't tell." Of course I swore don't tell anybody. I didn't tell any -- I didn't dare phone

my parents because I thought well you can't get into trouble. But I did make one phone call to an aunt in a different place where I had a secret code, and. I said, "[unintelligible] is sick," or something like that. I mentioned [unintelligible]. Then she knew I was going out of the country and could inform my parents [16:00]. So, that's what -- also what happened. From Post Office Box 1142 [16:08].

INT: And I'd like to talk a little bit later about your experiences in England because that's of great interest as well. And after you went to England you came back to 1142 [16:22], correct?

DK: Oh, yes.

INT: Okay. So, this time where you had -- you were furiously trying to put together -- was this a revised version of the Red Book [16:32]?

DK: Yes.

INT: Okay. And --

DK: It was the new Red -- the same Red Book that I'm going to show you.

INT: Oh, okay.

DK: It was the latest Red Book, yeah.

INT: Okay.

DK: I might add to it. This is very sad, but it's very good. By the time they finally got through with this new Red Book [16:51], there was nothing I could do about it at the time. I think it could have been handled [17:00] -- the publication could have been handled more efficiently. I must answer your question right now.

INT: Sure.

DK: After we had revised, at least my portion of the Red Book [17:18], I did my job quickly and efficiently. I was finished, I would say, we were told in January to do it. And I think by the first of February I was finished with it. I had done it. But now I don't know to use a vernacular -- all the other parts for many other people screwed on, and that and how long it -- that I don't know. I do know that I was with a few other people sent to New York from Post Office Box 1142 [17:57]. But, I can't recall what month that was [18:00] because the book was printed not on government printing office but by a private printer in New York [18:12].

INT: Really?

DK: Yes. New York City. And because they wanted to expedite this, I was assigned to New York [18:26] for I don't know how long. Maybe a week or I don't remember. There were several days to read the galley proofs. And other people were there with me, just -- but apparently, it was not -- it was not fast enough because the book never reached the troops before the end of the war.

INT: Oh, really?

DK: So --

INT: That is from Paul Fairbrook [18:57] as well [19:00]. On the current subject we were speaking about.

DK: Yeah, that is. That's it.

INT: So, that should be it, correct? Going to New York [19:12]?

DK: Yes, that's it. Exactly. When was that?

INT: It looks like February of '45.

DK: Well, as I told you, I was finished --

INT: Absolutely. So your memory is spot on. It's absolutely perfect. So, it's very helpful to have -- again, from what little I've glanced at some of these documents and -- of that history -- your recollections appear to be absolutely spot on. So, that's -- but I wanted to make sure that that made sense to you.

DK: Yeah.

INT: So, let's see -- we've got about --

DK: We talked about the -- we talked about the Red Book [19:55] and we talked about the [20:00] in between was the -- was the London [20:05] affair.

INT: [affirmative]

DK: That was a fabulous thing. Absolutely unbelievable. You want to know about it?

INT: I do, but can I -- can I ask just a few other questions first?

DK: Yes.

INT: And I promise we'll get to -- if not this tape, the next tape we'll definitely get to London [20:22]. Because I want to hear about it. Help me understand again, the difference between the work you were doing -- it sounds like you were at the Pentagon [20:32] for almost a year.

DK: Yes.

INT: What is the difference between what you were doing there versus what you were doing at 1142 [20:42]?

DK: Same thing.

INT: It's the exact same thing?

DK: It's the same thing. And, to explain this more, I was not only a soldier, I was a musician. I had my cello with me at the POB Box [21:00]. Don't ever forget to ask me about how I used my cello and my music there.

INT: I'll write a note down.

DK: And so, what -- besides -- I did not practice as a musician should. I had no time to practice there regularly as a musician should. I was there to work. So I never abused the -- my position. But I used my cello in order to participate in various musical activities in Washington, D.C. [21:41]. So, I played regularly in the string quartet and I played in an orchestra that consisted to a large extent of Army personnel there and people in Washington [21:55]. It was a semi-professional orchestra of people that simply were there [22:00] and they wanted to stay. So, that's what -- that's what I did. And on this one occasion I actually played on POB 1142 [22:08]. So -- and besides that, I was very active in musical life at that time. And as a music student, as you know, from Nebraska I had -- I saw this enormous opportunity to learn music that, again, there's nobody in the world who can compare with that background that I've had. Let me explain to you. And that was only because I was directly working at the Pentagon [22:49]. I shouldn't say that, but it's the truth. On -- during my years in Washington [23:00], on Thursday night I would go to the National Symphony Orchestra in Constitution Hall. It was very easy to go because people would leave tickets for soldiers, and the doormen there, they knew me. Sergeant Kober -- he would have a ticket for me and I'd come. He would come and have his ticket for me. I would -- every -- Thursdays. Fridays, I would either go to the Library of Congress [23:31] to hear the Budapest String Quartet. And mind you, I got free -- as a soldier, you got free in everywhere. And of course, as you know my personality, I made

friends very easily. On -- if there was no chamber music concert at the Library of Congress [23:50] on Friday I would go to Baltimore [23:53] to hear the National Symphony with Reginald Stewart conducting. On Saturday [24:00], I would be in Philadelphia [24:04] to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra with Eugene Ormandy. Now, mind you, it's not that I just heard the orchestra. I went back stage and got to know the musicians. I became very friendly with one of the greatest flutists in the world, the principal flutist of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The -- I can tell you another story, but that comes later. Many stories. On Sundays, then I went to New York [24:37] where I would hear regularly New York Philharmonic. I was there when Leonard Bernstein -- I still have the program -- made his unexpected debut. And I'm probably the only person in the world that was ever thrown out of a Toscanini concert at NBC [25:00]. Because after the Philharmonic I would go over to Radio City Music Hall, go to the NBC orchestra on the eighth floor. There were no tickets. I couldn't get in. I would take a tour of the building, leave the tour, and find my way, and sneak right in while Toscanini was conducting. And as I thought I was safe, two guards came and grabbed me, and threw me out but I couldn't take -- Toscanini was conducting his symphony.

INT: [laughs]

DK: But anyway, I mean as far as Tanglewood where I watched and became acquainted with the musicians. The Boston Symphony. And my scores -- marked the scores by using the same markings. It's quite recently people say, "How do you do [unintelligible] [26:00]?" I say, "That's what I learned from [unintelligible] in Boston. Now, from the -- from the Pentagon [26:10] it was a hell of a lot easier to get to the railroad station and travel. You traveled very inexpensively, a soldier. So, number one, I could get off easily from the

Pentagon [26:24]. Number two, and it was something special. I wanted to leave on Thursday. Well, nobody can get into trouble now. Major Herman [26:35] -- female officer -- with whom -- she was an officer but we shared our -- let's say our opposite sex problems. Her lover and mine -- we shared our problems. We were very, very friendly. And when I was there [27:00] -- like [unintelligible] quartet orchestra that was off the bus and she would cover up for me.

INT: [laughs]

DK: So that was a -- so I hadn't given you enough reasons to be in the Pentagon [27:11].

INT: Sir, how did you -- where did you sleep? If you were working during the day, going to concerts in the evening.

DK: Yeah. Oh, this is not too bad. Concert is over 10:00. No, and I would sleep. And I would always go to the USO's where I would stay inexpensively. No, but that has something to do with my activity. Now it can be told as, "Oh, everybody knew that." And I was tolerated because obviously I did excellent work. Just think of this. One of my great moments in the Pentagon [27:51] was -- I remember, I think I was standing in the hall somewhere. Somebody was looking for Sergeant Kober [28:00]. It was a telegram from General Mark Clark [28:05] in Italy who had just invaded the Sicily. Wanted to have some information about some unit nobody knew. They said, "Let's get Sergeant Kober, he'll know." And whatever he wanted to know I knew it and I passed it on. Right up to the top. So, but that same Sergeant Kober was deeply involved in music. So I thought that -- I don't know if this is really -- belongs to 1142 [28:36].

INT: That's okay though. This is fantastic. We have just a few minutes left, and we've gone through another hour believe it or not. But we have a few more minutes of tape so we

might as well use that up. So, again, just to summarize, pre-London you were -- you arrived at 1142 [29:00], you were there for -- what? A matter of a few months or so?

DK: Yeah.

INT: And then you went back to the Pentagon [29:06]. Where you continued to live at 1142 [29:10] but work at the Pentagon -- your barracks.

DK: Always back to --

INT: Back and forth, yes.

DK: Yes.

INT: And then after almost a year at the Pentagon [29:20] you went back to 1142 [29:23] and assisted with this reorganization of the red --

DK: Yes, the -- that's right. That's right.

INT: Okay.

DK: That's -- in between was London [29:32] and that little trip to New York [29:33].

INT: And was your commander -- from day one when you first arrived at 1142 [29:42] was Klug [29:43] your commander?

DK: Yes, he was in charge of -- as a matter of fact, I know he became Captain Klug [29:52]. I don't remember he -- I don't know if I was still there. Later on we were transferred [30:00] back to Ritchie [30:00] if he was Major Klug -- Klug then. He was my commanding officer and I think he was a wonderful commander, and I would say -- and I explained to him what was necessary to do. And what was -- in plain language -- bullshit that he -- that he should just ignore. I cannot imagine any other captain listening to his Sergeant -- except in combat perhaps -- but outside the combat zone that he would actually listen and agree with a Sergeant. And I gave him great credit -- I give him great

credit for that [31:00]. It's no wonder that he made it big later because if you listen where other people drink and use it, it's not a bad idea.

INT: Great. That takes us to the end of our -- of this tape.

DK: I think it went pretty well.

[End of Tape 2B]

[Beginning of Tape 3A]

INT: Okay, this is the third in a series of interviews for the Fort Hunt Oral History Project [00:15]. Today is January 17th, 2008. We are here interviewing Mr. Dieter Kober in Chicago at the Union League Club about his experiences as a member of MIRS [00:30] at P.O. Box 1142 [00:33]. This is Brandon Bies of the National Park Service. And with that, we'll get right along again. We heard a little bit about your early experiences at 11 - - yes, go right ahead.

DK: Okay.

INT: You've thought of something already?

DK: Yes. In connection of your introduction I think it is important in your research to realize that MIRS [01:00] was so hush-hush that we actually didn't know or weren't supposed to know what else went on on POB 1142 [01:13]. Somewhere there should be inserted we tried to know but we really -- except for the very few rumors that we heard -- those were totally different entities. So I don't know if I said it at the beginning, but that was an administrative center entities with some officers and the executive being Sergeant Ost [01:40]. There was another secret entity. We knew they were having prisoners, POWs [01:48], and we knew they were -- they were being overheard with listening devices. Nothing more. I'm sure they didn't know a damn thing [02:00] about what MIRS [02:03]

at -- what we were doing in our barracks. And just until you talked to me, I didn't even know they had a place to walk there, no idea. So, I thought that should be a part of the P.O. Box 1142 [02:23] that --

INT: Well, let's talk about it, and I promise next we'll get to London [02:28] -- but, let's -- since we're on the subject, let's talk about that a little bit. You mentioned, I think, over lunch that your entire time there you never remember seeing any German prisoners.

DK: No. Yeah.

INT: And yet, you know, through the research that we've done over the course of the entire war there were some -- probably close to 4,000 very, very high --

DK: I did see -- I did see after the war when MIRS [02:57] was transferred back to Ritchie [02:59], there [03:00] I saw a lot of prisoners, and I can tell you stories. We have so much to cover.

INT: Right? It's difficult, I know, for you to bite your tongue.

DK: Pertaining -- well, you speak about prisoners, and it's not stories. I think quite significant there were prisoners. But not at which that I didn't know. But I thought before you go start to London [03:29] I think you should -- I wanted to emphasize that I really didn't know what else was going on on the -- and mind you, we shared a dining room. The mess hall. Even at the mess hall, those guys didn't tell me what they were doing, and I didn't tell them what we were doing. So, I think that's a fact you should know about [04:00].

INT: What about your -- you mentioned your barracks. Was your barracks, your living quarters --

DK: Totally different area.

INT: But, were they just MIRS [04:10] staff in your barracks?

DK: Yes, yes.

INT: So you didn't -- you didn't have any interrogation monitoring staff?

DK: Oh, nothing. Nothing.

INT: Okay.

DK: Was it -- just like a different camp. It seemed to be -- with inside, indeed, but when you get -- do research, I think -- I saw you had a map there.

