

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

COLONEL ABTAM GILMORE FLUES

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: June 27, 1995
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INTERVIEW

Q: Colonel, could we start at the beginning, could you tell me where and when you were born?

FLUES: Well, I was born August 30, 1903 which means I am 91 years of age right now. I was born in Saginaw Michigan. I lived there very briefly when my father was there on business. My real home was Toledo, Ohio.

Q: Oh, yes.

FLUES: I went to Toledo public schools and then to Lake Forest Academy above Chicago and then to Princeton University, class of 1926, and then to Harvard Law School, class of 1929, and that's my educational career, a B.A. degree and a L.L.B. degree.

Q: Well, just a little bit about what business was your father in?

FLUES: My father had a place in the Merchandise Mart in Chicago for the drapery and sale of fine furniture and furnishings. He was a recognized expert on the best oriental carpets and rugs, as one would be for fine paintings.

Q: Oh, my goodness.

FLUES: He had a showroom there and represented quite a number of big companies who needed that expertise and that kind of supply and recognition.

Q: Where did he pick up this knowledge?

FLUES: My father was not a college graduate, but he simply picked that up from experience. He represented Carson Perry Scott in Chicago [a big department store] at one time before establishing his own company. It was purely from experience and his interest in that area which made him, I would say, a country wide expert in that field.

Q: Fleus, Flies, what is the origin of that name?

FLUES: It is from a German background. I believe it goes back to the Latin fluvium.

Q: Right, I was going to say "river."

FLUES: One time my mother thought of changing the name Flues to River; she thought it was an easier name for others to remember and pronounce. When my brother and I were playing football, papers would print our name even as "flies," "fleas" or what have you.

Q: At Princeton, what did you major in?

FLUES: I majored in history and literature. I majored in jurisprudence also, preparing for the idea of going on to law.

Q: You graduated from Princeton when?

FLUES: 1926.

Q: You went to Harvard Law immediately?

FLUES: Yes, I did. So I was out of Harvard in 1929.

Q: Twenty-nine: just a good time to come out into the world, right in the beginning of the depression.

FLUES: Yes. I may say I just returned to Princeton for my 69th reunion this year.

Q: Oh, wonderful. What type of law did you go into?

FLUES: Corporation law, mostly.

Q: What firms did you work for?

FLUES: I started out in Toledo, Ohio for the big sum of \$175 per month. That was the kind of going rate in those years for a beginner, and that was with the largest law firm in northwestern Ohio. And then when along came the bank collapse in Toledo and around the country, I became a special counsel on the staff of Attorney General John Bricker of Ohio.

Q: Later Governor and later Senator.

FLUES: Later Governor, later Senator and later a Vice Presidential candidate with Dewey. Then I had my own firm for a short time, followed as a member of another important firm. Along came the war. So I volunteered for service at once. I was not married, I was 38 years of age, I was the only unmarried man in my law firm, so I felt someone should go. I volunteered therefore, and was commissioned a Captain, as I say,

out of private life. My only previous military experience was a brief stint in the Ohio National Guard before going off to college.

Q: We're talking about going in around 1942.

FLUES: 1942; it was right after Pearl Harbor.

Q: Well, now can we start a bit about, what did they do to you? Let's talk about your military career. Here you were a lawyer, versed in corporation law in the middle of World War II.

FLUES: I had had just one bit of military experience. I was only 16 years of age and my cousin, a World War One veteran, came over to see me. He was a Colonel in the Ohio National Guard with an Artillery unit. He said to me, "You're going down to Fort Knox, Camp Knox, with me." I said, "What am I going to do down there?" He said, "You're going down with my artillery unit." And I said, "Gordon, I am only 16 years of age." He said, "We need some bodies. You're not sixteen you're eighteen, right now." So that was my experience of going down with a field artillery unit for training at Camp Knox in Kentucky. I was the only person apparently in the outfit that knew anything about plain geometry and angles. I ended up, a sixteen year old boy, operating a French aiming circle in the battery commander's detail helping to sight the guns for firing. That gave me my own horse and I was with the battery commander's detail, so I always got a kick out of the fact that as a sixteen year old kid I was helping to direct the artillery fire of this unit. But that had been my only military experience.

Q: Could you tell me a bit about what you did when you came into the military? They took a look at you and what did they decide to do with you?

FLUES: Well, the first thing I did was to go out with several younger friends to the Great Lakes Training Station, which was a Navy training station above Chicago. I was thinking about going into the Navy. I knew a young ensign, he couldn't have been in more than a few weeks himself, and the first thing he said to me was, "Well, what do you do?" I said, "I am a lawyer." "Well," he said, "what are you doing here? Why don't you go to the Judge Advocate's Department?" I said to him, "If I'm going to get into this thing I'm not going to shift my feet from one desk to another." "Well," he said, "we can't use you." I said, "Why not?" "Well," he said, "you wear glasses." That made me sore. I said to him, "Young man, they tell me that in the Japanese Navy, half the men wear glasses, and just now they're doing pretty well against you fellows." I got thrown out at that point. That was my attempt to get into the Navy. So then a program turned up for the Army Air Corps, where they were commissioning people out of private life and I applied there and I was accepted and I took my physicals at Camp Perry, Ohio and passed those. One night I got a telephone call at one o'clock in the morning and the voice said to me, "Captain Abram G. Flues," and I immediately knew I was going to fight the war as Abram G. Flues. The second thing was, I knew that I was now a Captain and she said I was to report to Miami Beach at a certain date. I ended up getting a uniform of course, and saying

good-bye to my mother. I knew that she could take care of herself, so I didn't have to worry about her. I went on down with several others to the first Officers Training School at Miami Beach. One of the amusing things down there, on a particular morning, I was in command of a company and we formed outside the Roney Plaza hotel where I was quartered. So we started the war in pretty good shape, at the Roney Plaza. At any rate, here we were all dressed in shorts, jerseys and tennis shoes and we were all going to march out for calisthenics. We pulled into Collins Road and here we were all marching along and they had shut off all intervening streets into Collins Avenue. A car pulled up, it was a roadster I remember, and it was obvious that the occupants had been out all night. There was a big blousey blonde sitting up in that car, and as my gallant platoon came along she looked at us and in the front rank there was a World War One retread who had a big belly hanging out of his front, slouching along, and she shouted out, "Oh my god, look at that one, we've lost the war already." Well, I tell you that calisthenics down there made young men out of us again. We got excellent training. Then I was sent on from there up to Harrisburg to another intelligence school.

Q: Was intelligence broken down when you were being trained into various types of intelligence?

FLUES: That's correct. Up at Harrisburg there were several RAF men who were teaching us recognition of aircraft and visual and photo interpretation, that sort of thing.

Q: We're talking about the Royal Air Force, British Royal Air Force.

FLUES: That's right, they were our instructors. On this particular day, I was taking the last exam and the Colonel in command comes down the aisle and he said to me, "Captain, I want to see you in my office", and I went into his office. He said to me, "Get your gear together, you're going out". I said, "I haven't finished my exam." He said, "Forget it." I asked, "Do you happen to know what I am going to do?" He said, "We're going to send you to Melbourne, Australia and you're going to join the staff of General MacArthur." I said, "What am I supposed to do on the staff?" He said, "You are to start organizing a Prisoner-of-War interrogation set-up unit." I said to him, "Good lord, prisoner-of-war, I don't know a word of Japanese." He said, "No one else does either". "Well," I said, "May I ask why I was specifically picked?" and he said, "You're the only lawyer in the class." So I am all set to go to Melbourne. I go home to say good-bye to my mother and I get word that instead of moving out directly to go to Melbourne I am to report to the Middle East, to Cairo, to join a British unit working with prisoners of war, in other words to learn my trade. So I went down to Charleston, and was put aboard an old Hog Island freighter that could burst her boiler at twelve knots at best, with two other officers. We shoved off from Charleston and the only other place on the coast that we touched was we went into Key West, inside the submarine nets, of course. Then got into a convoy. We came down all by ourselves, alone.

Q: That was quite a dangerous time.

FLUES: That was a pretty dangerous time and the boat that I was assigned to had been in the coffee traffic between New Orleans and Santos, Brazil and her original crew was still aboard her. Her Captain was a skilled man, and he always said that the worst thing he had to fear was the sunken wrecks along the Atlantic coast because the German submarines had been doing a terrible amount of work on that coast. Well, we pushed off from Key West in convoy and the next stop was Trinidad where we were organized to go across the Atlantic. That convoy went about three hundred miles out, led by the cruiser Marblehead, and we were then, from that point on, on our own.

Q: That was a cruiser that made a dramatic escape from and about the only ship to make it out of Admiral Hart's Pacific fleet after being slaughtered by the Japanese.

