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Summary

Robert Matteson was born on September 13, 1914 in St. Paul MN. Graduated Carleton College 1937 and received MA from Harvard. Traveled to Europe 1937 and was initially impressed with Hitler's work. Went to Prague and met classmate Ferdinand Hitek who disabused him of his feelings shortly before the Sudetenland takeover. Married Jane Paetzold 6/21/40.

Drafted and went into 80th Infantry Division. Landed in Normandy ~7/44 and went through France as a special agent in charge of the CIC detachment of 319th Regiment of the 80th Division. His group arrested war criminals as they passed through France and on into Germany and in to Czechoslovakia. Once there, they rounded up SS, SD and Einsatzkommandos in the area. With the help of a local Communist, Zeb Pleisseis, he identified Ernst Kaltenbrunner who was in Strobl, Austria. He went there and found Kaltenbrunner's wife and arrested her. Pleisseis told him that Kaltenbrunner was in Alt Aussee where art treasures had been hidden in a salt mine. In Alt Aussee he met Prince Chlodwig Hohenlohe Schoenfurst who was the grandson of a German Chancellor in the 1890's. He told Matteson that Kaltenbrunner's mistress, Countess Gisella von Westauer and her newborn twins were in his hunting lodge in the mountains where Hitler had ordered a last stand against the Allies. Countess found, but refused to tell Matteson where Kaltenbrunner was unless he took her along. Matteson refused. Local Resistance leaders told him Kaltenbrunner holed up in a cabin in Todsgeborg Mountains. He recruited 4 Austrians who had deserted from the German army to guide him to the cabin. US Army commander feared a trap and sent a squad of soldiers as backup. Once at the cabin, Matteson walked to the door unarmed, covered by the Austrian guides. A German answered and Matteson gave him a note from the Countess. The German tried to reach a gun and slammed the door. The US soldiers surrounded the cabin and captured 4 Germans, including Kaltenbrunner, disguised as a Wehrmacht doctor, and his adjutant. In the cabin they found Geestapo and Kripo badges, a copy of a message to Hitler confirming that the HQ set up for the last stand. Also included was an order to have Stukas bomb concentration camps to eliminate evidence. Kaltenbreunner, who was in charge of forgery, was found with British Pounds in his possession. Kaltenbrunner taken eventually to Richmond in the UK where he denied involvement with concentration camps or extermination squads even though he was part of the Austrian SD and later replaced Heydrich after his assassination. He became head of Zeicherheitshauptdam, the main security office that assigned personnel to the camps. He also investigated the Hitler assassination plot after the 7/44 attempt. Ultimately, he was one of Hitler's closest allies along with Himmler and Goebbels. Adolf Eichmann came to Alt Aussee at the end with gold and currency. Kaltenbrunner sent him away as he did not want to be associated with Eichmann who then went to Blau Ulm where he was captured but later escaped, finally moving to South America. Kaltenbrunner was sent to Nuremberg to stand trial in 11/45. Matteson, who received the Silver Star for the capture, was assigned to Nuremberg to head up security for the judges, prosecutors, witnesses and visitors. He saw Kaltenbrunner at the trial and was asked about his mistress and her children. Per William L. Shirer, Kaltenbrunner received an order in 12/44 from Himmler to destroy gas chambers but he defied the order and kept them running. He was convicted and hung.

As to the art in the salt mines, the local Gauleiter Eingruber set up explosives to destroy the art. Kaltenbrunner, in a recorded conversation, told him not to do it, not because of the art but because he needed the workers in the mine to guide him to the cabin where he was captured. Matteson also arrested Dr. Wilhelm Hottl who was involved with intelligence work with Kaltenbrunner. Years later, Hottl and Matteson were on a TV show in Austria.

At one point in 1945, Matteson went to Ohrdruf concentration camp outside Bad Ischl. He saw inmates in the hospital in rags and lice-covered. He went to the crematorium and saw bodies stacked up inside and more bodies in chemical pits outside. Years later, he visited Ohrdruf and met a Czech man who remembered seeing Matteson in the Ohrdruf hospital. He told Matteson that the medics came briefly, but the inmates remained in the camp area for 6 months. Matteson also went to Topplitzsee in 1945 and came across 12 German scientists working on underwater rockets. Rumor was the Germans dumped gold into the deep lake.

At one point in Alt Aussee he met Norman Bailey who had been a British traitor who was put in the Tower of London before the war for passing along information to his girlfriend, Countess von Platen. After his release in 1938, he went to Germany and began propaganda broadcasts, but was later replaced by William Joyce, Lord Haw Haw. Matteson arrested him after he confessed to passing information to the Countess.

Postwar, Matteson worked on Harold Stassen's Presidential campaign and later in the Eisenhower administration. Under Kennedy he worked with John McClure as Director of Arms Control Policy.