INT: Yes, in fact I have some maps with me.

DK: Yeah.

INT: Either now or later on -- I have a very large map of the post. I don't know if you think that you would recognize where your building was.

DK: Yeah.

INT: Because we don't know where MIRS [04:45] was located at 1142 [04:48].

DK: You don't?

INT: No, and it would be very interesting to find out where that was.

DK: Let me think. And I have some more materials at home. We can do that in May.

INT: Sure. And I'd be happy during the break we could --

DK: Is this all on this?

INT: Yeah, this is being recorded [05:00] right now. That's fine. But I do have with me a full map that I can show you. We can spend some time with that.

DK: Yeah. I'll have to put my thinking cap on.

INT: Sure.

DK: But I can see it in front of me some other stories come to mind. Okay, go ahead.

INT: Well, are the stories related to 1142 [05:26]?

DK: Yes.

INT: Go for it.

DK: I have to think. I remember -- I've talked previously about facilities, and I remember when it rained, we had to be very careful going to the -- it was only a small pathway from either the barracks or from where we worked to the mess hall. And my very good friend David James [06:00], he said -- he said something, "It's just like life. You got to walk the straight and narrow to get to eat at the mess hall." So that just came to my mind. It's not important, but that was in MIRS [06:20]. I do think in retrospective that Colonel Lovell [06:30] had to do quite a bit of fighting to keep this organization in existence. I don't know, but I think what I could observe in the Pentagon [06:51], there was politics there. For example, the [07:00] -- one of the cabinet -- next time it comes back to my mind. I went -- pretty frequently I worked with the press office there in the Pentagon [07:11], and the person in charge -- I don't know how qualified he was -- but he was, I believe, the brother of one of the cabinet officers. And, one of the civilians who worked there -- one fine day he comes up in uniform and says, "Well -- " Now he's a Lieutenant or Captain or something, and he says, "Sergeant, can you -- can you show me how am I supposed to salute?" So, it was some indication to me that there were politics around there somehow [08:00] and perhaps we would have had more privileges at 1142 [08:09] or more compensation. But these people did that work there which really were the salary of officers. But they were simply -- I don't want to use the term discriminated against, but the explanation was used, "You are not natives." That was not used; I presume that was the explanation. And although some of them were native Americans of German

origin -- Schmidt [08:52] for example, who did the [unintelligible], who did the drawings for us -- those were genuine German Americans [09:00]. But when I see firsthand what the officers did or didn't do at the Pentagon [09:15] -- not that many people can value that -- with what these people did I don't think it was quite fair to let them work as un-commissioned officers of what they were doing. And I would say some of these reports that was not my province, but there were specialized reports and specialized topics that some of these people made, you know, very intelligent, highly qualified people. That they made these reports, turned them into the Pentagon [09:52], and some officer signed them. Now, that's all on record. I'm not going to get in trouble [10:00] for it?

INT: No, you're not going to get in trouble. I promise.

DK: But I think it's a good thing that somebody opens his mouth before it's gone.

INT: That's why we're here. Absolutely.

DK: Yeah. I don't speak against the officers. I probably would have done the best of the situation myself. But think about it -- was it fair?

INT: I think you have a -- I think you're coming at it very fairly. And one of my questions that I had written down on the plane -- so you didn't influence me -- some of these I wrote down on my way here -- had to do with the officers. First of all, the officers, did -- let me start over again. The enlisted men, did they all speak German? Were they -- they were all fairly fluent in German?

DK: Most of them, yes. I think all of them. All of them.

INT: Okay.

DK: Also the German Americans, yes, they did. One thing [11:00] I should mention.

Someone who was different from the American officers, at least to me, or generally. You know, we had a British -- what do you call -- liaison at POB. Did you know that?

INT: Well, only from reading this here. So, please speak about that a little bit.

DK: That was at that time, Captain Horton Smith [11:31]. Do you have that name? Captain Horton Smith.

INT: No, I don't think so.

DK: Absolutely necessary. I don't think he worked very hard. He was a lovely man. I really don't know what his function was if I may. But he was frequently at the Box and also at the Pentagon [12:00]. Honestly, I don't know what he did. He was liaison.

INT: But he was a British military officer?

DK: Yes, he was British Captain, later Major Smith [12:11]. And when I -- when I conducted later on in England, I remember he came to concert.

INT: Really?

DK: And you know what he said to me? "There was another Bartok on the program, why didn't you play it?" I say, "It was too much." He reminded me that my program was not as long, as extended as it was announced. So, but it was nice to see him come to see my as conductor with tails and tie. So, not my orchestra. I conduct orchestra there in Nottingham [12:47]. So, anyway, what was your last question?

INT: Well, again --

DK: But anyway, I think you should know -- that when you asked about relationship to officers that's the way it was in the Army. I don't know how it was [13:00] -- it was exactly the same way in combat. It depends on the situation. But in comparison to the

American officers, he was closer, he was more intellectual, and he was closer to us as the American officers. That's when you -- I said, that came to me.

INT: And who are you speaking of? Who are you speaking of?

DK: The British officer, Horton Smith [13:31].

INT: Smith. Who Smith was?

DK: Yeah.

INT: And, so again, he was the liaison officer but you don't know -- you don't recall exactly who he was reporting back to?

DK: No, I don't know. I just don't know what he -- he had wore a British uniform.

INT: Really?

DK: Oh, yes. And, sure -- and he was a very tall man. And he had a girlfriend who also worked in the Pentagon [14:00]. Also very tall. But -- and he was at -- let's put it this way, he was very conversant over the subject matter. You could talk with him about units or divisions or practically everything. That I recall. He could talk with Sternberg [14:26] or various other people in there. I don't know whether he worked as advisory or what, but he came frequently to the box and -- I'm sorry, I just don't remember the details, but --

INT: That's okay. Do you remember if he ever provided information?

DK: No, no.

INT: Or if he was just --

DK: He did not provide.

INT: He was just receiving it and presumably relaying the information one way or the other?

DK: I just don't know.

INT: Okay.

DK: There was never [15:00] any dearth on information to be -- to be used. And I think the biggest -- the big program -- the big problem that we had at the time that I can recall was, how do you present information that you have in such a manner that any idiot can use it? Was a -- in other words projecting it in a legible, intelligible way. And for that, especially the Germans that we had. You must remember I was a young -- and Fairbrook [15:53], I think, was also in in his first year of college. I was a young college student and very conversant [16:00] with the American way. But you have people there who were just like Germans, and they don't adjust as quickly or -- and they have a bunch of information they only know this is this and this. And Tucker [16:18] was very good in organizing things like that. And I presume Horton Smith [16:24] also helped in the organization of material. But, I was pretty independent always and I worked much with Tucker [16:37]. Well, when I see a good man I took advantage of him.

INT: And Tucker was a civilian?

DK: Yeah.

INT: Could you talk about that a little bit? That's somewhat phenomenal. So he was --

DK: It is phenomenal.

INT: He was at 1142 [16:53]?

DK: No, never. He came out a few times -- rarely. It's rather that [17:00] when there was a problem I think you had to go to Tucker [17:04] at the Pentagon [17:05]. So, he was sort of like a high priest. And he was simply conversant in everything. And besides that, he was a warhorse. To him we did our alls except in the case of emergencies I told you. But

generally, you come and go, everything is -- but with Tucker [17:38] when I was in the Pentagon [17:39] that was just life.

INT: So he was out -- he was at the Pentagon though, was where he --

DK: He was at the Pentagon, and I think that that's just my conjecture. That he and Lovell [17:56] just figured this [18:00] all out among themselves. And one word I didn't use before, but I suspect that were any number of such configurations in the Pentagon [18:14] so to speak building their little empires in the system. Well, now you can quote me. If I had said that then I'd given you court marshal.

INT: Right, but they can't do that now. And so, again, remind me, Lovell [18:32] -- was Lovell the commander of all MIRS [18:33]?

DK: Yes. He was my commander.

INT: Of just the Washington [18:39] branch? Or Washington and --

DK: No. He was the Washington branch and Burley [18:44] of the -- however, things change. There comes -- I don't know how we get this all in. Because then later Burley came into MIRS [18:55] in Camp Ritchie [19:00].

INT: Oh, really?

DK: Yeah.

INT: After the war?

DK: He saved my neck. I think I had -- I had said to an American officer, "How come you made captain?" Somebody -- he had said to me -- I think there were promotion and I wanted to become Master sergeant or head sergeant or something. So he had said to me, "You're just not Master sergeant material." So I had said, "Well, how come you made captain?" And I was -- as told you, I was demoted at times. And so, I think then he tried

to get me sent someplace. But then came my friend Captain Burley [19:50]. Just at that time from London [19:52] and he was temporarily made -- was commander of the unit.

And that saved me because he [20:00] was happy to see me from London [20:04], and so.

INT: Oh, let's see. We've been all over the place, which is -- which is fine --

DK: Well, I gave you some more information.

INT: No, this is great. This is outstanding. This is really good. So, again, to recap a little bit of the officers since we're on the subject of officers.

DK: Yes.

INT: You had the British officer was Captain Horton Smith [20:27] who was liaison officer.

DK: Horton Smith, yes.

INT: Who was both at the Pentagon [20:31] and at 1142 [20:33]?

DK: Yes. [affirmative].

INT: Phillip Tucker [20:33] was a civilian at the Pentagon --

DK: Yes.

INT: --who worked closely with Lovell [20:40]?

DK: Yes.

INT: Okay.

DK: And, I would say before anything or anything that was published would be proofread by Tucker [20:55]. So even in the reports that they made -- Fairbrook [21:00] can tell you perhaps more about that, but let's say they wanted to have a report on production of weapons. That had nothing to do with production. And somebody write a very good report of what they had. Now, before that would be utilized or published formally, it'd go to Tucker [21:26] in the Pentagon [21:27] and he would proofread it. And if Tucker

went through and said, "This is okay." English and structure and everything -- then it was okay. So, he was in that respect he was very important, and I think that you should know. So, let's say 1142 [21:46] -- those guys did very good work, appreciated by Colonel Lovell [21:53] but in the final analysis the Pope of the whole thing was Tucker [21:59].

INT: Really [22:00]?

DK: Yeah.

INT: A civilian? It's just amazing that Tucker who -- he was a civilian and yet he --

DK: Yeah.

INT: -- had that much --

DK: Well, as I said, it was all buddies those two guys. And he was in my opinion; he seemed to me like a genius. And perhaps because he smelled like one, he was really one.

INT: And so, who was the commander of all MIRS [22:30]? Both London [22:31] and --

DK: I don't think so -- that -- when we -- from the top the only thing that rings bell -- rings a bell with me is General Bissell [22:40].

INT: Bissell [22:41]? Okay.

DK: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

DK: So -- but I never -- even in the Pentagon [22:47] when I worked there I never had anything to do with him. As a matter of fact, although the information that I gathered where the units -- where the units were [23:00] or where they had been -- to bring it up to date. They had a situation room in G2 where the big guys were. I was never permitted to

go in there. I was never in there. I'd sort of glance over to -- that's the way it was.

Yeah.

INT: Was Lovell [23:29] Klug's [23:29] boss?

DK: Yes, of course.

INT: So, and was Klug the highest officer of MIRS [23:39] at 1142 [23:41]?

[talking simultaneously]

DK: Klug [23:39] was the officer in charge -- pardon?

INT: At 1142?

DK: Yeah.

INT: Okay.

DK: That's the way it worked, yes. That's right. Now, I don't know -- this is -- again, I don't know whether Kluger [23:54] was told, "Send three or six men or whoever send Kober and [unintelligible] to London [24:00] or whether Lovell [24:02] said it or whether Bissell [24:03] -- I don't know. I just did what I was told. I didn't know. What I think was -- and you start learning that's a whole story. But that I'll tell you when we get to London [24:16]. Because my big surprise in London is I thought when I get there that they would use my know-how. That's why I go over there. And when I was just put up there for just very rudimentary work in plain English, I was simply pissed off. I had a good job in Washington [24:45]. I did what I liked. I said, "What do you need me here for?" And I guess that's the -- I presume that's the way the Army worked, that went too - - I just remember Fairbrook [24:59] and me went over there together, [25:00] and we both and a room together. And so I was very disgusted. But then my boss -- my

immediate boss was Steven Rundt [25:13], R-U-N-D-T, in England. His name must be on there.