FLUES: That's right. She simply blew her siren and that was a signal that you were on your own from there on. I had gone with the captain of my ship to the hearing where we all got organized for the voyage across the Atlantic. Well, he avoided all the steamship lanes and we sighted nothing between that point until we were almost off the coast of South Africa, when the Panama came by. She looked us over, she was armed, we were armed too, she looked us over, she was on her return trip. I think she had been off to India or some place like that. At any rate, she was the only ship we saw in all that time; we had one word of an Italian raider being out in that area of the South Atlantic, and we thought she sighted us at one point, but darkness fell and by morning we were clear again. Now we had on board a Navy gun crew, a young lieutenant J.G., I think his name was Blood. And a few men just to help him man that 4 inch gun which was mounted aft on the ship. They drafted me to command the splinter shelters up around the bridge. A number of us were trained to handle machine guns, 50 caliber machine guns. That along with the 4 inch gun was the armament that the ship carried. So the first thing we knew when we were getting into land was when a plane came out and flew over us. It was a South African plane and it flew out and looked us over and we knew we were getting close to port. We put in at Cape Town. I am not a good man at sea, and all the way across, the only thing I could do was read Tolstoy's War and Peace. Which was the only reading I was able to do. I fought off sea sickness all that trip. We got into the Cape Town Bay, which is a bit shallow, and the custom boat came out to take me off. The freighter was going on to Iran, as a matter of fact. The custom boat came out to take me off and that was a very rough little voyage, and I said, "God, I can't lose it now," and I just held on and held on. But I'll tell you when I got up onto that stone wharf at Cape Town and I got my legs under me again, it was a wonderful feeling to have something solid to stand on again. Well, the next job is to get north to Cairo, and transport north was very scarce. I got in touch with the Army attaché there in Cape Town, but they were not sending much, at that time North, everything was tight. So I did get up around the Union of South Africa to Pretoria and Johannesburg and so forth, thinking that I could get a plane from there but there was nothing going. And I finally got over to Durban, and the British had some flights organized out of Durban and they were using float planes, old Sunderlands. I caught on with a flight going North. There was one very interesting person that I became acquainted with, amongst the men going North in that plane, and that was Lord Moyne. He was the British High Commissioner for the Middle East who was later assassinated.

Q: Yes, assassinated by Ariel Shamir, wasn't it?

FLUES: He was assassinated by Jewish gunmen in Cairo right in front of the British Embassy with his chauffeur. The gunmen were probably members of the notorious Stern gang of which Yitzhak Shamir was a commanding officer. Lord Moyne was a very fine man. I enjoyed being with him. His was a sad loss.

Q: Oh yes.

FLUES: There was an Egyptian Minister also in that group who was promptly airsick so Lord Moyne and I had to take care of him all the way north. Well, we flew along the East coast of Africa putting in here and there up to Zanzibar, and then we turned westward to Victoria Nyanza...Lake Victoria Nyanza to Cusimo. and there we just came down on the lake. From there on we could fly up the Nile in that float plane and going north we stopped in Khartoum, for instance. There from Khartoum we had the run right in to Cairo and we came in at just as it was getting dusk. It was a wonderful thing coming in over that city at that hour.

Q: Oh yes. This is still 1942? What time.

FLUES: I would say about the middle of 1942 at that point. So in Cairo I reported to the American Military Mission, I guess that is what you would call it. I believe General Madison was the commanding officer and he was occupying the American Embassy in Cairo and from there they made contact with the British unit I was to report to, which was CSDIC, Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Center. That was the British title. They sent a car in for me and picked me up and took me to the interrogation center which was just outside the small town of Maadi on the east side of the Nile and south of Cairo, and the center was built really out on the desert. Not far beyond was the New Zealand rest camp. Well, I reported into this British unit and the commanding officer was a Navy commander. He was a very interesting person. We all called him Taffy; his full name was Gustavus Rodd.

Q: He must have been Welsh.

FLUES: English certainly. His father was Lord Rennell of Rodd and had been the British ambassador to Sweden. King Gustavus of Sweden was the godfather for his son, who was named after the King, and he was always called Taffy from that time on. His father had also been the Ambassador to Italy. In fact, I have a book written by Lord Rennell of Rodd about Rome. Taffy had gone into the British Navy, he was a Navy commander, and a flier. He was the first man to take a plane off a catapult on a British cruiser. So his experience, as I say, was not only in the Navy but also as a Navy pilot. This camp was quite an unusual place. It was not built to handle all kinds of prisoners of war or to take in prisoners of war. It was a specialty camp. The Red Cross never knew it was there; if they did know it they never came near it. I can explain why a little later. So I got into the

regimen of how they handle the prisoners of war. Now this was the time when Rommel was pushing towards the Delta.

Q: Yes, and Tobruk had just fallen...

FLUES: Tobruk had fallen. He was threatening Cairo and the Delta. People were digging slit trenches as back-up positions. So, I am there at a time when the battle of El Alamein was fought. And I went up with the British into the battle area and the whole area was sealed in. And you remember, what was it, it was the 23rd of October if I remember the date right. The British had accumulated every gun that they could get their hands on. And just at dawn when the signal was given they just hit the German line at El Alamein with a tremendous blast of cannon fire. It literally stunned the Germans. And when the attack began, you recall, they broke through at the North and the whole German line collapsed and they tried to get West on the one road along the coast. It was a debacle, of course, for them. I had a very interesting experience, I must have been, it was an amazing thing to say, I never came in contact with any other American officers at El Alamein or right after it. I say that particularly because of two things that happened. A delegation of officers from the Folgore division, an Italian division, and they were paratroopers, came to me; they had found out that I was there, an American officer and said that the British were treating them very badly and disparaging them as Italians. And they said, "We defended our end of the line: the British 44th division made four assaults on our lines and we held there. When the Germans collapsed in the North, they took our vehicles and we were just hung out in the desert. They said practically the whole division was picked up en masse. So I went to the British headquarters and I said that the Folgore fought well and they were asking that they be treated as prisoners-of-war just as well as you may treat Germans. I got water for them, I got other things for them to help them make out as prisoners-of-war. The other incident involved a British major, who spoke excellent German. He took me with him, and they had formed a square of German prisoners, most of them from the elite Africa Corps. There were over 5,000 of them and this major and I went to the center of the square. He began calling out various units of the Germans, trying to piece out every German unit that had been on the field at El Alamein. And of course, officers had already been separated from the men. And if any prisoner wouldn't give any more than his name or army service number, the major would say to him, "All right, just stand aside. I'm going to turn you over to the Poles." Because in the British army that fought at El Alamein, there was a Polish division. He said, "We will turn you over to the Poles, and perhaps you will talk to them." They all talked. He was able to sort out the whole of 5,000 men in their particular units.

Q: Order of battle.

FLUES: Order of battle,... right. I reported back to Maadi after that fight was all over and now we began to get some special prisoners. And here I think was one of the most amazing experiences that I have ever had. You know that Rommel was not on the field at El Alamein. He had gone back to Germany for conferences with Hitler. Von Stumme, who would have taken command of the German army, died of a heart attack not too long

before that battle. The commanding officer was General von Thoma. Von Thoma had come out from his lines on an armed reconnaissance in a tank. A lucky shot from a British artillery piece hit that tank and put it out of business. Von Thoma had been in the hatch of the tank and he had a piece of shrapnel go right through his cap. He told me he hadn't had a helmet on and had just his regular forage cap on and the slug went right through the top of it, otherwise he would have been dead. So von Thoma is brought back to the Maadi camp. He didn't want to talk to British people, but he would talk to an American. And the British said fine.

Q: Is this a little bit of the good guy, bad guy type...you know police use sometimes.