INT: Okay.

DK: And he was in charge of Nazi [25:24] units. I think it was SS [25:26] and concentration camps and all that stuff. And I just -- well, you know, when you -- when you're unhappy you can show that even in the Army. When you know you can slow down and just show that, well, you just don't give a damn, which I did. It got to the point that I was not even reliable. What's the use of having a man like that here? So, Rundt [25:26] was very smart. He said [26:00], "What do you want?" And I said, "I want to do something where I'm useful. I just don't want here in London [26:09] to sit here in an office eight hours a week and then go to concerts." That alone I also liked -- I liked to work in the Army and do something useful. So, Rundt [26:22] said, "I think I got a job for you." He said, "Would you be interested to write a Red Book [26:29] just on your own for the Hitler Youth [26:32]? That's in this book, isn't it?"

INT: Yeah, I think it is mentioned in there. I believe it is.

DK: Yeah, it must be.

INT: And Fairbrook [26:41] mentioned that to me as well. And do you --

DK: And I mentioned it to you.

INT: And you did as well. You have a copy of that still, right?

DK: No, I have [unintelligible].

INT: Oh, that's right. You mentioned that. You mentioned that.

DK: So then I simply -- I grabbed the opportunity [27:00] and from scratch using similar system of filing -- and of course you forgot to ask me what was your first impression in London [27:14]?

INT: Well, I didn't even know we were going to talk about London and we suddenly -- so I wanted to start from the beginning about London.

DK: We were talking from the beginning. I got there and I was teed off, okay? But, besides -- and I got -- because I was teed off, I got this assignment. But what I should add to that -- this was quite different from POB in my -- that's what interests you. Because it seemed much more lively and active for some reason. We just sat there and did our thing and everybody did very meticulously. But, it was one thing perhaps that helped to give a little bit tension is when I [28:00] -- when I got there, the very first thing -- I forgot his name. I have it -- the sergeant who picked us up at the airport -- I knew him, Kegson [28:12] [phonetic]. He said, "Oh, it stinks here." That's the first thing I remember he said. And then he -- the first thing he did is he dropped us -- dropped us at the hotel, at the Strand, and Fairbrook [28:26] and I took out a room together. And, then the next day report at the -- where we were working in the -- in Kensington [28:38], where the office was. And then all this business happened at first with Rundt [28:47] and I was just unhappy. But what was interesting there is there were people from all nationalities that you probably have in there. Poles, Frenchmen [29:00], all kinds of people. It was -- what Burley [29:03] had there in his crew -- that was really international and that was intriguing. And -- but, anyway, there was nearly nothing for me to do. It didn't take long and then I just got this job with Hitler Youth [29:24], and it was a fantastically fascinating thing because Rundt [29:34] was the best boss you can imagine. He just said,

“You know, you go ahead. You do this book.” He never even looked at what I was doing or anything. I think I showed him a few times I was proceeding. He just left me alone. And I just -- I really had no mentor so to speak. I ask him [30:00] -- I asked a few patient people around there but I really had no supervision as I had in Washington [30:09] -- it was -- well, I had good old Tucker [30:11] there to hang onto. But in London [30:16] I had nobody. Somehow I was on my own to figure out what is useful for us. But I did pretty much on the basis -- I did the Army. In other words, Hitler [30:32] -- throughout Germany was divided similarly on the numbering system that the Germans do so meticulously. And what was important to find out -- for us important -- which I thought was important -- find out who the key person is. So if something happens you know who the hell to go after. We tried it [31:00]. Of course, in London [31:05] I had a little help I must say. I had carte blanche, number one; to work my hours, do whatever I want. And I had -- I was given, I must say, contacts to foreign embassies -- [unintelligible] to press places all over to -- and I was told, so Rundt [31:29] gave me or somebody gave me source -- places where source material could be gathered. So, I did that. I did have help in -- I did have help in London [31:46]. I don't remember exactly how much, but there was help to type out and do -- and do menial things. So, I must say that I was not left entirely [32:00] just to sit there and do that. And I would say -- how long I was there -- eight weeks or two months.

INT: Okay.

DK: Maybe three months. I don't remember exactly.

INT: Okay. I think we have some records, and it says not to exceed 90 days. So, it was probably less than 90 days. Less than three months.

DK: I could have been there three months, that's possible.

INT: Well, I need to quick switch this tape right here.

[End of Tape 3A]

[Beginning of Tape 3B]

DK: It was very -- I would say it was very heartwarming to work in London [00:10] because the people I worked with in the same offices and when I would go to other offices in town, everywhere I got wonderful cooperation there. It was just an entirely different atmosphere from Washington [00:32] and the -- well, you were closer to the war I suppose. And then indeed you were closer to the -- it didn't take very long. The bus brought us came. V1 and then V2 came. I experienced that. [inaudible] [01:00] I'm sure you're interested in. As a V -- you know what the V1s were? V1s were rockets that would suddenly stopped the motor and go down and hit anything that would be down there. Not to dissimilarly what's happening in the far -- in the near east. In our offices, there were Americans and non-Americans. This is unbelievable. And along came -- for [unintelligible] were coming inside. Everybody went downstairs into the air raid shelter, but the Americans, we don't give a shit. I always used to say, "Go away, go away." And it was for us [02:00], a matter of honor to sit there and get killed possibly. But that's the truth that was happened in London [01:56]. I thought it would be nice to know [02:00]. And another thing that struck me there -- people were so nice. You go and take -- go down to the underground -- you see people spending the night there for safety. And they would just look at Americans as they were sent from heaven. An American was just -- they were just -- I can't believe all this anti-American feeling after the war. They were so happy with us. And I just thought that I'm glad I have a chance -- have a chance to

mention it. Not only the military cooperation, that was to be understood. But, there was a sympathy [03:00] that went with it. We're so happy you're doing it -- whatever you do whether it's fighting out front or doing this intelligence work. That was impressive and I thought that somehow you should know about that.

INT: Well, that's important.

DK: Well, it's history.

INT: Well, it is important.

DK: Now, the second point in London [03:04] is -- you probably can gather -- I took advantage of the musical opportunities. And again, I actually went to some academic course that I took and regular concert at St. Martin Fields and Dame Myra Hess particularly. So, all this -- even in that short period -- contributed significantly to my musical background [04:00]. And so I'm very fond -- I'm very fond of London [04:12]. I had, I would say, just personally, I met some wonderful women there. Very nice, not sex but just some -- unfortunately people, they're all dead. But it was part of the experience there. And the British, at that time at least, I thought they were just wonderful allies. I saw how they -- how they put up with the war. I saw the people. I saw the -- I forget what landing it was that didn't work out but the beaten troops came back.

INT: Dunkirk [05:00]?

DK: No, not Dunkirk. It was -- they had one raid, which, maybe I can check it out. It doesn't matter, it was one of those raids that the British troop made, and for some reason I just saw it when they came -- I saw them when they came back. Pretty beat up -- so that made -- that also made an impression on me. And they were -- they were good people. And I realize that now if they hadn't stood up against the Nazis [05:38], it would have

been a hell of a harder to win that -- win that war. So, anyway, I was very sorry after the period was up. But I turned in my book, which I thought was important. Of course, you could really look up every city in Germany [06:00] -- what the name of the units and they were divided -- actually, even the women I had. [unintelligible] Hitler Youth [06:11] and you would have made a [unintelligible]. And the women, young people, intermediate people, and other people so that you should know -- other people that worked underground. Example, they had the [unintelligible], the labor service. Wrote the book on that -- on the motorized SS [06:39] -- the book on that. On the concentration camps [06:47] -- the book on that. I mean, we had really --

INT: These were individual assignments?

DK: Yes.

INT: For different -- not all you?

DK: No, no I had my Hitler Youth [06:53]. But, I'm just thinking of some -- all possible sources [07:00] of insurgency were anticipated. As I said at the very beginning of our interview. Now, I saw how this was prepared in England, and I think that was a very -- Rundt [07:16] was pretty much in charge of that. And I think he worked -- I think -- I think he worked for the New York Times before. And he was pretty tough to get along with generally but he knew his business. And, he's probably dead too, but it should be known that in this preparatory area that fortunately was never used, I did a very little thing for the Hitler Youths [07:47]. But this man supervised a complete preparation for an emergency. I think that that should be part [08:00] of the history.

INT: And it is now.

DK: Yeah.

INT: If you have more -- I'm piling up questions to ask, but if you have more.

DK: In summary, while I was very much aware of what Military Intelligence Research [08:22] means to the leaders of our military somehow coming to London [08:32] close to the place opened my eyes a bit more. That's in summary of what I was going to say. I think that's important when you write about MIRS London [08:43] and MIRS Washington [08:44].

INT: I have so many questions.

DK: Go ahead.

INT: First, to finish up with your work on the Hitler Youth [08:55] -- that was done completely from London [09:00]? You didn't --

DK: Completely from London.

INT: You didn't do any Hitler Youth work at 1142 [09:05]?

DK: No, however, good question. When I got back to Washington [09:10], I was a Hitler Youth [09:12] expert from everywhere. So after that, anything that came out of the sack, or from anywhere with Hitler Youth [09:24] -- that went to Sergeant Kober.

INT: How did you get information in London [09:31] on the Hitler Youth? It was still all captured documents?

DK: Captured documents -- that's a good question.

INT: What did they -- did they ever -- did they have prisoners who had been in the Hitler Youth [09:43]?

DK: Oh, yes.

INT: That they interviewed?

DK: That's right. That's right. We had prisoner information and then we had a lot of -- you know, that's a good question. I had a lot of membership cards [10:00] for the Hitler Youth [10:02]. Some of these soldiers that carried with them -- that carried not only their social and their family usually they'd have their wives or some girl's picture, but they had other things that meant something. They had membership cards -- membership in the Nazi [10:26] party. We grabbed all that stuff from them. And, many -- they all -- every German had to have been a Hitler Youth [10:36] at one time. So, many of them had [unintelligible] or to say membership cards. So you let me think you wanted to know the source with your question -- you wanted to know every important source. One source was, of course, where I needed help. You had all these newspapers and it was a tremendous job [11:00]. And that's where I had help. It wasn't a question of organizing -- read all the German in different press places whatever was said about Hitler Youth [11:16]. They celebrated this and [unintelligible] was there and [unintelligible] were there -- spoke there. All that -- we got a tremendous amount from the press. There were different press; so, again, I don't remember the details, but I went to various different offices and got very good cooperation everywhere to assemble them. But it was a big -- I couldn't have done it by myself. I got good help. But within three months I assembled that. Not only that, I also had help from artists because I had -- in this book I had pictures of uniforms and [12:00] the ranks -- rank -- what do you call it? Signs of designations.

INT: Insignia?

DK: Insignia, right. Kind of -- I wasn't prepared for that question. Anyway, it gives you an idea of -- you're standing -- constantly looking for something, and you go to an office.

Let's say you go -- I go to an allied embassy -- let's say to Polish embassy. And ask them, "Can you help me?"

INT: Okay.

DK: And so the nice thing is I was unlike what you think about the Army in London [12:47], I was very well treated in Washington [12:47]. But in London, I had free bus any time I passed through any place. My time [13:00] any way I wanted to. I spent a great deal in the office, however, to coordinate and get the stuff done. But I was given the opportunity, as I would say. I was a 24-year-old kid to just work totally independent and do that. Till then they [unintelligible] my age so when I went there was unbelievable. They gave me 40 people and I [unintelligible]. So I -- as the Colonel said, I really contributed at -- when I could. I enjoyed it and surely my music.

INT: So, were you able -- for example, at the Hitler Youth [13:45] -- were you able to put out a general call or request to say --

DK: No, no.

INT: You know, an all points bulletin -- I need information on this?

DK: No, no, no.

INT: So it was up to you to go around, knock on doors --

DK: It was up to me -- that was a good question [14:00]. It was really what you might call an English pick and shovel. And, gosh, what they would have done today with the Internet.

INT: So there wasn't so -- at a prisoner processing center where there were Hitler Youth [14:20] related prisoners coming in --

DK: No.

INT: -- there wasn't someone there that said, "No, Sergeant Kober gets this information."

DK: No. It was for -- but I supposed that for the time, that short, brief -- the brief time that I was there maybe -- but I don't remember. That it was said any information you have on it, give it to -- but I don't think that was essential. The way that worked was only in Washington POB with the big sacks and that continued.

INT: [affirmative]. So there were no big sacks of documents at London [14:57]?

DK: No, no, no. It was a little different there [15:00].

INT: Could you talk about that a little bit? What do you see as the major differences between London and Washington [15:07]?

DK: Well, we already said, there was a spirit of immediacy in London [15:16] and there was a spirit of we do our job systematically. That was a -- I would say that is a basic difference. And secondly, the difference was in you work under constant danger of being bombarded. So, it gives a different atmosphere. And thirdly, I would say your company. You see in -- on POB, I don't recall a single woman. In England [16:00], there were women. I worked with women there on the office.

INT: In the London [16:05] branch there were women?

DK: Yeah, you asked me what the difference was.

INT: American women or British?

DK: No, they were British women if I remember. Later in Camp Ritchie [16:16] there was a few American, I believe, and one Canadian woman. But, in Washington [16:24] -- and there was no women at 1142 [16:27]. And, now I have to say something else. In Washington [16:35], we were all -- the group was all in one big establishment. In London [16:42] there were different -- smaller, different groups. So I didn't have as much opportunity to contact with so many what they were doing in different departments.

I was very much concentrating on my own job, and so that's the answer to your question [17:00].

INT: Would you say -- was there -- was the mission -- the overall, not just your specific job, but the overall mission at MIRS [17:09] in London [17:11] -- was it essentially the same as the overall mission in Washington [17:15]?

DK: No. I think that - I believe the mission in London [17:24] was let's not -- let's not miss any information that could be of immediate use. Hence my observation of the immediacy of the situation. In Washington [17:43], let's do it systematically, and there was really no rush except that one time I told you about.

INT: With the Battle of the Bulge [17:55].

DK: Yeah. After Battle of the -- yeah. Answer your question?

INT: Yes. Yes [18:00]. So, sounds like overall you enjoyed your London [18:05] experience tremendously.

DK: Tremendously. Yeah. Well, you see, if you look at the Red Book [18:13], fine. I knew it. Tucker [18:18] knew it. Lovell [18:20] knew it. And my coworkers knew it. But the book was a composite endeavor, and I was proud of my very important contribution, but it still wasn't my book. But that Hitler Youth [18:38], that was my baby. So, that is something, and I'm glad to talk more about that Hitler Youth if you ask me.

INT: Well, what happened? So, this Hitler Youth [18:51] book, you were responsible for this. What happened when it was published? How -- was it disseminated [19:00]?

DK: That I don't know, but I'm sure it was. It was -- as I said before, all these -- there were many books on all the potential enemies of the occupation force. So, I'm convinced that I would -- that it was at least available to key posts in the occupation. I really don't think

anybody expected that the opposition, or the Nazis [19:35], collapsed as quickly as it did, for the simple reason as they were fighting a lost battle, which still -- I mean, there were tens of thousands are still -- around Berlin [19:56] they were still fighting a lost battle [20:00] thinking they were going to win it when any reasonable person -- and happily dying. So, you had I would say especially among the young people, if you -- [unintelligible] his contemporaries will tell you, the new soldiers, the soldiers that were inducted in the last year of the war, they were not primarily trained militarily; they were trained here to think, "We are going to make it. We are going to beat the -- we are going to throw them out again. We are going to fight until the last drop of" -- and so, with this kind of ideological enemy, well, we could expect after we beat them, they'll go right on like they do in Iraq. And so I was convinced, but I was stewing [phonetic] [21:00] a very valuable thing. Just think of it, if you had in Iraq, if you had a book where every unit and every leader of these units, all these names are listed and the cities where they come from, how much good that would do. So, I was very happy to do this, and perhaps I would be happier if it had been used, but we should be happy that it was necessary to use.

INT: [affirmative] A final follow-up question comparing, again, Washington [21:39] to London [21:40]. Size-wise, would you say -- could you compare the -- in terms of numbers of personnel -- the two branches? Were they about the same size, or it was one bigger than the other?

DK: You know what? Even that was pretty hush-hush.

INT: Really [22:00]?

DK: Really. It's just they were so secretive. I just didn't know. If somebody had asked me how many intelligence personnel, what other departments they are in in the Pentagon

[22:16], I knew there were, but nobody told me anything. You just didn't -- it was secret. And same in London [22:25]. I didn't know either. I was -- on one floor, I know there were -- if you asked me how many were there, if I just think of it, Brandon, it makes me sick, and I just see how the press and the media publish military information in this country. Let me give you an example. About two years ago, I was in Hawaii [23:00], and there's a military -- an important military place, Pearl Harbor, and there's a military unit there. I read in the newspaper, this-and-this regiment is going to -- has been assigned to go to Iraq at the end of the month. Who the hell would put something like that in the paper? It would be unthinkable in -- I really don't know what's happening to the general staff of the people who run the military now. I think I could do a better job than they're doing. So, but I think he got some better people now. He -- Bush [23:45] made some changes fortunately, but he didn't know what to do in the first place, so -- [unintelligible].

INT: That's okay.

DK: I didn't mean that.

INT: He's not going to watch this, so don't worry about that.

DK: Oh, I didn't mean to say that [24:00].

INT: That's okay. Don't worry about --

DK: Can you cut that out?

INT: Again, we have interviewed veterans who have said far worse than that about the current administration and what not, so I --

DK: I don't want to talk -- that's not my business.

INT: Sure.

DK: I'm talking about military intelligence in World War II, and I'm comparing it with the pursuit of military activities now, if I may correct myself. And I think the way they are being publicized now does not speak well for the people who are running it, and I can -- I stand for that. That's what I mean to say.

INT: [laughs] We have about five minutes left, and we've -- we're almost through our third hour, believe it or not. So, do you have any -- do you feel that you've covered London [24:53] fairly well enough? Anything else you think you've left out about London?

DK: I'm sure [25:00] I left out something. There were -- I think one thing that just comes to my mind -- I mean, I've already mentioned that I've met some very good -- made some very good friends there, and I'm thinking also among the military I met some nice, very fine people, soldiers there that sort of substituted for my soldier friends -- I had very good comrades in the POB 1142 [25:37], Paul [25:38] being one of them. But I had also some of those people that I very quickly made friends with in the British army, Army and Navy. I think that's part of my story of London [25:57]. If I think long enough [26:00] -- I would have liked to have stayed there longer, glad to have taken on another job, but fortunately I was sent back to POB 1142 [26:11] and the way I was happy that I was there when I was needed.

INT: How did London [26:19] and Washington [26:20] communicate with one another? And did they -- or did they?

DK: I think they did. We -- see, we knew -- there was really not much need for communication in POB 1142 [26:37] because we knew everything had been screened over there, so to speak. That was their job. And I think there may have been occasionally a question from this side, from our side, certainly not from theirs. The

cooperation [27:00], I think, seemed to become more obvious -- again, I don't know why would they have later on in Camp Ritchie [27:11] a British officer become commander of an American unit -- of that unit. I don't know, but I'm telling you. So that must have been -- one thing I know about it, there's a whole chapter after that. Anyway, that's the best answer I can -- there was not much need for communication.

INT: But if when -- let's say back in 1142 [27:42], if you -- would there ever be a scenario where you'd be working on a project and someone would think, "Oh, they might have information on this at the London [27:53] branch"?

DK: No, that never happened.

INT: Okay.

DK: That never happened, no. And [28:00] the only exciting things in that respect happened when I was in the Pentagon [28:08] and someone from the war office -- I don't even know who -- someone wanted -- in that one case, I [unintelligible]. Somebody wanted information on units, but then I was -- somebody thought to ask Sergeant Kober. I don't even know how many other people worked on units. I think the system was very good the way it was to keep spies out and so that we ourselves were ignorant of many -- that's the way it was. I wish it were the same way now.

INT: [affirmative] Was there a lot of -- let me rephrase. You went with a group of eight or nine other Americans from 1142 [28:56] to London [28:57].

DK: Yeah.

INT: And then you all -- I presume you all went back to 1142 [29:00] as a group?

DK: No, there were more people, a lot more.

INT: Oh, more than --

DK: That's a good question. When I went, it was believed it was really an emergency that I should go over there. That's why I was so unhappy. We went in a deluxe airplane. Behind me sat Lord and Lady Hamilton, who at that time was a Foreign Minister of Great Britain. And I had -- I still have their signature on my -- I don't know -- you know what a short snorter is? At that time, it was, you could have a piece of, let's say, a note, money note, and you -- people who [unintelligible] they didn't write, they signed it. And then you'd get another, and then you'd get -- plane rides [30:00] in 1942 were not so common, and this was the best possible plane. So whoever would -- I don't remember -- I think Paul [30:14] went with me. I don't know who else was with me on that trip.

INT: There's a list here of eight men from 1142 [30:21].

DK: Who went to London [30:22]?

INT: Who went to London, yes.

DK: I don't remember. You got the names?

INT: Yes, I have the names here. Unfortunately, we have about 30 seconds left of our tape.

DK: Okay. All I have to answer is, I went back on a very simple plane -- on a flat ground, we all laid there on sleeping bags [unintelligible].

INT: And was it the same group, or was it a larger --

DK: No --

INT: -- a much larger group?

DK: Just they filled the plane with soldiers that somehow were sent back to the United States.

INT: Okay. All right. Okay, well, that does it --

DK: That didn't go as well as the one before.

INT: Oh, I thought it went quite well. I thought it went very well.

DK: So, now how --

[End of Tape 3B]

[Beginning of Tape 4A]

INT: Okay, today is January 18th, 2008. This is an interview with Mr. Dieter Kober, formerly of MIRS [00:16] at P.O. Box 1142 [00:18]. We are here interviewing him as part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project [00:23] in Chicago at the Union League Club. This is Brandon Bies of the National Park Service, and this is the fourth of a series of hour-long interview tapes with Mr. Kober. So, with that we took a -- we talked at length yesterday, and I'm sure after an evening of going through, looking at the history, I guess a few things have come to mind. Is there anything that you'd like to start off with today that you think would be a good start?

DK: Well, I recall having talked yesterday about adjacent [01:00] musical activities, and I think I'd like to add just a few items pertaining to music at 1142 [01:14]. I recall that after I was established there, going home on leave, and then returning. Not alone, but with my cello, which was then, put to good use off campus, or off 1142 [01:36]. And I performed with the orchestras and sort of national -- I don't remember. They had a very prominent conductor I remember. And, there were weekly rehearsals and concerts now and then, and also some people I had met were regularly played chamber music [02:00] with my cello. And sometimes when these rehearsals took place and we were still having conferences at POB 1142 [02:13], I would just say, "Hey, I'm playing quartets now. And three people are waiting for me and came to get started. Sorry, I've got to go." Then, on campus -- on the 1142 [02:30] box itself, there was some occasions where I played cello there. Occasionally, I believe I played there with some other people for dinner music for

the officers in the officer's club. And one time when we had the final victory celebration there, there were people coming out with jazz instruments [03:00] and some sort of pop band put together. And no music -- I think everything was just played from memory. And there at the -- I didn't think I fit into this, but at the behest of Sergeant Ost [03:20] I pulled out my cello and everybody was happy. And I played there. And one event that is really worth remembering. At the time of the death of Franklin Roosevelt [03:35], our Commander-In-Chief, there was genuine grief in Washington [03:44] I recall. And I believe the news came and I was in Washington, D.C. where I frequently, being an academic [04:00] at heart, used the library. And strange as this may seem, I believe among the first persons at [unintelligible] -- the news went around like wildfire. It was in the middle of the day. It was Miss Nimitz [04:20], the daughter of Admiral Nimitz [04:25] that I talked to at the time of Franklin Roosevelt's [04:29] death. And subsequently, on the Post, the officers in charge arranged for some sort of memorial service -- memorial parade, I would say, which, for the first time I really saw a great -- a number of personnel I never seen before. And I remember we were assembled [05:00] in a big square, and it didn't look very military. These people did not look like the Marines. But, we all stood at attention, and the commander of the post -- I don't even know who he was -- but some officer, high ranking officer -- gave a memorial speech in honor of the Commander-In-Chief. But previously, I had been asked by the -- by the officer in charge of the day room of entertainment what I would suggest would be the appropriate music to use on that occasion. So, I said, "Well, we don't have much classical music." In the recordings of the LPs they had in those days [06:00]. But I didn't know they had had something by Handel and we had the Messiah, which is semi-religious music. And the

vocal parts -- and they were sung by Marian Anderson, a black, outstanding singer who had gained national headlines by -- when her appearance in Constitution Hall was not -- was simply negate by those in charge. And then Eleanor Roosevelt got into the act, which helped greatly for the popularity of the singer and publicity. So anyway, it would just be great to show his great America -- and Marian Anderson you pick anything she sings. And then of course as the moment came she sang [07:00] a record for Franklin Roosevelt's memorial. He Was Despised, by Jesus Christ, and I could hardly keep from laughing, but that really happened. The musical culture of our officers.