FLUES: Right. He was willing to talk to an American. But I can't speak German. He could speak some English, but we had also picked up his aide de camp, an officer who had led the German drop on the island of Crete earlier. He spoke perfect English. So I would go into what they called "the gardens," which had no walls but were wired so you were inside an enclosure. Those were called "the gardens" by the British. A tent had been set up for him and one for his aides and that is where he was quartered. I would go into "the gardens" and I was the only one that von Thoma would talk with. He told me some very interesting things. We really got along very well and in a friendly fashion, and he said to me, "I tell you why I want to tell you this, Captain; I was sent by Hitler to Italy to check on the prospects on what we might have in that area, and as you know, only Italians at that time were in the area." He said, "I made an appraisal of that whole area, I reported back to Hitler, not to waste a single man or gun on Africa. Sooner or later, every man and gun would be picked up of what was left." He said, "Hitler, did not take my advice and look what we're in today." He said, "You have won the war ...you're going to get everything that's in Africa that we have here." Then he said, "I am a Bavarian, I am a regular Army Officer; when the war is all over, if I can be of any use in setting up a provisional government in Germany, I would be glad to help." I reported all that, I saw him off at the Cairo airport. He was being flown to England, and that was the last that I ever saw of or heard from von Thoma. He was an enemy but I instinctively liked him. He was no Brown Shirt. But I thought it was extraordinary that here I was just an American Captain talking to the commanding officer of all the German forces in Africa. One other thing, right after the battle of El Alamein, again word gets around who's there, a delegation of Africa Corps officers came to me, and they said, "We are all professional soldiers, we don't want to spend the rest of the war in the a prisoner-of-war camp. If your government will reequip us and reorganize us, we will go out and fight Japanese for you. We won't fight against Germans, obviously. But we will go out and fight Japanese for you." I reported that too, but, of course, nothing was ever done about it. But that was quite interesting that these men wanted to stay as soldiers and not get into a prisoner-of-war camp for the duration. Well, as I said, I learned my trade, prisoner-of-war interrogation work, with the British. And I wrote the P-O-W manual for American use on what I observed and what I experienced. And that manual was sent to the United States and I understand was used as a directive by our military wherever prisoner-of-war interrogation was needed. Now, after El Alamein as you know, the landings in North Africa occurred.

Q: That's October 1942ish.

FLUES: Right. When that happened, one British officer, a lieutenant-colonel and I, were flown over the German lines to Algiers to set up a prisoner-of-war interrogation system on the model of what the British had been using in the East part of Africa. He and I went to Algiers and were assigned an area a little south of Algiers near the village of Berkadem, and now we had a site but no personnel. But I had learned that there were some Camp Ritchie men in the area.

Q: That's our main intelligence camp in Maryland.

FLUES: Yes. These linguists were at Oran in a repo-depot over there.

Q: Repo-depot being a replacement depot.

FLUES: Right. Sometimes jocularly called "a Ripple-Dipple". So I went over to Oran and I picked up a whole group of Camp Ritchie men because they were linguists, Italian speakers and German speakers. I also needed one other thing; I picked up a whole company of military police and brought them out of that repo-depot to this site at Berkadem and we set up a prisoner-of-war interrogation center there. Now, I made one mistake. I'm only a Captain and the British officer was a lieutenant-colonel. So in organizing this prisoner-of-war interrogation camp at Berkadem, I set up an organization table calling for an American lieutenant-colonel to balance off the British lieutenant-colonel. Now getting two jumps in grade, if its ever possible I don't know, but at any rate, here I provided in that table-of-organization, for an American lieutenant-colonel. I would say, after getting this whole thing organized, suddenly one day, an officer comes into my headquarters and he is a lieutenant-colonel. He is an American officer who has gone through Camp Ritchie. He had studied my manual. Now he was sent over, to Algiers, to take command. His name was T.C. Van Cleve, he was a lieutenant-colonel, a World War One retread, and he was a Professor at Bowdoin, a college up in New England, and as I say his whole experience had been what he had learned at Camp Ritchie. Well, he now out-ranks me and I thought about whether I should go to headquarters and make a big battle about it and so forth. And I said, I feel my job has been done here. So I turned that outfit over to him and I think he stayed with it probably through the rest of the war. And my Executive Officer and I reported back to Cairo.

I can add, Van Cleve was an authority on Henry II Hohenstaufen, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, one of the great figures of medieval Europe. I too have been much interested in him. Had I known at the time of Van Cleve's enthusiasm for Henry, he and I could have had some friendly conversations together. As it was, should I say he had stolen my creation? But circumstances had made that possible and I shouldn't blame Van Cleve.

One day very shortly after that, I happened to be walking down a street in Cairo and I ran into a very close friend, Adolf Schmidt. He was a Major and he was in the OSS. Dolph Schmidt and I had been classmates at Princeton and when I went on to Harvard he was at the Business School and I was at the Law School and we roomed together at Harvard. I knew his family very well. Here we meet on a street in Cairo. Now I had done a little service for the OSS people over in Algiers and I should also say in Tunisia by that time. I was helping them get started in one or two things. And I said, "Dolph, give my regards to Lada-Mojarsky, who is the OSS head in the area, and let's have dinner together." So I saw him the next day and we had dinner together, and he said, "Gil, Lada-Mojarsky wants to see you." So I went in to see the Colonel, and I went into his headquarters and he said to me, "Captain, don't you think it's about time to get back to your own army?" I said, "What do you have in mind?" He said, "How would you like to join the OSS; I'll make a Major out of you overnight, I can do that." And he said, "I would like you, if you will agree to it, to take an OSS mission into Mikhailovic in Yugoslavia." I answered, "That as far as being a Major, I am not a professional army officer; it doesn't make a great difference to me how I fight this war." But I said, "The mission sounds quite interesting," and I got to thinking, well how do you get into Mikhailovic and he said to me, "You jump in." I guess I turned a little green, but I sort of thought that I was committed a bit, so I said, "All right I'll take jump training. Where do I go, what do I do next?" He said, "I am going to assign a group of men to you and we're going to send you to the British jump school up in Palestine. After you have taken your training there we will be organized to get you off to Italy and then into Yugoslavia." So, I picked up the men who were to go with me in Cairo and we went off to Palestine to the jump school in Palestine which was in behind Haifa in the Valley of Jezrael. There we took our jump training. Now the British trained in two ways. Like most Americans you would go out through the door of a plane. You're on a static line. They also trained us to go through the floor. In the Wellington planes they had a hole in the floor, of course with a hatch on it, and when you went out through the hole, four men sat with their feet into the hole and at jump times a sergeant would say "Number one go," and you push off and drop down through the hole. Then, "Number two go" and so on.

This doesn't have much to do with Yugoslavia at the moment.

Q: We're getting there, we're getting there...don't worry.

FLUES: The thing you had to do was don't push off too hard or your head could come in contact with the shield which was protecting you from the slipstream of the plane. One man had almost knocked himself out doing that. And we were again on a static line so it was not a free jump. We went through all kinds of preparatory training and I must say it was an excellent training because by the time the British got through with you they had convinced you that it was just another way to get out of a plane. One little interesting note, we had plastic helmets and the helmet that I drew had been worn by some British chap who was quite a whip and he had written on the helmet, "Elbows in and knees together will get you through all kinds of weather. But whatever they teach you it's just a farce, for whatever you do you'll land on your arse". The people that were training with us

there were very interesting. Training at the same time was a British unit composed of LRDG men (Long Range Desert Group). They were the men who had almost picked off Rommel on a raid behind the lines in North Africa. They were now being converted into jumpers. The other unit that was training with us was the Greek Sacred Brigade: they were being trained as jumpers also. I may say that unfortunately, when we made the assault on Sicily, a diversionary assault was also made on Crete; those men were sent in, on a jump into Crete; they went in with no air protection whatsoever and the Germans slaughtered them.

Q: Oh, how sad.

FLUES: Well, after being trained by the British as a jumper, we reported back to Cairo and we sat around for a while waiting for the signal to go up to Italy.

Q: Excuse me, had we invaded Italy as of this time?

FLUES: Yes, by that time we had. So finally we get the word and we fly up to Italy. Now something else has changed in between. Winston Churchill got wind of the fact, through the OSS, the Americans were sending a mission into Mikhailovic. He flew into an absolute rage I was told. At any rate he brought a lot of pressure to bear on the Americans not to send anything into Mikhailovic. He said, "We've put all our eggs into Tito's basket and we can't ride two horses in the same race. Don't, for God sake, send any people into Mikhailovic." My mission to Mikhailovic was canceled. We were flown up to Italy, and now we were to go in to Tito's partisans.

Q: Could you explain for the record who Mikhailovic was?

FLUES: Mikhailovic was a General of the regular Yugoslav army. He was a royalist, to start with; he was a professional army man, he was Greek orthodox, and he was a Serb. Tito, in opposition, was a Bosnian, he was a communist; as far as having any religion, I don't know.

Q: He probably had a Catholic background, and came out of Croatia.

FLUES: He was brought up a Roman Catholic, as opposed to the Greek Orthodox. He was certainly an anti-royalist.

Q: Oh, yes.

FLUES: So these two men were absolutely different and opposed to each other. Churchill's idea, was that you couldn't back both men, you had to back one or the other and they had picked Tito. Because Mikhailovic at this point, and the reason why the the OSS wanted to send a mission in to him, was the word we had he was down to eight rounds of ammunition per man. He was unable to do anymore fighting, and was actually doing no fighting. He was not harassing the German line of communication down through

Yugoslavia to the Greek islands. So the mission was to see if he could be reorganized, re-equipped to get the personnel together to make himself again a fighting unit where we could put more pressure on the Germans. So the job was to find out what he had, what he could do, and what he needed. And to say that mission was canceled, later it was revived, and the OSS sent in, I believe it was Colonel McDowell who was actually sent in to Mikhailovic. That's after my time. We go up to Italy and we were quartered in Bari and we were there for some time, not a great length of time, but then the word came that we were to be sent into Yugoslavia. When you were going into Yugoslavia you were sent to Brindisi which was the take-off point. On this particular night a small group of men and I, we were all as I say, jumpers, were flown into Yugoslavia.