INT: So, the officers are who selected that particular song?

DK: Yeah. I should have been more careful and said, "Let me also know the song." But I had assumed that a person would have taste to see that a title He Was Despised is not exactly appropriate. But he just picked Handel and Anderson, and that was it.

INT: And so this was piped out over the loudspeaker system?

DK: We all stood there and -- in awe -- our commander-in-chief was despised [08:00]. Which indeed he was by some politicians.

INT: So it sounds from this story and from the stories you gave yesterday, obviously you continued to develop your love of music throughout your time at 1142 [08:23] and while you were in MIRS [08:25]. And you mentioned even yesterday that -- not seriously -- but anything -- anytime anything music came across --

DK: Yes.

INT: --a capture document -- someone would pass that.

DK: That's right, that's right. So, we went through my musical London [08:41] experiences, I believe, yesterday. I remember -- something else has come to mind since. In musical

circles, the St. Martin in the Fields is in England [09:00] not only the church but the musical venue. Sir Neville Marriner -- well I regularly went -- regularly went during my stay in London [09:13] to St. Martin and the church. And I had occasion there to meet some of the musicians and also some of the composers at the time, which I don't think was absolutely essential for my musical development, but it was all part of the package that I remember from my very, very wonderful experiences in London [09:43].

INT: Well, let's see here. I'm trying to think what we still haven't covered.

DK: We have to cover Camp Ritchie [09:55].

INT: Ritchie. Yeah, I definitely wanted to get to that. And then we'll probably -- well, maybe let's cover Ritchie now [10:00] so we make sure we've covered that. And then we'll come back. I'd eventually like to ask you some questions about what else you might remember about 1142 [10:10]. I've got that one map I mentioned that has the quarters on it. I'd like you to maybe see if you remember anything from that map. But to make sure we cover, let's go to Ritchie [10:22]. Well first then, let me ask how did you come about -- let me rephrase. Did the war end while you were still at 1142 [10:33]? And when I say the war, I mean the war against Germany [10:35].

DK: Yes. And I'll tell you what happened. When -- wait a minute -- no, the war ended while we were at Ritchie [10:53]. The German war ended there.

INT: At 1142 [11:00]?

DK: Then immediately after the victory -- very shortly thereafter -- there was no more need for that and then we went to Ritchie [11:09]. And then the war -- we hardly -- we weren't very long there, then the war ended. The war ended shortly thereafter with the Nagasaki and the -- now that I remember very distinctly. How we went wild.

INT: Oh, really?

DK: Oh, well, all you have to do is look at the photos of Times Square. It was in Times Square. I had my Times Square in Hagerstown. And -- well, it was -- everything was -- absolutely went wild. What was -- for me at that that time -- at the end of the war particularly exciting, one of my best friends [12:00], college friend from Nebraska, who visited at that time -- we were just together just at that time. And the men in Hagerstown. He was saying it was infantry. Saying we were -- we were going to go to Japan and we were going to have a tough time. It was all over.

INT: Yeah.

DK: Then we both got just -- I don't know what happened. We were all celebrating in Hagerstown, and the MPs and the morning or at night they were just picking up drunk soldiers and ask them, "What post are you?" And then they took them there -- back. It was -- I found myself sobered up and then in Camp Ritchie [12:57] again after having been picked up [13:00] totally out of this world. And, well -- no details -- no details, but you can imagine. So, when you asked me the end of the war, that was the end of the war,

INT: The end of the World War was Ritchie [13:16], but the end of the European front was -- you were still at 1142 [13:22].

DK: That simply meant -- again, I think it was a -- probably from Lovell [13:30] or somebody there I would say was a -- I wouldn't say genius, but efficiency in organization. He had a bunch of people who are well trained and knew their stuff. What they were doing was no more import. So, bang, let's find something else for them to do that we could utilize. And that's what they did [14:00] very promptly. I keep stressing these things because I do think that the current -- that people currently in these positions in which the leader --

military leaders were at that time -- they should take stock and people learn from that. And so what they did -- they made [unintelligible]. No one used -- first thing we did -- I believe that was still at the Box. They put us to work, and that was translating Russian documents -- German captured documents that suddenly appeared from somewhere, somebody. They were just -- they were on my desk, and that was that. And now Sergeant Kober, this is your job. And remember, they were in red covers. That's what you have to translate now [15:00] into English. And once passed on -- I don't know where or what -- but that's the way they operated putting us to use. And then very quickly we were transferred back to Ritchie [15:17].

INT: Now, these documents that you were getting at 1142 [15:21] -- these were German documents about the Russians?

DK: I speak now about '45.

INT: Yes.

DK: War was over. There was no use spying on or making on the German army. At least in Camp Ritchie [15:38]. So the first thing to keep -- at least to keep me busy at that time was to translate documents pertaining to the Russian -- German intelligence on the Russians. Which I believe would very soon go outdated anyway, but that's what we did. And then [16:00] -- and this is where I just have respect for the military directions that that had work for us in Ritchie [16:12]. And the reason we had work was simply that from Berlin [16:19] -- the war department -- their entire library and archives came on train -- by train -- to Camp Ritchie [16:33], and stuff was unloaded, and we had several barracks full of prisoners. Germans and Italians. I saw these prisoners were unloading -- they did all the heavy work or dirty work -- unloaded all that stuff. They built shelves in

the barracks, and that whole -- all that material was [17:00] sort of sorted and then eventually researched and complimented by other information that we had so that in the end all material from the German war department general staff in Berlin [17:24] was utilized as basis for the reorganization of the American military. In other words, instead of the previous system that we had where the Army, the Navy, the Marines -- they were all separate empires. They had their own air force. They had their own communication systems. That was remodeled after the German system [18:00] where they had a high command with liaison, and it was very carefully organized that there was no duplication of effort and that there was communication -- very effective communication between various departments. And not this kind of competition that is probably healthy in business in America. But when you fight a war, it ain't so good.

INT: So you're feeling's that the German system of organization was a much more efficient --

DK: Well, it wasn't my feelings. I just did what I was told. But I observed that that was -- that was the objective. I think it was a tremendous undertaking to. Maybe was just grand thinking [19:00] -- but anyways, somebody was responsible for this -- for this system of which I was a part -- a relatively small part. I was not nearly as independent or as important as I was in Washington [19:18] and Camp Ritchie [19:20]. This was just -- and there were many people working on this. I don't -- again, I don't know. I had a small room, to me was assigned Lieutenant -- or Lieutenant Colonel Fellner [19:39], young German officer with whom I must say I had excellent -- very often non-military conversations. He was very cultured, very well educated; it was a pleasure with him to talk. But, he also [20:00] -- well, underlined observations that I had made as a youngster in Germany [20:10] and later on namely. But these bastards were all Nazis [20:15], so.

INT: So he was a Nazi [20:17]?

DK: Of course.

INT: Yeah.

DK: But my best friends were Nazis in Germany [20:22], and if I had had a chance I probably would have been one myself. Sorry to say. They were all just simply overwhelmed by this system which -- this Nazi [20:37] system. But, the difference between this man and the other prisoners that I had occasion to talk with -- and in that respect, things were very free at that time -- Camp Ritchie [20:52]. I had access to Italians and Germans as prisoners. In fact, I became friendly [21:00] with some of them and talked with them in German. We were close to my hometown or this and that. But Fellner [21:10] who just - - they all professed never to have been Nazis [21:16] as the American occupation force surely experienced too. We were just forced to do -- we were not Nazis. But, this Colonel Fellner [21:30], he just said, "I can just tell you the truth," he said, "I was in the German [unintelligible] military. It was limited to 100,000 men before the -- Hitler [21:46]. And Hitler took over. I was delighted to see the Army, which was my career, to expand, and in no time, I was made an officer [22:00]. Went to officer school, and he said if he hadn't lost the war or if it had gone on, he said, "I sure wouldn't have become General. So what do I have to complain about?" He wasn't arrogant. He said, "Well, this was by my profession. Under this government I did great." He was just very honest and that sort of impressed me. And I must say, at that time, I was not quite as much aware of the damage that the Nazis [22:37] had done. And all of us, we really didn't know till sometime later, what tremendous crimes they were responsible for. But it was

bad enough what we did know. So, that was an experience. Camp Ritchie [22:54], Post Box 1142 [22:59].

INT: Why do you think [23:00] -- this German prisoner -- Fellner [23:05]? What was his last name?

DK: Rudy Fellner.

INT: Yeah. No, the German prisoner?

DK: Oh, Colonel Fellner. Yeah.

INT: Fellner -- Colonel Fellner. Why do you think he was so willing to assist and to help out? Was it just because the war was over?

DK: Well, I understood -- they asked -- I think at the time he was attached to the archives, you know, the general staff in Berlin [23:35]. And as far as I knew, he was a volunteer. In fact, he did -- I know he was a volunteer. And if I recall, when he told me, they were all asked, "Would you like to go to America?" And, "We are shipping all this stuff over. Would you like to go over [24:00] and assist?" And he volunteered and he went. I think he was told that you'd get to eat there and they'd take care of you. Now, I do know -- since we did a lot of talking -- and he always said -- now I told him I had been to this concert, to this opera. He said, "Yeah, you tell me all this and I get very envious. Why can't I go once in a while, do that too? But I can't." But the administration at Camp Ritchie [24:32] apparently was very strict, and they did not let anybody -- and of these people off the post. Although, now I think it would have been very easy for him to escape if he had wanted to. But he had volunteered to be there. In contrast to that, as I heard when I was at the Post Box 1142 [25:00], that cooperative officers -- in the part of

the camp of which I knew very little about -- they were given the opportunity to get off the post and were rewarded for information or whatever they contributed.

INT: When you were working with this Lieutenant Colonel, was he simply just helping also translate these German documents? Or was --

DK: Oh, he knew English as well.

INT: Oh, did he?

DK: Oh, yes.

INT: Okay. So he was helping translate but was he being --

DK: Oh, I didn't need help for translation.

INT: But was he being questioned at all? But did he have a knowledge of the German military system that was valuable? Could that be why he was there?

DK: Well, you know, it's hard for me to remember just exactly what we did. I know there were a lot of documents that had to be [26:00] -- somehow had to be put in order -- in such an order that they would be -- and cataloged so that they would be useful to somebody else. It was -- let's say it was -- what we did was advanced clerical work. It was not creative like we did at POB 1142 [26:29]. So, just something that was to utilize the trained personnel that we had and I presume I could have done that without him too perhaps. But it's so long ago, I just really -- and I didn't put my heart and soul into it as I did in the other. It was just something. We're still in the Army. I was waiting [27:00] to go back to college, so.

INT: Do you remember in terms of numbers this operation at Ritchie [27:09] -- I assume this had far more people than --

DK: Yes, yes.

INT: -- than 1142 [27:12]?

DK: Well, MIRS [27:14] at Ritchie then to the point that I didn't know so well anymore. Oh, one thing I remember in Anchorage that's interesting. There were about, I would say, let's say 50 people sleeping in a barracks. And I think the officer said, "Well, one of you has got to be barrack sergeant who is in charge of everybody gets up in the morning for report and stand in line." Well, I was elected -- they elected me barracks sergeant [28:00]. I was one of the younger kids too. And it was almost like an American election. I said, "You elect me and you'll be happy." And people sort of knew what my attitude to life was. And then we had what was called reverie when you get up, and with Sergeant Kober it was reverie in bed. And I was very popular. And so at that time we didn't work that hard as we did before but we sort of knew the war was over and eventually -- only thing is we didn't want to go -- nobody wanted to go to Japan. But that was all set as far as the combat units and air force. And then as I told you [29:00], that one day -- it wasn't very long after the war ended -- all of a sudden all over. And then after that we simply waited out. In my case, I think I waited a little longer in order to get more money before I put in for -- put in for discharge. So anyway, I was -- I waited till I was made Master Sergeant. And then somewhere in May or June or so or July -- I don't remember. I'll give you my discharge right when you can see. I was -- I was discharged with the rank of Master Sergeant. The discharge papers don't exactly match the information that you have [30:00] on this report as I note -- which I looked at last night. I told you I had about 40 people working under me, which according to the discharge paper is correct. But this -- what you have in there says I had 10 people working under me. Now, I may -- myself - I remember just a room full of people, and I remember beer or anything we were

drinking while we were working. And as it says in the report, 16, 18 hours working. That's why we had the privilege. You work till you're tired, sleep a few hours, and then go right on because we had sacks and sacks of material to go through -- go through to write the new Red Book [30:48]. The reason that would have been -- I told you why we had to write the Red Book. But then to get back to [31:00] -- get back to the 40 people. It could have been that I had a lot of people working for me in London [31:09] too.