Q: DC-3 probably.

FLUES: The old horse wagon of the air force.

Q: Two engines? C-47.

FLUES: Something like that. It was not even armed in any way. So you went off at night and the Germans, of course, had fighters all over that area trying to keep American supplies and so forth from going into Yugoslavia. They had night fighters up, and the word was you flew without lights, you flew dead, and kept away from anything that the Germans might be able to throw up. We flew over the Julian Alps and we came in about one o'clock in the morning across the Drava River into northern Slovenia. We were now in touch via sugar phone with a...

Q: Sugar phone, or was it a short wave radio.

FLUES: Yes. We are now in touch with a ground crew. These people had set up a temporary air field and they were regular McLean men, they were RAFs.

Q: He wrote a book on the mission to the East. It was a well known book...

FLUES: Right, he was very close to Tito...

Q: ...and close to Churchill too.

FLUES: Fitzroy McLean. A fine good man, fine officer. What the British had done was to take a cow field which was level, and that's something that you don't find too much of over there. They had a ground crew organized of Yugoslavs. Every man was armed with a flare. When we were told to come in and we were going to make a landing, we came in and one moment suddenly beneath you is a flare path. The word was out and every Yugoslav soldier lit his flare and suddenly we had a flare path. We came in, the moment we touched ground, boom it was dark again. Well, I was glad to get all my men down in that way. If we had jumped in you run the risk of losing some men to start with, and

chances are you lose some or all of your equipment because as you know the stick goes out...

Q: The stick being the ????

FLUES: An eight man stick was the way you were organized to go. You, as command officer go out first and your exec officer comes out last and may I say, anybody who gets stuck in the door, if you were going through the door, got what they called "the helping hand." The jump sergeant standing at that door, if anybody got stuck in the door, gave the helping hand to that chap which meant a boot in the pants, of course. They were literally booted out of the plane. Well, we didn't have to jump for it. We got down on the ground. I got all my men down safely, I got all my equipment down safely. I would like to make one other observation. At this time the British had a jump set which was far superior to what the Americans had. For instance, all your lines fed into a lock on your chest and you were taught as I said, elbows in and knees together, the moment you touch earth you made your roll. Get on your back, hit your lock and all your lines flew free so that you weren't dragged on the ground in your parachute. Some people died that way. The Americans had to unhook themselves line by line. The British had a bang, you were free, your lines and your parachute floated away on you. Now, I understand that Drew Pearson before the end of the war came along and found out about this difference and made quite a ruckus about it and the Americans adopted the British jumping harness before the end of the war. Well, anyway that's just an aside. At any rate we're now on the ground with this British unit of McLean.

Q: Before you went, were you told what your mission was?

FLUES: Yes. As commanding officer I was particularly briefed. The mission was to support first, the McLean people. We were to help organize getting wounded out, getting in supplies. Also where we were, we were in almost direct route of the bombers going up to hit the Ploesti refineries in Romania.

Q: These were also major oil fields.

FLUES: And also the bombers going to hit the Chepel Island steel mills outside Budapest. So, any planes that were shot down or couldn't make it all the way back, we were supposed to get their men and forward them back to Italy. And farm houses in that area were organized, if any plane came down near them and if any men were alive, get them into particular farm houses where literally bunks had been built. And where supplies had been set up to take care of these men until we could communicate with them and get them back to Italy. Now that was another mission that we were doing. I also had another mission: sound out what was going on in Hungary. Could we think of any opportunity to find out anything that was going on over there in the way of an underground movement. Could anything be organized in the way of an underground movement? So that was my briefing. We also took out with us \$10,000 in Swiss gold coins for use in any of that kind of work to see what we could do. We stayed there as I say in that particular area and I

think what you would like me to do is to tell you something about how the Yugoslavs were organized.

McLean's men and my unit were attached to the Partisan Sixth Corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General Pero Drabcin. I'll tell you about Drabcin a little later. We reported in not only to the British but to Drabcin's people, the Sixth Corps. They assigned a bunker to us. All the Yugoslav units and British had bunkers. Now this bunker that they assigned to us was dug out of the solid earth. I would say its dimensions could be as much as thirty to fifty feet long and probably twenty to about thirty feet wide. I went down into that bunker, it had logs for the sides and roof of it, and the Yugoslav officer said, "Now there are, as you must know, ventilators. Will you check the ventilators." I checked all of the ventilators. He said "Now come with me on top." He said, "Can you tell me where all the ventilators are?" I couldn't find them. They were masters at camouflage. Masters at digging these underground bunkers. Why the bunkers? They had no way of containing a solid German attack on the area, particularly with tanks. They had nothing with which to defend themselves against tanks except what we might have sent them.

Q: Bazookas.

FLUES: Bazookas. So they would have to evacuate an area. They had no transport for wounded, for instance, and no transport for what supplies they had that they could not carry with them. The wounded men were put in a bunker and supplies were left with them. Now I could tell you there was a rule of the bunker. If you had to evacuate the area and your wounded were put in one of these bunkers, food was left with the wounded men and one able-bodied man. The rule of the bunker was that if any one of the wounded made a noise, couldn't stand his wound and made an outcry, the able-bodied man immediately killed him. And I know of instances where Germans came into the area and actually units were on top of those bunkers and never knew that there were living men beneath and those bunkers were later opened up and except for those who had died meanwhile, they got their wounded out. This was a merciless war, no quarter was asked on either side. The partisans had no place to keep prisoners so they took no prisoners. Obviously, the Germans therefore took no prisoners. The only way you could hold up a German attack on the area was in any road which came into the area, and it was very heavily forested, very mountainous, Yugoslav axmen would cut a tree about three fourths of a way through; when they got word that a German attack was coming with tanks, the axmen struck a few blows and the tree would fall over the road. So to go through, the Germans would have to get those trees out of the way, and while their tanks were immobilized their men were working to clear the road, and of course, the partisans were busy trying to pick them off. That was one way they could try to at least hinder a German attack into the area.

Now the low area, where my men were, was close to a village called Vocin. But Vocin was really no longer in existence and I'll tell you why. And this is why the Yugoslavs, the men fighting against the Germans, hated the Ustashis, the Croatian Ustashis.

Q: They were Croatian, Catholic fascist group.

FLUES: That's right. They were an auxiliary army organized by the Germans and the Italians. They were far more terrible than any Germans. This little town of Vocin: they rounded up every living being left in it. All the able-bodied men were already with the partisans: women, children everybody and they put them in this beautiful little orthodox church and they set it on fire, and they burned them all. Those who tried to break out, they machine gunned. Now I went into that little church and the beautiful frescos were peeling off the walls. The whole village was gone. Man, woman and child. So, you can understand that the Yugoslav armies did what they did whenever they caught up with any of these Ustashi people. I can tell you some of that too. I went out on patrols with the Yugoslavs and one time I went out on a mounted patrol and I'm not a horseman. They gave me a white horse, that damn white horse was one of those animals that can't let anything pass it. It had to be at the head of the parade. Now they stuck me with this horse purposely. I am a man on a white horse, a literally almost uncontrollable horse, and their point man. If anybody was going to get shot out there, I could understand that I was the guy who was going to get it first. Actually, we didn't run into any Germans on that patrol so it all worked out all right. I went out on night patrols with them also. Up in the woods, it was so black that I couldn't see my hand before my face. You would be coming back through the partisan line, and all of a sudden a voice would say "stoi".

Q: Which means stop.

FLUES: That means stop. You stopped. You not only stopped you didn't move. The next thing I knew, a hand and arm would come around my throat and feel my dog tags, and that was my ticket for re-entry. Then I could pass.

Q: Were you able to converse? How were you communicating with these partisans and what sort of talk were you having with them?

FLUES: Some of them could speak English, almost all of them would speak German. I had a man who could speak German. But also, the British had officers who could speak Serbo-Croat.

Well, to tell you just a little about Drabcin. Drabcin was a professional soldier; he was also known as one of the Old Internationals. He had fought against the Nazis on the side of the loyalists against Franco and the Nazis in the Spanish Civil War.

Q: The International Brigade.

FLUES: Yes. He was a trained soldier who had also seen action. He was a well-educated man, he was a university man. He was always trim and sharp as an officer. I remember one night, my men and I were having mess with partisan officers and after eating everybody got to drinking. May I say, the liquor that they had in that area was something.