INT: Okay.

DK: Especially on the Hitler Youth [31:12] book. Of course there were graphics in there and there were a lot of pictures of what they looked like in uniform and different -- that the occupation forces could recognize the rank. Of course, I don't think any rule would have shown their ranks after occupation. But, there were pictures in there and graphs and all kinds of things in that Hitler Youth [31:44] book. And I talked about it with my wife and she said she is sure that this relative of mine who stole it from me -- who I suspected stole it -- that [32:00] he saw their names that would possibly point not to him but to some of his buddies as ringleaders sort of for them. And he didn't want -- he thought he didn't want to have that. Indeed, if anybody ever really looked -- who cares now who was a Hitler Youth [32:24] --

INT: Right.

DK: But at the time -- so that --

INT: Real quick I'm going to flip this tape here.

[End of Tape 4A]

[Beginning of Tape 4B]

INT: Okay, go right ahead.

DK: I don't know if it's as good as yesterday.

INT: That's okay. Today we're a little more fragmented because we're just trying to catch up on what holes are left.

DK: Oh, you mean you're going to splice eventually?

INT: Oh, sure. Whatever we end up using -- again, we will just use --

DK: Edit it.

INT: Exactly. And again, this is going to be -- all these tapes are going to be for research purposes so if a researcher wants to come in and find out about 1142 [00:35] they could look at the unedited version. But anything that's ultimately produced --

DK: Would that be stored at the POB?

INT: This would be stored at the National Park. Our headquarters are actually not right there at 1142 [00:50]. They're a little bit further up. But we eventually may have offices there at Fort Hunt [00:56] as well.

DK: Well, I was thinking the museum that you put there [01:00].

INT: Yes, yes. It may have -- it certainly very well may have copies of all of this material. All of the originals will be locked up in archives with museum curators to make sure that it's preserved forever. But we'll make duplicates of everything and they'll probably be a duplicate copy there at the visitor center.

DK: What I think is -- I think what I would personally -- this being a very important -- it took a great deal of effort to write that Hitler Youth [01:32] book. Not only myself but other people. If that could still be existing someplace. I'm sure there's no book on the Hitler Youth [01:44] any place. And it was an important part of Germany [01:49]. Just think of it -- every kid in Germany had to put on -- eventually after I left -- it was a law. Every

kid had [02:00] to become a Hitler Youth [02:02] member. And they were organized into age groups just like the military into bands. You had Hitler Youth [02:13] that would be specialized on horseback and other. So it was very interesting how they utilized the young people through that typical German desire for organization. How the Nazi [02:33] government would utilize that German trait, so to speak, for their purposes. And that's why I think it's a shame that this when this is documented that that isn't -- that that son of a bitch stole it.

INT: We will see what we can do to locate. And I have no idea. I don't want to speak out of turn, but I think it would be pretty neat to see that. Do you [03:00] -- was your name attached to this or was it all very anonymous?

DK: No, my name was -- everything was hush-hush. But, from my boss who was at that time Staff Sergeant Rundt [03:13], had wrote a lovely dedication with it that's lost. And I vaguely remember he called me the [unintelligible] Dieter. Because [unintelligible] was a nomenclature used for young Hitler Youth [03:35] boys and that was attached to it. But, no, it's just like the Red Book [03:43]. We worked, as I said, highly undercompensated, but we did something for our country.

INT: Absolutely, you certainly did.

DK: Yeah.

INT: A couple last follow up questions about Ritchie [03:59].

DK: Yes.

INT: Your officers [04:00] while you were at Ritchie, were these some of the same officers as 1142 [04:06]?

DK: No. No. Captain Kluger [04:07] wasn't there. And as a matter of fact, that's where I also had some run ins with my -- simply because I though just in plain English -- simply I thought what the hell did I do? And no one is going to tell me anything as I told you earlier. At that point I felt I'm not going to take no shit. And got a little -- got -- occasionally got into a little trouble. But the worst they could do to me at the time was send me to Japan. But it was unlikely, so. What is interesting -- was interesting at the time at Camp Ritchie [04:51] and as I said earlier, I believe the commandant or the chief of [05:00] -- commander of Camp Ritchie [05:02], I think he was more of a disciplinarian because I think they didn't have so many privileges. One thing that you might find interesting. There was an area where the Germans were -- prisoners were -- and there was an area where the Italian prisoners were. Of course, all prisoners were used there for housekeeping -- kitchen, toilets, and so on. They did all the menial work. So, it was kind of nice for us. We didn't have -- we had to make our own beds but otherwise in my barracks it was very leisurely -- a leisurely way of life. And there was no officer there that would go after me [06:00] and say, "Now, your barracks is not spick and span." Those days, for us they were gone. It was a relatively easy life. Except at work. Now, when I -- I remember that somehow after these things from Germany [06:26] -- they were all processed properly. And then they put us to some -- pretty busy work -- which I thought was pretty insignificant. I think that's kind of fun if I tell you this.

INT: Sure.

DK: We were in -- I had an office then with my desk to work on documents. Absolutely meaningless work. There was no Lieutenant Kluger [06:57] there who understood what was important [07:00] and what was not important. But some young officers -- and that

was the occasion when I occasionally got -- Fairbrook [07:13] will probably tell you. We had captured model material to put on, like; I believe it was a model U-Boat [07:28].

And what I would do is cut out these parts and paste them together and build these things. A U-Boat or airplanes. And explain to them that was my work. Because that interested me more than the crap they put up.

INT: Was it serious work? I mean --

DK: Absolutely. I just didn't take -- the war's over. I've done my thing. You want to put me that stuff, doesn't mean a thing. So I just played with these things.

INT: [laughs]

DK: So [08:00], I forgot his name. I don't even know if this could be true, but I was in intelligence to make sure -- what happened is I found out -- I had ways and means to find out what the next promotion list was. So, I knew exactly who was going to be promoted. So, you can imagine, officer comes up, says, "What will you do?" "I'm playing making boats. It's fun." And he said, "Why do you do this?" I said, "Look, has another act done so much? There's another promotion that's coming out and I'm still the stock sergeant and I should be promoted." And so he said to me [09:00], "Well, you have to simply accept that you're just not sergeant material." So, I said, "Look at what." And then -- oh no, first he wouldn't get that. First he said, he says, "How do you know?" I says, "I know more than that." I said, "Oh, this man is going to be corporal. This is going to be that, and you are going to be Captain." He says, "Amazing, amazing. How do you know?" I says, "Oh, I know." And so he said, "Well then, if you didn't make it you are just are not sergeant material." I said, "Well, how come you made captain?" And, so that was -- so I got in a little trouble there. But at that time, just when he was trying to initiate

something against me which was in a way was insubordination, Colonel Burley [09:58] came from England and he took command [10:00]. And well, welcome -- remember us from London [10:06]? But that was all a very short period of time. I sort of got a little bit off the topic. But I should say it was interesting to see that the Italians and the Germans were just two different countries there on the -- on the post. When you come to the Italians, they seemed relaxed, they were singing. And the Germans very tight and little gardens, spick and span everything. Nobody really -- I don't think anybody forced them. I had nothing to do with that. But, I fraternized with all of them [11:00]. After all, these people were part of a whole machine. There's nothing they could do. You know, terrible things that happened to those that were only suspected of not doing [unintelligible]. Well, I was particularly friendly in the Germans with a Private First Class Miller [11:31]. He came from Graz, Austria [11:34], and they called him the Austrian or the German Kober because he had similar characteristics and he played a violin. So, I don't know -- somehow I got a violin for him, and I played [12:00] cello and violin duos with him.

INT: And this was at Ritchie [12:04]?

DK: At Camp Ritchie, yes. We stayed in touch after the war but then gradually I had -- I was so busy with college and worked very -- that's another story. I did in a record time -- see, I got out of the Army in '45 or '46. And in 1950 -- that's about four years later -- I had my doctorate. And of course, G.I. Bill helped a great deal -- helped a great deal. And so, I was used to how it worked. And so, then just by accident, this is [unintelligible] beyond [13:00]. This conducting business -- well, it was a hobby. But I never thought I'd be a -- I'd make it to be a conductor. In my youth, I wanted to join the Army and be in

militaries. I think I told you earlier. My goal was to become a music master in a German regiment. But then I went more the intellectual way, and by a hair after I graduated -- a hair -- I got a job as music critic at the Chicago Daily News. Somebody else got just a -- it was just by a fluke that I missed it. If I hadn't missed it, I never would have gotten into the conducting business.

INT: Wow.

DK: And then -- that doesn't belong here. But when you think these were all fantastic stories. I told you at breakfast -- some of the things [14:00] how could you make it? You have a small, amateur group and you go play in the biggest concert halls in Europe with your own group. That's what -- and then -- well, I hadn't written about that, but then the relationships with the communists and socialist government. That's a story within itself.

INT: A few last questions about Ritchie [14:29]. You mentioned that there were Italian prisoners there as well.

DK: Yes.

INT: Did you work at all with the Italian prisoners?

DK: No, I didn't work at all. It was all purely social. I didn't work with the German prisoners either. It was --

INT: Except for the case of the Lieutenant Colonel?

DK: Like I said, there were, for a short time, there were staff officers there. And then for a time there after they just gave us busy work. And of course, every weekend you took off or even the evenings [15:00] you went off to Hagerstown [15:02]. As a matter of fact, I believe I took a college course by correspondence there to pass the time. You know, I took English composition II there just to keep -- to utilize my -- I was ambitious. I was

intellectually very much stimulated by some of the people on POB Box 1142 [15:27]. There first class academic admissions in that group. Some names that you have there [unintelligible] and David James [15:42] [phonetic] [unintelligible]. Fairbrook [15:44] will tell you he was a professor of Brown University, and after the war, as a matter of fact, I went to Europe and Italy with David [15:55], and he explained to me the painting and the sights in Italy [16:00]. So I was very much -- and this is a sideline -- the company I kept with the people on that box -- P.O. Box -- it's very stimulating and affected my intellectual academic growth. And Paul [16:19] is going to tell you exactly the same thing. The government was just very -- whoever picked us -- they picked the right people.

INT: Is it safe to say that your experiences during the war and at 1142 [16:36] had a major influence in shaping you as a person and then you -- and then --

DK: Absolutely.

INT: -- in your later career?

DK: Well, it -- not as a person. I think I had a very good education. I had a wonderful home. My parents, from childhood on, they educated us differently from the way children [17:00] are educated now. Other words, I was very early, given all the comforts of life, but at the same time taught the responsibilities to go with it at an early age. And given many opportunities to develop culturally. A little example -- for a 12-year-old to have a - - to work for the historical atlas, ancient Greece, ancient -- and these. So, that came -- I wouldn't say it came from the Army. But I have that kind of background. I go back to [unintelligible] for my grandfather also. But it was a great, great help to be in the company of very fine academically trained people [18:00] far older than I was in the

Army. You know, I learned from them and the -- and another thing -- it was -- I don't believe that was mentioned. It was very interesting. There was Bogdanov [18:17] [phonetic]; it was a Russian I worked with. I don't know what he was doing. And then there was Crawford [18:28] [phonetic] or something. I can think of his name later -- from South America. There were -- there were some international people around us. I don't know what they were doing.

INT: At 1142 [18:41]?

DK: At 1142.

INT: And so you work -- you said you worked with a Russian.

DK: Yes -- American Russian.

INT: An American Russian, yes. Did -- would you -- would you ever --

DK: George Bogdanov [18:51] was his name. I don't think he's in this book.

INT: Okay.

DK: Radcliff [18:58] [phonetic] was his name [19:00].

INT: Radcliff?

DK: Radcliff is another one. Radcliff, but he was -- he couldn't be alive. But he -- up here -- and he was -- he was occasionally, I took him with me to the Pentagon [19:15] if I remember. That's all first-class people that somehow got picked to come to 1142 [19:24].

INT: Well, to wrap things up chronologically, you were -- you were discharged from Ritchie [19:36], correct? Or at least did you -- did you have to go to --

DK: No, I was not discharged. It came at Ritchie then when the time came, I was then shipped to Leavenworth [19:50].

INT: Oh.

DK: In Kansas. I spent a little while in Leavenworth just waiting to be processed.

INT: But not doing anything related to intelligence [20:00]?

DK: No, no. No, I was -- I don't remember. You could hardly wait to get out. Things didn't work that fast in the Army. So, and I think they took some medical examinations. And I think in my case they were briefing me because of what I was doing. I don't remember exactly. But I was not dismissed like Ritchie [20:25], go home. I was sent to Fort Leavenworth [20:28]. And after I spent -- maybe I spent a week there. I don't remember. But the dates are all on this thing.

INT: Right.

DK: And, well then from Leavenworth [20:41] I think I'm back to -- I think I went home, say hello, put on for first time as civilian. No, first thing I did -- you know what I did first thing? I went with my Aunt to 5th Avenue Brooks Brothers [21:00]. You know, Brooks Brothers, and find a suit. I decided to buy myself a civilian wardrobe.

INT: [laughs]

DK: See, my aunt, I was very close to her, and she was fairly well to do. She was a physician. And she paid for it.

INT: [laughs]

DK: So, that was post Ritchie [21:23].

INT: Then you -- after the war, you finished your undergraduate degree.

DK: Yes.

INT: Because you hadn't finished school at University of Nebraska [21:30]?

DK: No, I was still an undergraduate. And then I graduated from -- I graduated from Nebraska, which incidentally, some years later -- a few years ago -- honored me. I was there for that event so I got some more kudos. And what if the way I went to Chicago was a second choice [22:00]. So, from Nebraska I wanted to study musicology. And I knew quite a bit. I was very well prepared, but not on paper. I had it here but I -- Nebraska didn't have such courses. I was majoring in music education and minoring in political science. So, I applied by mail to Harvard and to Yale. The best schools I wanted to go to. And back, there's no record that you have taken courses in musicology. I think if I had gone there personally I would have talked my way into it because when I went to Chicago I had no problem at all. So, I just said, when I was asked, "Why you want to go to Chicago?" I said, "Very simple [23:00]. I couldn't make it in Harvard and Yale." They said, "Okay, you're in."

INT: [laughs]. So, you got your PhD?

DK: No, I got a Doctor of Music --

INT: Doctor --

DK: Doctor of Fine Arts, and I had the -- I don't know if it's pertinent, but I had a very unusual education. But I studied music at the Chicago Music College [23:30]. Then I studied some course of musicology and art history at the University of Chicago [23:40]. And then I studied some courses in art at the Art Institute of Chicago [23:48]. So the combined courses -- degree at the time -- which also symbolically was awarded in Orchestra Hall, was Doctor of Fine Arts [24:00]. Some -- that program was eventually discontinued but I think it was -- for my case it was appropriate. And then after that, my first job was at the city colleges. And -- which then were taken over by the state so I

became more comfortably set as a state employee with pension and other things as I told you before. As a sideline, I started to orchestra and as a special interest I became active in the union. Because from way back, I always felt when you do something you should be compensated properly, which was not the case financially, at least in the Army.

INT: So, at what point -- today you live in Dresden. At what point did you move to Germany [25:00] to live there?

DK: That's about 10 or 11 years ago.

INT: Okay.

DK: Well, what happened is -- well, I just felt it was -- I was thinking of -- I was thinking of not wanting to retire. But the life in Chicago was very fine. I mean, I was very active and being invited to so many things and doing this and that. But then, my wife -- this is another story -- whom I met in East Germany [25:43]. You see, I visited East Germany regularly after the war hence my contacts including high East German government. That's another story. She's a native, and, well, she escaped East Germany [26:00]. And then we got married, see?

INT: Oh, really?

DK: And after the reunification in -- was it 1990 -- '89 -- I had already been there. I concertized there and so I knew -- and in her hometown, of [unintelligible], a suburb of Dresden [26:25], she was returned her property. You see, she had a piece of land right across from the street of the house where she was born. Beautiful section. And [inaudible] would have been nice. To make a long story short, it was a choice piece of property in a choice location right near the forest [27:00]. I walk my dog there. Five minutes -- not even that -- I'm in the forest. I get in my car. In 15 minutes, I'm in front

of the opera house in Dresden [27:15]. There's no place in the world like that. So, I said, "Well," I talked to some of my friends here who are in business and know. I said, "Gee, if you own that land you got a little money, this is the time that country's beginning now. Ought to buy and build." So I went down. Built a house exactly to my wife's and my specifications. I'll show you a picture. And I said, "Well, gee, what I first thought is we have that house over there and I stay in Chicago and in the summer time I go there [28:00]." I said, "Gee, it's nice here." And I have many friends there and relatives -- my wife's, my own. A lot of them are dead, but that's unfortunate. And so -- but at the time, there were many people from mine and her family alive that made it just like we'd be at home there too. And I had met new friends over there. So, I said, "Oh, what the hell. Let's pack up everything and sell off the other condominium here on Lakeshore Drive." Very nice -- so I just sold that and moved and packed over there. I got the -- I was told -- but with the Internet you can do anything, and I had no idea. I went and bought myself a computer, and after I [29:00] -- well, the computer man got to know -- after I bought that I said, "Well, you recommend school or [unintelligible]." He said, "You can do that yourself. Just ask everybody you know, and just follow instructions. You can do." And indeed, I sort of kind of print my own programs, do everything on it. [unintelligible].

INT: That's great.

DK: And, I'm running that Chicago Chamber Orchestra [29:35] from Germany [29:36]. The only trouble -- the only problem if that I see my limitations financially. Because while I was here if I go out and start soliciting -- I talk to big people and big companies. My batting record was if I go out four times [30:00] I'm guaranteed to get a good chunk of money from one. As simple as that. Sometimes even better. But I don't think it's -- I

don't want -- at my age I've decided I don't want to go out and chase after money. I'd rather sit in my nice house over in Germany [30:21]. And I just come over when I want to run a concert. It's not so -- well, there's enough money that I can afford to just go back and forth as I please. Not first class, but I get enough coin because every once in a while I get a free business class trip. So, that's why -- that's why I'm in Germany [30:46]. And of course, culturally it's nice. All in all, I would say, however, it's more of a convenience than a conviction. Of course [31:00], I feel totally American. What's amazing is that in Germany [31:07] they say, "You act American. You speak with an American accent." In Chicago, they say, "We can hear your German accent." So, I don't know how much you'll recognize, but there's an inflection there.

INT: Oh, sure, sure.

DK: But the choice of words I think is adequate.

INT: I think it's more than adequate. With that, both of these tapes are about to run out. So, we've gone through an hour. I'm going to turn it off.

[End of Tape 4B]

[Beginning of Tape 5A]

INT: We're going to get right into it. Today is January 18th, 2008. This is an interview with Mr. Dieter Kober, veteran of P.O. Box 1142 [00:18]. This is part of the Fort Hunt Oral History Project [00:20]. We are here in Chicago at the Union League Club recording our fifth and most likely final taped interview of this session. This is Brandon Bies of the National Park Service, and we are going to go right in. And, Mr. Kober, you were just telling an interesting story about what happened to you and maybe a little bit about the influences that 1142 [00:44] had.

DK: I recall an interesting incident. I was at Union Station [00:44] returning from a trip abroad. And at that time [01:00], you needed a valid pass that apparently I had overstayed my -- the date of the pass and it was no longer valid. And this was found out as various soldiers would pass through at Union Station [01:21] were checked there by MP personnel. Well, my turn came, I showed the pass, and this was -- pass shown to the -- it was a Lieutenant or Officer MP. What showed me, "What shall we do with this man?" And so, he said -- I think he actually said to me, "Sergeant, you are under arrest. Follow me. I'm going to have to investigate this," or something like that. So, I said, "Well, before you [02:00] do anything, would you please telephone this number?" Which was 1142 [02:06]. And he just stood -- there was no -- or no cellphone at the time, so anyway, they had a telephone and he phoned or somebody phoned. He came back and he says, "Okay, Sergeant, you can go." And I think I asked then -- I was told, "Well, they take care of this matter." The whole thing was forgotten. I thought it might be interesting to know -- to know that beyond military regulations POB 1142 [02:43], being a member of that did count for something. So, that's the story.

INT: That's great. Oh, to ask a few final questions -- this last session we'll probably jump around a little bit and just get some of the last questions that I haven't [03:00] had a chance to ask yet. And some of those are about the physical description of 1142 [03:08] - - of the actual Post in terms of what do you remember about the layout and where your buildings were? And I have here a map of 1142 [03:23], which I certainly don't expect you to remember every single detail but just thought you might want to take a look at that. And see if that --

DK: I think I remember this is the road to the mess hall. Oh.

INT: And so, just for your reference, we believe [04:00] the main entrance would have been over here. This would have been the river over here in the main road -- the parkway.

And the entrance would have been through here. This was the parade ground right here.

DK: Yeah, that is -- yeah.

INT: These are the prisoner compounds where the German POWs [04:18] were.

DK: Does this show where the mess hall was?

INT: The mess hall would have been one of these buildings up --

DK: Right.

INT: -- up in here.

DK: That's right.

INT: Perhaps right here.

DK: I think we were very close to here where we were. And we were in this area somewhere.

INT: Over toward -- closer to the entrance of the post?

DK: Yes. Yeah. Somewhere in this area. All this was [inaudible] [05:00].

INT: [affirmative]. Now what about your barracks? See, most of these long buildings were -- most of these were barracks for enlisted men -- the MPs, the room monitors.

DK: [inaudible] It seems to me we were maybe here. We were so isolated from all of this other stuff. I'd have to think about it and really spend some time.

INT: Do you recall if you were close to the entrance or if you were --

DK: I think we were fairly close to the entrance. I think I almost think we were over on here.

I think it's possible that all activities it seems could have been right here. Sleeping and everything. You must realize in our barracks [06:00] there were not more than 20 people

sleeping. So, I think it's that front section. But Fairbrook [06:15] maybe would remember better.

INT: Okay.

DK: But if I just look at it again or somehow. It's been a long time ago.

INT: Absolutely. No, that's okay. I just wanted to ask.

DK: I think I did -- when I was in Camp Ritchie [06:33] a few years ago, even there I had some difficulties recognizing the barracks.

INT: So you went to Camp Ritchie a few years ago?

DK: Yes. And I can tell you again, this is none of my business. There was no security whatsoever. I could just do anything I wanted there. But they found out that I didn't belong is when I went to the PX [07:00] and wanted to buy something. They said, 'Where's your I.D.?' I said, 'No, I don't have it with me.' So, I simply -- I couldn't use the PX. I found other ways to use it, but again, that's where nowadays, of course, we are at war and we are not at war. The security there was certainly not what I think it should have been at a military post. It's not my -- at this point it's not my -- it's not up to me to criticize, but I observed it was not -- for an old soldier, that was not sufficient security.

INT: A couple other questions about your buildings at 1142 [07:53]. When I was reading through that report on MIRS [07:54], it mentioned that your building was referred to sometimes as Berlin [08:00] or as the Farm [08:04].

DK: Yes. That's right.

INT: So, you remember that?

DK: I can -- yes -- I can -- I can substantiate that. The Farm [08:13] and Berlin [08:13], yes.

INT: And was that -- now, were those two names for the same building? Or were those two different buildings?

DK: No, I think it was synonymous. I don't know what they called London [08:30]. But that's right.

INT: Do you know how -- what that signified if anything? Or it was just kind of a code or a nickname?

DK: No. I just recall both names. But --

INT: There were some other very secretive buildings at the post. I mentioned to you over breakfast about this whole program, the MIS-X Program [08:58] which they were helping American prisoners [09:00] escape from German camps.

DK: Absolutely. I had no idea.

INT: The building they were located in also had a nickname. It was known as the Creamery [09:15].

DK: Never.