It was made out of raw potatoes and everything else. It got to the point where you warmed yourself before breakfast with a shot of this stuff, but it was really powerful.

Q: Oh yes.

FLUES: At any rate, on this particular evening people began drinking, and a partisan officer suddenly shouted "Smrt democracy, smrt fascismo."

Q: Death to fascism.

FLUES: Then some fool officer shouted, "Smrt democratia!"

Q: Oh, God, that means death to democracy.

FLUES: And I turned to my men and I said, "Time to go." We got up and walked out. The next morning I got a call from Drabcin, and he said, "Please come over and talk to me." When I went over to see him, he apologized for the incident and he said, "I also reprimanded that officer."

Drabcin was a fine good man and an excellent commanding officer.

Q: Was there on the part of the Yugoslavs, was there much interest in the United States?

FLUES: I'll get to that in a little bit.

I am just going to say that not too many years ago my wife and I were in Belgrade, and we went out to the White City, and there is a war museum out there. I had heard that Drabcin, who became renowned as one of the real heroes of Yugoslavia, he had died by that time, but that there was a memorial room to him out at the war memorial. So we went out, but unfortunately it was on a day in which it was locked up and I couldn't get the caretaker to let us in. So I missed seeing the memorial. But I just wanted to say that everybody knew about Drabcin. He was one of the real heroes.

Now I'm back to the question...

Q: Was there much intercourse between your soldiers and the partisans about life in the United States, US role, that sort of thing...

FLUES: Really very little, in a way. We were quartered in cabins in the woods and I may say that the camouflage was terrific. The cabin that I occupied was with two other officers, and I'll get to that, was a log cabin with a tree going right through the middle. You couldn't see it from above. Most of the food that we ate was supplied by the partisans. Pig was the only meat you got. But there were enough vegetables and so forth and our planes were bringing in food here and there to supplement. So we got along all right so far as food was concerned.

I can remember an incident when there was a fire fight, which we were not in, but one of the partisan leaders had been killed by machine gun fire. I always remember his name-- Nicholas Demonya. He was one of the very early partisan leaders and there was a ceremony for the burial. He had been brought from where he was killed, he had been put into a casket and relays of Jug soldiers carried him from village to village, and I was representing the Americans. There were British officers representing the British and there were Jug officers.

Q: Jug being Yugoslavs.

FLUES: We walked from village to village behind this cortege and at every village they would open the casket and the villagers would look on the face of Demonya and the women were keening--like they do. We would then carry him on. Finally, we took him to the side of a hill or a small mountain and that's where he was buried. They told what he had done, like he had been one of the earliest and had lived in caves, he with a few companions and then finally gotten the resistance organized to where many were in it. But he was one of the very first fighting against Germans and Croatians.

They were communists. It was very interesting that there was a very large wooden cross at the head of that grave. So they were sending him off in whatever he needed in the earth and the world above.

Now, getting back to the very good point you were going to bring up. The partisans had organized in a field a meeting of all the villagers of that area. They came in from everywhere. Maybe there were as many as 5,000 people in this field. They had a stand from which we were to speak. Now, as I said, the British had Croatian speakers, officers who could speak Serbo-Croatian. The Yugoslav army had their Commissars just like the Russian army. I remember this one Commissar got up and he told all about the fighting and so forth, and he went on to say that the Russians were the ones who supplied them, who brought in whatever food they got, that all military supplies came from the Russians. That was their source of help. This British officer stood up, and I say he could speak Serbo-Croatian, and he turned to that Commissar and he said to the people, "This man is an absolute liar. There have been 95 lifts into this area or drops and landings into this area by planes. The Americans have brought in 91 of those drops, the British have brought in 2, the Russians have brought in 2." He said, "This man is lying to you, your help has come from the Allies, from the Americans and the British. The men who are in here supporting the Partisan 6th Army, are all British and Americans, not a single Russian."

Now, all the emphasis was on, all credit was to be given to the Russians. They were the ones to get the credit, and they even, I remember seeing, they thought that some Russians were coming in, they had put in some sort of an archway to greet the Russians when they were to come in. I'll tell you who did come in--lots of Russians.

Q: Now, these were Germans...

FLUES: These were Cossacks, regiments known as Circassians. All of them were mounted. They came in after my time. I had already been pulled out. The Yugoslavs wouldn't refer to them as Russians, they called them Circassians. They did not want the people to know that they were Russians fighting on the German side.

Q: ??? was a Soviet general who when captured early in the war, recruited an anti-Stalin forces, this is just for the record, of Russian prisoners all of whom were pretty much eliminated by Stalin after the war.

FLUES: That's right. The Russian was General Vlasov. His men were known as "Vlasov's Russians." Now, the only time I ever ran into Russians later on was in Austria where Vlasov's men finished and where they had dismounted and just let their horses go free. If you think a locust will clean off an area, you should see hundreds and hundreds of horses eating anything and everything that they can get their teeth into.

Now the war is over at that point. Now I am speaking about up in Austria. German labor camps were being emptied. People were coming out of the camps. They would beg them to take whatever horses they could take home with them. So that's what finally happened to the horses. The British had to do something about the soldiers themselves. The Soviets asked that they be repatriated. I remember two trains for the men were made up. Officers had been separated. The British had put these Cossacks on the trains and every other car or so, there was a platoon of British soldiers with machine guns. If any man jumped off the train, he was shot. They took these trains up into Austria, Stzittal, was the name of the town, and turned them over to the Russians. After about two trips, when they heard the machine guns begin, before the train even started pulling off to return, they knew what was happening to these Russians turned back to the Soviets, so they stopped taking any more of them into the Russian lines. Quite a few of those men, I understand, landed down in Brazil and were settled there and in other parts of the world, but they never got home.

Well, we're back in...

Q: We're back in Slovenia.

FLUES: I've explained what our mission was. As far as Hungary was concerned, we tried to make a crossing of the Drava one time with the help of the Yugoslavs. But the Drava was so solidly held by the Germans we had no way of breaking through. There were a few Yugoslav casualties and that was the end of it. We made no more attempt to get into Hungary from below the Drava River. We were in touch with base by radio and may I say, Tito never got up into this area.

Q: I was going to ask what you were getting about Tito? Any impressions?

FLUES: Tito was down on the Isle of Korcula off the coast of Yugoslavia. He was down there because the British did not want him picked off by the Germans--so he was in a safe

place down there and if the Germans made any attempt to get to Korcula, he could be immediately flown off or taken by water to Italy.

Q: There had been this very famous parachute attack on Tito's headquarters at one point.

FLUES: I don't know about that. Now, as I say, I got the word to pull out. I had two men that were with me in my cabin who also came out with me. Those left behind took over, equipment, everything. We came out with only our uniforms. We came out on a plane which was headed for Italy and again at that same airfield that I have spoken about in the cow field they brought wounded and loaded them on the plane. There was a girl. I would say she was quite an attractive girl, and I would place her not over twenty years of age, maybe 18 or so. She had had both legs amputated above her knees and as we were going to put her on the plane, as with all the other wounded, the Yugoslavs were taking the blankets from her. I said to this Yugoslav doctor, who happened to be a woman, "We've got to keep blankets on this girl. We're going to fly 20,000 feet above the Julian Alps, the plane is not in any way heated. She can't stand it; she will die." The only reply I got from the doctor was, "We are Yugoslavs, we are tough, she will live," and she took the blankets from her. The girl had nothing on but a shift. We got her on the plane, most everybody else was a man, and my officers and I took off our parachutes and we wrapped that girl in our parachutes. When we got down on the field at Foggia she was still alive. We got her into an ambulance, and that was the last I ever saw of her. God knows if she ever lived. I can't believe what kind of life she could have with both her legs gone.

Well, that's the kind of thing that you ran into.

Q: When you finished up there, when you came back, were you making any reports on the effectiveness of the partisan movement whether what type of political orientation or how you saw things developing in Yugoslavia after the war, anything of that nature?

FLUES: I could only say when you asked about what I told them what was going to happen in Yugoslavia was that it's going to be a big Kentucky mountain feud, on a national scale. They're going to be fighting against each other and it's going to be a fight of who come out on top. Mikhailovic and Tito are going to be directly opposed to each other. As you know, Tito was able to establish the control over all of Yugoslavia. He captured Mikhailovic, put him up against a wall and shot him.