INT: Nothing?

DK: No.

INT: Okay.

DK: Never heard of it.

INT: All right. Another nickname for a building where the room monitors used to listen in on the prisoners was called the Honeysuckle Lodge [09:32]. Okay.

DK: No.

INT: Just curious.

DK: You see, it was only -- I don't even know if the other people in my MIRS [09:42] knew what I knew. But through hearsay I knew that they were monitoring. Otherwise -- well, you can see how secret that was when you just look at that article [10:00] I gave you now after all these years that this [unintelligible] in Germany [10:07]. Very famous researcher now comes out how they were monitoring in England. That's just this year came out. So, very, very new. I just hope you get in touch with this man.

INT: Absolutely. No, we're certainly have -- we'll get it translated and then we'll try to do that. Did you -- we talked about this a little bit yesterday. Did you have any relationship, or maybe not you particularly, but MIRS [10:37] as a whole -- did they work at all with the interrogation and the room monitors to get information for order of battle?

DK: The monitors on the post?

INT: On the post, at 1142 [10:56]. For example, when you were revising the Red Book [10:58], was this --

DK: No. No [11:00].

INT: You didn't -- you didn't go to the interrogators?

DK: I could only emphasize -- when you have the evidence, we were kept so secret I didn't know and they didn't know.

INT: [affirmative]. And so, again, you never interacted at all with any prisoners at 1142 [11:28]?

DK: Never.

INT: Never? Okay.

DK: Never.

INT: Do you know if there was a related -- and you might not know this, and that's okay -- if there was a related order of battle section from -- that the interrogators and the room monitors were getting their own information on order of battle?

DK: They may have.

INT: Because there's reference in the history to an order of battle section [12:00] for that program, and I'm trying to figure out was that separate from you guys.

DK: Yes, though the answer is -- the answer is we had very, very many different sources. And it wasn't -- I'm thinking of when -- what I learned from Tucker [12:28]. On some information, I put in parenthesis the word "spurius" [12:35], S-P-U-R-I-U-S. When we weren't quite sure where something -- where something came from. And it is absolutely possible that information that was gathered there was being used by us indeed. But they [13:00] didn't give us a source. It could have -- I believe we did have some sources where it would just say something like, IPW info. But I wouldn't know whether this was in Africa or where. Yes, I would know where something came from Africa or from some particular front or some particular hospital as I told you. But there were items where I could not identify where it would just say IPW info. Also, one thing I did not tell you the last time we should add, that we used a fuel post number [13:48]. That potentially --

INT: The German's fuel post number?

DK: The Germans. That they finally got a little bit more careful and instead of identifying [14:00] units or the actual number -- with actual numbers, they started to use fuel post numbers [14:11]. So, if mother wanted to write to her son, she would not write any more infantry or so and so, but fuel post number [14:21]. But after a while we got -- we got

into this thing too. But, anyway, that's one of the source you should add to what I had said earlier. It just came to me.

INT: At 1142 [14:39], do you remember -- you mentioned briefly yesterday -- you brought up the OSS [14:44] a couple of times. You thought some people in MIRS [14:48] may have gone off to work with those.

DK: Yeah.

INT: Did you ever have interactions? Did they ever send an OSS [14:55] officer to find out what you guys were doing or what your information was?

DK: Yes [15:00]. I don't know what they did, but Colonel Lovell [15:05] occasionally came to the post with some officers, and he would go from desk to desk and just -- I don't know who they were. They could have been also people in foreign uniforms. I think they were probably -- there were some British officers too. And they would go then from desk to desk and he would show them, this is how we're doing things. And Sergeant Kober's doing this and Sergeant so and so is doing -- yes.

INT: So, they would kind of brief these --

DK: Not -- again, I don't -- they didn't tell us very much. I just remember. In answer to your question, that somehow our system of doing things was communicated [16:00] by Colonel Lovell [16:03] personally to some of his guests or offices. I don't know. They may have been generals or anybody. He would have -- we'd visit, and he'd also -- on some of these occasions, he would always give sort of pep talks to us. That was a good question.

INT: Do you remember if there were any other military intelligence -- OSS [16:31] for example, facilities in the vicinity that you dealt with?

DK: No. No. That was Colonel Lovell's [16:39] round. And, possibly General Bissell [16:44]. No, I think every unit there -- they were -- tried to be. And it was part of the reason I believe of the reorganization of the American Army. These [17:00] departments and units were self-contained sort of. And I had used -- first determined they were building their little empires, and it wasn't quite that bad. But the thing that I found good, the secrecy. But I believe that under the realm or under the heading of secrecy, there must have been people that didn't do a goddamn thing. Just used it as a shelter for whatever they were not doing, so that's where I was. All I know is that P.O. Box 1142 [17:54] was -- since you got into the picture now, was undeservedly [18:00] underestimated.

INT: Absolutely -- yeah, at least certainly today it has been. And this is what we're trying to -- trying to bring it back to the forefront a little bit

DK: Shoot.

INT: Sure, a few more shotgun approach questions. The year or so that you were at the Pentagon [18:23], again -- and I know we talked about this yesterday. I'm just trying to really summarize things. You were working on your -- one specific project there at the Pentagon [18:34].

DK: Yes. Yes.

INT: Can you think of any real substitutive, specific reason why you were tasked to do that project at the Pentagon [18:46] as opposed to at 1142 [18:48]? Why couldn't you have just carried that out at 1142?

DK: Because of the proximity to Tucker [18:54].

INT: [affirmative]. So, you -- that particular project, really you needed to be close to Tucker [19:00]?

DK: Well, it helped. It helped. As I explained to you, according to the general procedure, your question is absolutely justified. Why the hell shouldn't this go to the guy that works there? And officially including Captain Kluger [19:24]. But what he's doing over there he can do it better there and he's got his files there. We cannot -- we cannot order it, but we can just let him slide. We can -- when it got to the point where the administrator's officers felt they must have come for every -- for every seat on the carrier that we could -- that was military bureaucracy [20:00]. People like Kluger [20:03] and other people in the Pentagon [20:04] including Lovell [20:05]. That just said, "Okay, if you can find it. It's own transportation. Just literally go, we were happy to have them there." It's an unbelievable situation in an Army. And I remember Radcliff [20:21] did something. I don't know what he did, but Radcliff was a professor of old languages or something. I don't know what he did, but I don't think it was in my department. I remember when he said, "It's like in old times where the soldiers should just go on their own." And he was there chatting with me on occasion. Active forces -- so. That's a story.

INT: Oh, absolutely.

DK: As I said, the key person is -- of this whole Red Book [21:00] and all the other books -- there are many books. And I was too absorbed that I hardly knew. I saw the other books that were printed. I think I have some that I can bring next time.

INT: But you can -- you can really only speak intimately about the Red Book [21:21] and some of the --

DK: It was my work.

INT: Okay. So, because there are references to the older Red Book, to the Yellow Book [21:30].

DK: Yeah.

INT: You're familiar with them but you didn't work on them?

DK: I wasn't even familiar with them.

INT: Okay.

DK: I'll give you an example. Sergeant Thompson [21:38] -- his job was installations. Hell, I don't even know if that man -- presidents -- I don't know whether his man -- military post or whatever. I know we was in installations, but I was busy with my own stuff [22:00]. I would have had access to it. I would have never went to his desk and said, "What are you doing over there?" When the books came out we short of looked at it and I suppose Sergeant Schmidt [22:13] did know about it because he disseminated this stuff. And I have to add something else. I'm not sure everything came in the sack. It was not my business. It came there somehow. Just remember these big sacks sometimes, and I also remember a lot of stuff that came in those sacks was highly personal and heartbreaking sometimes. A soldier -- do you know what he keeps in his pocket when he goes to battle. And it might be his wedding picture and what not. So these things weren't [inaudible] [23:00].

INT: Did you get the impression that some of these things were from German soldiers who had been killed?

DK: Absolutely. And they were just -- those were the orders, and anything -- and I suppose I had personnel. Again, this is either -- I know what I was trained for to do is IPW [23:25]. On the IPW team and I talked with some of these people later on after the war and met

later -- was friendly with [inaudible] for example. And they were utilized for other things as well, but mainly to make use of their knowledge of German and evaluating quickly what could be of use in combat.

INT: One of the last questions [24:00] is a little bit about security. You mentioned earlier -- you even referenced going to Camp Ritchie [24:06] recently and being so surprised at the lack thereof. What can you say about the security from what you remember at 1142 [24:17]? I presume there were MPs there. Was there a gate? Did you have to show a pass to get in?

DK: Yeah. One thing was totally different at 1142 [24:30] you compared with Camp Ritchie [24:35]. 1142 was secluded. You hardly knew there was anything. You drove by there and you went -- the only thing that was apparent I told you before, was a blue light that you had a chance to get disinfected when you came back from washing. But, the outside was absolutely [25:00] nothing noticeable that hint that that was a military installation. At Camp Ritchie [25:11], you could get off the post and the whores were just in masses there to hustle. And so, that is the difference, that's one difference in security. I don't know what military means -- that word -- besides the fact that it was hardly detectable. I'm sure that the compound where the PWs were -- they were sufficiently secure. Of course, we have this one instance where we know that the prisoners couldn't get away from that. But in Camp Ritchie [25:58] -- when I was there [26:00] -- the second, the first time there were no prisoners there. And I think the population there knew at the time that things were going on at camp. It couldn't happen. I mean, you saw these German uniforms in the neighborhood and in the fields. And I'm very sure that the population knew that this was the area of a -- of a military intelligence. And as well as I knew, and

we knew, this was Camp David [26:49] where Eisenhower and big military people would come and visit the President. I guess the Germans knew that too [27:00]. Everybody knew that this was a pretty important territory. But, otherwise I can't think of any special security. What the hell they had to do their job there -- and then just under the circumstances you can't keep it secret when you see soldiers in-- units in German uniform on the countryside. So, they had to do it someplace. And so -- and they had a limited number of classes. And, again, I wasn't interested. Maybe they had two dozen or so classes of these -- you probably knew of this course. And I don't know what they did afterwards except what they did when they came back. But, well, that [28:00] answers my question on security.

INT: And you mentioned one thing that I don't know that we talked about on tape so I wanted to see if you would repeat it. At the very beginning yesterday you mentioned a story how you remember hearing that somebody had maybe tried to -- one of the prisoners had tried to escape from 1142 [28:21].

DK: Yeah.

INT: Can you just remember briefly what you remember hearing about that?

DK: What happened -- it was the one time I heard a siren. So, I don't even -- well, the only time I heard a siren so something happened. And then I saw a -- and then I saw a medical -- what do you call it?

INT: An ambulance?

DK: Ambulance, yeah. I just saw an ambulance dashing out [29:00]. And so what the hell went on?

INT: Leaving the post?

DK: Leaving the post, that's right. And then somebody said, "Well, they shot a German soldier." That sort of got back to me. Which is inevitable because you can't hold security when you turn on a siren like that. That's how I --

INT: Did you remember hearing if that prisoner died or if he lived?

DK: I think I heard that he died. But I didn't know the details they told me. I think -- I think he was -- I heard that he was killed.

INT: Okay.

DK: Yeah.

INT: That is it for my questions.

DK: Okay.

INT: Do you have any final -- we've got about two or three minutes before this tape runs out and we'll call it quits. Do you have any final concluding thoughts or anything drastic [30:00] that you think that we've horrifically skipped over?

DK: I think we've covered the -- we've covered the ground pretty well. I'm sure if I lie awake at night dreaming about pastimes and some other ideas, reminiscences will come back to my brain. And I'm looking forward to collect those and bring them to you three or four months from now.

INT: Outstanding. And we're looking forward to it as well. And I can't tell you enough what a treat this has been. This exceeded my wildest expectations. I feel like now I'm almost an expert on MIRS [30:46] whereas before I couldn't have told you a thing about it. So, this has helped tremendously. We're looking forward to seeing you in May. That'll be a real treat for everybody. And formally, you know, and we'll do it [31:00] again in May, but want to thank you for -- not only for participating in this, but for your service in

World War II, because from what you've said today and from all the research we've done thus far, what you did made a difference. It made a big difference. It was important.

And you're owed a thank you for that. And we hope you'll come in May so we can -- we can thank you for what you did.

DK: Thank you very much. It was a pleasure playing out duet here in Chicago.

INT: Outstanding. All right.

[end of transcript]

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