One other incident; before I came out; speaking about what happens with those who are captured. A group of Domabrans had been captured by the Yugoslavs. These were men who were organized by the Germans, not as combat units, somewhat like police units, in an occupied territory. They could police the area when regular Croatian auxiliaries were going to the front line. This group of Domabrans had been picked up by the Partisans. I would say, maybe, there were as many as thirty men. They were lying around on the ground. Yugoslavs were going around kicking them in the head, and I tried to stop that, and I said to a Yugoslav officer, "What's going to happen to these men?" I sort of sensed what he was going to say. I said, "You've got to give them a trial, some of these men have

not killed anybody, have not harmed anybody, they have been police officers, they're not an army unit of any kind. You've got to at least give them a hearing and find out if they've done anything wrong." He said, "We will try them, and then we shoot them." That's what happened to them.

Q: With the British who were on the mission, who was in charge, was it an American, or British, or was it really joint? Usually, someone has got to be in charge.

FLUES: Well, I could say that I retained charge of my own unit. I simply coordinated what I was doing with what they were doing. They had their own headquarters--I had mine.

Q: Was there a difference in feeling or direction or what have you, between the British mission and the American mission to this group.

FLUES: I didn't encounter any of that. Now remember I was pretty used to working with the British, I had been working with them for two years. We got along very well together, I can't say enough praise for the men that I knew and worked with.

Q: Was McLean with you?

FLUES: I never met the Brigadier until years later, right here in Washington, DC

Q: He wrote a book, The Eastern Approaches.

FLUES: That's right. He has written several books. He was quite a traveler. I think he wrote something on Iran.

Q: Yes, he went to Central Asia, and all that...

FLUES: I have a book or two of his. In fact, he autographed a book for me when I saw him in Washington.

Q: Well, now...

FLUES: And incidentally, I have often wondered, the Brigadier must be dead...

Q: I think so.

FLUES: I would say that because he would be a man who would be invaluable with his experience in Yugoslavia and yet his name has never turned up. As far as I know.

Q: When did you get back to Italy?

FLUES: I was pulled out of there for one particular reason.

Q: When was this, by the way?

FLUES: This is General Donovan.

Q: No, but when?

FLUES: Let's see. Hold it just a moment now.

Q: You came back, and Rome had already fallen which fell in June of '44.

FLUES: I was pulled out by General Donovan. And when I came out, I met the General for the first time in Bari and I'll tell you about that incident. What he wanted done was for the OSS to organize, and wanted me to head it, a jump on an airfield outside of Budapest. That's why I was pulled out. I was asked if I would take it, and I said I would. The first time I met the General was after I had been asked if I would take the show and get it all organized. It came to be known as the Budapest City Mission. Colonel Glavin was the administrative head of the OSS at Bari and working with him I had got the mission pretty well organized by the time Donovan came there. Now, those of us who were going inside on a mission were then given a time to meet the General and brief him on our particular show. Donovan came down, and he had a very bad cold or flu or something. They wanted to put him in the infirmary. He said, "No, I am not going to any infirmary; just get a quiet spot set up for me and put a cot there and I'll be by myself and these men can come in one by one and brief me on what they are going to do." So they put him in a warehouse at Caserta...

Q: Caserta--that's just north of--it's a huge sort of urban Versailles--just north of Naples.

FLUES: Right...it's a beautiful place as a matter of fact.

Q: Oh, yes.

FLUES: So he's now in a warehouse. I come up there to Caserta to brief him. I came into the warehouse and here he is lying on a cot in a dark corner. The only illumination was a ten watt bulb or so hanging on a long chain from the ceiling. It came my time to talk with him, so I went in and briefed him on the Budapest City Mission. He had some suggestions to offer and so forth regarding how they were going to support the mission once it got inside and got command of the airfield. He kept referring to me as Colonel Flues, and remember I am only a Major. But apparently, I had been a Major now for so long that the gold on the leaf had worn off and looked more like a silver leaf, the leaf of a Lieutenant-Colonel. He kept referring to me as Colonel Flues. So I finished briefing him and I walked out with Glavin. Glavin said to me, "God dammit it, Flues, I guess I have got to make a Lieutenant-Colonel out of you." I may say that within a week, I was now a Lieutenant-Colonel. I have always said, and I am not sure that this is anything to be proud of, but I would believe that in the entire history of American military forces since the

Revolution or so, I must be the only man who got a promotion because the lighting was poor. Well, at any rate I am now a Lieutenant-Colonel.

He's gone from there. I finish up on getting this show organized. Meanwhile the Russians are approaching Budapest. The job that we were going to do, was we were going to be dropped onto the airfield and secure the airfield, then link up with the Russians. Now, Donovan, undoubtedly, as I have thought it out, had this in mind. He wanted an American beachhead, you might call it, in Eastern Europe. He wanted it there because he did not want the Soviet Union to absorb all of those Eastern European countries and take them into communism if they weren't already communists. He had one show which had already gone off, led by Frank Wisner. I got the story and I never met Frank Wisner. I think he had gone into Romania where there were no Russians approaching, but the country was in revolt and he had gone in there with the idea of setting up a little OSS group in that country to neutralize it. Now I am supposed to go into Hungary, get the airfield, and have the Hungarians know that American troops and combat men were on their front. The supposition being also from the standpoint of politically having a beachhead there, that with so many Hungarians with relatives back over in this country they would never fight Americans. That was one thing that they thought about. That Hungary might even pull out of the war.

Q: I'm not sure if we were even at war with Hungary, were we or not? It's always a little dicey...

FLUES: Hungary was certainly at war with the Soviet Union and so allied with Germany.

Q: Yes, oh yes, very definitely...

FLUES: I don't think any Hungarian soldiers had ever come in contact with American troops.

Q: Yes.

FLUES: But, there they were allied with Germany. So they were our enemy, as well as Germany, by reason of that fact and because her fighting against our allies, the Soviet Union.

Q: Sure.

FLUES: I am all organized to go, now the word is when do you go in. I talked with the Commanding General in Italy and you know for the life of me I can't pick off his name at the moment. It slips me.

Q: It wasn't Mark Clark...

FLUES: I have forgotten what that General's name was. At any rate he said to me, "Colonel, I don't have the ear of the President, General Donovan does. If General Donovan tells me to send you in, he's backed up by the President of the United States. Therefore, I'll send you in, but I am not going to send you in on my word alone, I've got to have my authority to send you in."

Well, we hung on and hung on and nothing happens. Meanwhile, the Russians are getting closer in, and finally I saw him again, and he said, "Colonel, I'm going to do one thing. I'm going to send a cable to Moscow to Ambassador Harriman. If Harriman tells me it's all right for you men to come into that area, I'll send you in." So he cables Harriman in Moscow. Harriman comes back with a frantic cable. "Don't send any American combat men into Hungary--there's been Yalta. This area has been set aside for the Soviet Union. Don't send any American combat men into Hungary."

I disbanded the Budapest City Mission on that word. We never did go in.

Now I might say, I ran into a sergeant of mine on the streets of Washington. The war is all over, and he said to me, "Colonel, wasn't that a shame that the Budapest City Mission never got off the ground." I said, "Joe, you and I are walking the streets of Washington, we're in good health, we've got the future before us, and if you and I had gone into Hungary, we might still be there."

Q: Yes, the Germans put up a tremendous fight for...

FLUES: Well, now I say again, as I look back on that operation, I would say it was something that the OSS did on occasion that they should have never done. That would have been a suicide mission; I'm sure we would have been slaughtered before they could ever get in supporting combat troops to help or before we could link up with the Russians. We would have been slaughtered. Better a live man than the Congressional Medal of Honor. I had others to think about besides myself.

Q: Oh, yes.

FLUES: The OSS did some very stupid things in my estimation and men suffered for it.

Q: I think some of that spirit lingered on with the CIA for a while because people were saying the same thing, sort of anything could be done, and to the detriment of foreign policy and to the people involved.

FLUES: Back at headquarters they were putting up little flags showing where a mission was inside. That was all important.

Q: Yes.

FLUES: That sort of thing. I know of one man who kept his gear in the little office that I had in Bari. He told me how he was going to go inside. I said, "Do you speak German?" He was going to be sent into Austria. He said, "No, I don't speak any German." I said, "Who's going in with you?" They were going to send two ex-German soldiers, who I think were Austrians, who had been supposedly turned around and would go in with him and supply him with the linguistics that he would need. I said to him, "I have no authority over you, but I think you ought to review your particular mission and question a little bit more what you are going to do and how you are going to be equipped, and so forth." He said, "I told them that I would go. I don't feel as though I could back out of this." I said, "That's up to you, I can't tell you whether to say yes or no--I am not your commanding officer and it's not my job to say what's a good mission and what's a bad mission. But I think you get a little feeling on my part that you ought to review that a bit."

They sent him in. That young man was dropped in Austria with the two Austrian ex-prisoners of war. The plane circled and dropped all his equipment into the Neusiedler Sea. He couldn't have communicated back to base if he had tried. All three of them were picked up, luckily by the Austrians. They were taken by Austrian police to Vienna. I don't know what happened to the two ex-prisoners of war; they were probably shot, but the Austrians kept pushing our man around to keep him out of the hands of the Gestapo. But finally, the Gestapo did get him and he was sent to Mauthausen where he was to be exterminated.

Now, this brings me to the next thing, what the OSS did. I am to take the Budapest City Mission, meanwhile the OSS thinks that there might be something in the way of a movement started up in Czechoslovakia. The British agreed that what should be done, is to send a mission up into Slovakia to see if they could start some kind of a revolt or get some kind of underground movement started. Now, the two officers who had shared my cabin in Yugoslavia were sent on that particular mission. They were to come down and join me by coming down from Slovakia into Hungary, and they were to join me in Hungary. That joint British-American mission went up into Slovakia, they were all jumpers, they were landed in Slovakia and there was literally nothing that they could do if they were found. Along comes the winter and they went up into the Slovakian ski country, they went up and they were in two chalets that service the ski area. Along comes Christmas. The Americans were staying at a chalet down slope, the British were up higher. The Gestapo found out that they were there. Two American sergeants who were with my two officers went up to celebrate Christmas eve with the British at the chalet higher up. The Gestapo and the SS troopers hit the chalet down below, and picked up everybody that was there, including my two officers; then the word got to the boys up at the upper chalet that the SS had come and they just spread out all over the mountain. They picked up everybody but the two sergeants. There was a Slovakian girl who had been helping in that upper chalet, and she said to the sergeant, "You come with me." In the dead of winter, that girl led those two men across the mountains into the Russian lines. She would go down into the villages and get food to keep them alive. The reason why I particularly know of that mission is that the Russians forwarded the girl and the sergeants into Italy where I picked them up and briefed them and got the whole story of

what had happened. Incidentally, the OSS sent that girl to me and she joined my unit later on, so I got to know her very well, and I can tell you about that later--I don't know if you want that. The OSS brought her to the United States and sent her to Vassar. I have lost track of her personally, but I understand that she was decorated for what she had done and that they turned out a full dress parade at West Point in her honor. That's the story that I got. I have to verify that.

Well, at any rate Mauthausen. The Budapest City Mission was now dead. They asked me if I would take another mission, to go up and join the Third Army front--now in Germany around Regensburg. The officer that was supposed to take it had apparently had enough, and he said, "Let me out of it, I don't want to take it." So they asked me if I would take over for him, which I did. I flew up to Paris and I met some of the men who were going with me. There was one absolutely amazing character, Rudy von Ripper. He is a story in himself. With the men I had brought up with me and the men I had picked up in Paris, we got our jeeps and went across France and Germany and went all the way to the Third Army front. The headquarters were then at Regensburg. There I organized a mission to go into Austria. I had with me, I should say, about six men all together. One of them was this Rudy von Ripper. Von Ripper was an Austrian, he is from Salzburg. In fact, his mother and sister were still living in Salzburg at this time. With two jeeps, we jumped off from the Third Army front at Regensburg, crossed the Inn River and came into Austria and all the area was flying the Red-White-Red flags of Austria. But here were the German armies. We went through those German armies without a shot being fired at us. We ran into a group of German officers in cars on one road. We surrounded them and took their cars and added them to our little cortege and kept on for Salzburg.

The Nazi Commissar in command at Salzburg had just fled. We came into that city and literally my small group took the liberation of Salzburg. We were the first combat men to get into Austria.

Q: Oh, my gosh.

FLUES: Von Ripper, I've said, was a Salzburg native. We walked down the main street in Salzburg, and people ran out from the sidewalks and threw their arms around von Ripper and said, "Welcome home."

We instructed the civic government to resume their posts, and got the police to reorganize and take control of the city and the area around it. All the Germans had fled.

So we literally got the civil administration of Salzburg back into action and kept the city facilities going again.

We also sent a small group over to Innsbruck to establish control there. The great ski resort in Austria. Wonderful old city. By this time more OSS men had come in to help me.

Q: Not Graz.

FLUES: Innsbruck. We sent a unit over there and got that place organized also.

And I also put a unit up in Linz. Our headquarters were in Salzburg, now we had a unit in Linz, we had a unit in Innsbruck, another in Klagenfurt, and still another small unit down on one of the Austrian lakes. Now I'll get back to Mauthausen.

I got the word that the group of men who had been picked up by the SS in Slovakia, had been taken to Mauthausen, an extermination camp in Austria. Of course with them were the two officers who had shared my cabin in Yugoslavia, Tibor Kesthelyi and Edward Bovianski. So, I headed for Mauthausen as fast as I could and when I got up to it with several men with me, an American tank unit had just broken into the camp. I went in with them. The German commanding officer at Mauthausen had fled. The camp was now open. The prisoners, now this was an extermination camp, had gone out through the countryside trying to find that man. I saw him. I saw him, but the first thing that I had tried to find were my two officers. There was a shortage of manpower at Mauthausen, you can understand that, they had begun to use prisoners as secretaries. There were some Poles who spoke German very well who had literally acted as secretaries, and of course for that reason they were still alive too. They told me what had happened to my two officers, they had been taken for interrogation and they stood in this room with an interrogating officer and as they stood there a sniper higher up in a wall behind them shot them through the head and killed them. Their bodies had gone through the ovens; they were gone.

The one American officer that survived at Mauthausen was a young man who had made the jump into Austria. He was a young Navy chap. He was the only man I found alive amongst the Americans.

I said I had seen the German officer who commanded the camp. His name was Zereis. When the camp was opened, prisoners scoured the countryside for him. They found him in a wood and he shot himself. They brought his body back to the camp. There he lay naked in a room. His genitals were being eaten by venereal disease, not a pretty sight.

If anyone wants to know about the Holocaust all they have to do is talk with me. I saw all of it. The dead and the dying. We tried to save men and women who were alive but their digestive systems were so degenerated that they couldn't even absorb food anymore. They just died in front of you. I have seen men crawl inside the great soup tureens and lick the inside of the tureen just to get an extra morsel of food. Like a dog. Of course, as soon as we could get food in there, we got food in to help them as much as we could. My job wasn't to take over Mauthausen, or to do anything more than to find my men. But I've seen those ovens, the ash heaps, I have seen those books of tattoo marks, whereby if somebody had an interesting tattoo they would mark his skin. When they killed him they cut out that tattoo mark and flayed it and that was put in a book. But the thing that

horrified me the most of anything I have heard about the concentration camps. Years later I may say that I have been to other camps, after the war was all over...

Q: Dachau...

FLUES: I was in Dachau right after the war ended.

Q: Elson...

FLUES: It was just several years ago, I was at, you know the great one...

Q: Auschwitz.

FLUES: Auschwitz, I have been there. Terrible reminders are still there.

Q: In Poland.

FLUES: Well, at Mauthausen in the door leading into the gas chamber there was a solid brick of glass--thick glass. A prisoner told me that women, wives of German garrison guards there, literally would fight each other to get to that window so that they could look through it and watch the people die. They would cram the people in so that they were holding each other in each others arms. They would cram those people in so tightly there was no place to fall down when they died. They would look through that glass and see those people die. I thought that was about as horrible a thought as I have ever encountered in all the business of the Holocaust.

Well, I had lost those two men. Now both of them later on were decorated posthumously by the United States government. [pause] Both of them were given the DSC. The Hungarian boy's mother was living in Budapest; I was not there to see the ceremony, although I was in Budapest later on. His mother was presented with his DSC by the officer commanding the American Allied Commission there.

All right, I may say this, we got Salzburg set up and the other points, now I am not supposed to be the commanding officer in that area for the OSS. I have literally done my job. Another officer is to come up, Charlie Thayer. Colonel Thayer.

Q: Oh, yes. Later was, then returned to being, a Foreign Service officer. Quite a distinguished one.

FLUES: Right. Charlie Thayer was to come up from Italy and take over the OSS command in Central Europe. But he was down there with the American army in Northern Italy, so until he was to come, I am the commanding officer for Central Europe. But I had had over four years now of uninterrupted overseas duty, I had not been back home in that time, and my mother was getting very old and I wanted to get back to see her.

So I was hoping that Thayer would get up there as soon as he could. What more do I want to say?

The headquarters for the OSS in Austria was to be set up, eventually in Vienna. At the time we went into Salzburg, the Russians were getting into Vienna after a bitter siege. I knew Thayer wanted to have his headquarters in Vienna when it was open, but Vienna was not yet open and Thayer had not yet arrived when General Mark Wayne Clark came up to take command of the Austrian theater.

Q: Was it Mark Clark who came...

FLUES: Mark Wayne Clark. Mark Wayne Clark was to come up to take over the Austrian theater. We had picked up, my OSS men had picked up one of Hitler's cars. One of his big--literally it was like a tank--it was so heavily armored with bullet proof glass and everything. We had picked up one of these, and Hitler had several of them of course, but we had picked this one up. So I decided what we would do when Clark came up to Salzburg to take command of the Austrian theater; we would present him with Hitler's car. The only trouble with the car was that the kind of fuel that they were using--we couldn't get any of it. We didn't in fact know what the hell made it run, strictly speaking. But I had some chaps who were pretty smart guys. They finally worked out a blend of airplane gasoline and kerosene and so forth, and they worked out a fuel that could be used in this car.

Mark Wayne Clark was supposed to be coming up and he didn't come and he didn't come. We had several runs out to the airport opposite Salzburg, and by that time, and because I was commanding there, I had very little in the way of appropriate clothes. One OSS officer came over from the States on some mission or other, saw me and said, "I am going to try and get you some clothes." He went back to the States and within a week some clothes came to me via another officer including a magnificent camel hair long coat. When I put my Colonel's insignia on it--hell I looked like a Field Marshal. When we made one of these runs out to the airport, I was sitting in Hitler's car, on the backseat of Hitler's car, and I had outriders, with white gloves, on motorcycles out ahead of it, screaming their way through the streets of Salzburg. I would go through those streets and the police would snap to attention--you know they thought I was a Field Marshal or something.

Finally, Clark arrives. I had had a silversmith make up a little silver plate for the dashboard of the car saying that upon the advent of General Mark Wayne Clark to take command of the Austrian theater, this car formerly belonging to Adolf Hitler was presented to him. So that's on the dashboard. We get up to the airfield and we have a line and Hitler's car is at the head of the line and the General commanding 2 Corps, General Key, has got his car right behind us with his chauffeur, a wonderful officer. I've got two men and I am in the backseat, two men in the front seat of Hitler's car to drive it. The plane touches down and Clark is to go out and inspect the battery firing his salute, and I would have the car up to the plane and make my little speech to Clark and present him

with the car. He would then get into the car, inspect the battery and drive into the headquarters in Salzburg. Well, all of this goes along beautifully until it is time for me to get the car up there, and the boys start it and it goes....put, put, put. They couldn't get it started and they ground and they ground and they couldn't get it started. I said to General Key, "Take our place," which he did. So I went out and made my little talk to Clark, and he said, "Well, I'll go over and help push the damn thing." Finally, they drove the car up and he got in the car. The last I saw of him was that he drives into Salzburg. I was never so glad to get rid of anything as the damn car.

Well, Charlie Thayer came up shortly after that, so I turned everything over to him. But before he came several interesting things turned up too. One, we were collecting German scientists and getting them to our place down on one of the Austrian lakes. I had a little place down there with an officer in command who was an interesting OSS character too. We called him, "Hudson of Albania." Wherever we could find any of those German scientists I forwarded them down to Hudson and then they were sent on into the States. Of course, they helped us a hell of a lot with all the missile business and so forth later on. And the Russians didn't get them.

Well, another thing we did, I got wind that the Leica plant, just on the east side of Berlin, would shortly fall into the hands of the Russians who were coming in. I got word up to our forces in that area--get out to the Leica plant--take out everything you can. We don't want to have the Leica optics business taken over by the Russians if we can prevent it. So they literally looted the Leica plant and got that stuff on trucks and got it out just before the Russians got in. That was the sort of little things that you could do to maybe help the show along a bit.

Meanwhile we had gone into Dachau as soon as we could. We pulled out some men from Dachau who were very helpful later on. One was a Hungarian by the name of Aladar Szegedy Maszak. He had been in the foreign affairs service of Hungary and had been the second-in-charge of the Hungarian embassy in Berlin. He knew that story and when Hungary was taken over by the Germans he was sent off to the concentration camp at Dachau. We got him back to Hungary as one of the leaders of the new Hungarian set-up and we also got him named as the first Minister to the United States from the new Hungarian state. He came to this country and was minister here, and then Hungary fell into the hands of the communists. His family and he were now over here. So he never went back to Hungary. He became one of our leaders in the Voice of America. That was the job that was given him, and he did very beautifully with it. He's dead now. His wife is still living here in Washington, and his son is a professor at a College up in New England as an authority on the Ancient Greek World. So the family is here. Wesleyan is the college where his son is.

The war is now over. I've got the situation in Hungary to keep in mind. So I went over to Budapest; I didn't have to jump in this time. I went over to Budapest with some men who could speak the language for me, and contacted the Hungarian government. At that time there was an election to be held, and it was the communists against the Small

Landholders Party which was a conglomeration of the more conservative parties and politicians of Hungary.

The Russians had 80,000 troops in Hungary at this time still occupying the country. They of course wanted the communist party to keep control. So they would give them equipment to go out to all the villages and towns of Hungary and set up a loud speaker in the square and harangue the people on behalf of the Hungarian Communist Party. They would allow no fuel or anything else to the Small Landholders to go out to have their say. It was just a very tight race. What I could do, as much as I could help, was to see that the Small Landholders got a hearing the best way they could. We by that time had also sent in an Allied Control Commission Group. Our first Minister, the American Minister, that was sent in there, was with that Allied Control Commission Group. I got acquainted with all the leaders of the Small Landholders Party, and our Minister and Aladar Maszak were the persons who made the contacts for me. The Small Landholders won the election and Hungary did not go communist. Of course my help was only a small part of the victory. I don't mean to enlarge it.

What else?

The man who became the Prime Minister of Hungary, the head of the Small Landholders Party, and you'll recall that the Russians and the Communist Party did later take over Hungary, and it became a Communist satellite of the Soviet Union, that man who had been the head of the Small Landholders Party and became the head of the government of Hungary, fled the country. He came to this country and became a farmer down in Virginia at one time. He made a visit to Toledo, Ohio which I've said was my home.

Q: Let me stop for just a minute. [change tape]

FLUES: There was a dinner given for him by the Hungarian community of Toledo which has a large Hungarian population who work in the steel mills and so forth. We arranged a dinner for him at the Toledo Club, of which I happened to be a member. He was invited to come to Toledo and speak to the Hungarians, which he did. My Hungarian friends invited me also. So I was able to renew my acquaintanceship with him. When it came my time to speak I said, "I want to say that this man is not only a great patriot, a Hungarian patriot, but also a prophet because when I saw him in Budapest he told me we can hold out for possibly two years, and if you Americans can come and support us we can hold on. If you don't come we cannot last more than the two years and the communists will take over Hungary." I said, "Tonight, I'm saying that this man is a prophet because it is almost two years to the day that I was in Hungary and he told me that. Hungary is now a communist country. It all turned out that way."

Well, at any rate, what else should I say? One more event perhaps. I have said we had an OSS unit stationed in Klagenfurt, the capital of Carinthia (Karnten). I went down there and met some of the local leaders, businessmen as well as politicians. It was now May, and on the 8th the war in Europe ended. A delegation of prominent citizens from Karnten

came up to see me in Salzburg. They asked my help. Slovene military units had come into the area with the object of splitting it off from Austria and adding it to Slovenia. I knew the Karnten area had been assigned to the British for occupation. I contacted British headquarters, described the situation and asked them to hurry up their occupation. They did so, British troops moved in and drove the Slovenes out. I have a memorial from the Karnten people thanking me for this help.

Q: Well, I think that probably, I am just looking at the time, we ought to...

FLUES: Don't worry about my time--it's yours.

Q: Well, it's my time too because I've got to be leaving. But, when did you leave Europe?

FLUES: In time to get home for Christmas of 1945.

Q: Were you discharged at that point?

FLUES: I was discharged from active service, but I stayed in the Reserve. As I say, I was a Lieutenant-Colonel when I came back. I was commissioned a Colonel in the Reserve. I stayed in the Reserve right on through till I was over age in grade, which was right here in Washington. So I am now a Colonel. Eagle Colonel, retired.

Q: Well now, you left the European command from Hungary, was that...

FLUES: I left the OSS command when I was in Salzburg, and I turned the whole job over to Charlie Thayer.

Q: For our concentration, I think this has been splendid. I want to thank you very much.

FLUES: I may add a postscript as to why I am here. I was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Treasury by President Eisenhower. I succeeded a friend of mine who had been the Assistant Secretary before me at the Treasury. We had been together at Princeton. He wanted someone to succeed him while he got back to practicing private law. The President and he latched on to me as a replacement.

I don't know whether that is of interest . . .

Q: Well, I don't want, I think...

FLUES: I don't want to be talking too much. I've already done that.

Q: No, this is great.

End of interview