



(U//FOUO) Interview with [REDACTED], Entering His 52nd Year at NSA

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(U//FOUO) [REDACTED] joined NSA in August, 1955. SIDtoday interviewed Mr. [REDACTED] recently to learn more about his remarkable career and to get his perspective on how the Agency has evolved since its earliest days at Fort Meade...

- *(U//FOUO) You entered the Army Security Agency in 1951, and joined NSA in August, 1955... When you first joined the Agency, did you work out of Fort Meade? What were the NSA campus and the surrounding area like at that time?*

(U) When I joined the Agency, my duty station was at Fort Meade where our offices were housed in what are now the enlisted barracks. Also, an immense hole had been dug for the nearby three-story Operations Building (now OPS1) and pouring for the cement columns was well underway. The heating plant had just been finished and the railroad siding* ending at the steam standpipes between the present-day south and west parking lots had recently been taken up. Prior to that, two steam locomotives provided heat and hot water to the barracks. (You can still see pipes poking up through the parking lot.)

(U) It seems hard to believe now, but at that time we had dismissal tones for each shift (3) of NSA employees. It was similar to the way bells ring in a school and all of the students file out! Many workspaces were long rows of desks with the supervisor sitting at the end.

(U) The NSA buildings were guarded by Marines, who would check your badge as you went in, and the only fence was the one up close to the building. All the surrounding area was densely wooded. Route 32 was a two-lane road, and the BW Parkway was more or less the same as it is now, except it was paved in concrete.

- *(U//FOUO) You were hired at NSA to work as a Traffic Processing Clerk. What did that job entail?*

(U//FOUO) A traffic processing clerk (TPC) performed such tasks as separating multi-ply intercept copy for the cryptanalysis and traffic analysis shops. TPCs also "tore down" the cryptanalysts' copies, discarding the chatter between the encrypted messages, and made determinations about message preambles and message encryption. TPCs were required to assemble and maintain a notebook of instructions and other information in order to perform these tasks. These were, in a sense, the first "Analyst's Notebooks;" I still have mine.

- *(U) You probably worked with many remarkable NSAers over the years, but if you had to select one person as being truly exceptional, who would it be?*

(U) I guess I would have to say Ann Caracristi. [Editor's note: Ann Caracristi was the first woman to serve (1980-1982) as the NSA Deputy Director. See her [bio](#).] She was a joy to work for and to work with. She had always knew what worked well, with whom and with whatever resources there were. She is one of those "most unforgettable persons."

[REDACTED]

(U) Ann Z. Caracristi



- (U) *Has the work ethic at the Agency changed over the years? For better or worse?*

(U) I think the work ethic has changed for the better. As any organization matures, it develops an increasing sense of dedication and drive for perfection. We are, and always have been, a professional group in no way resembling the hackneyed image of the lazy government worker often characterized by newspaper cartoonists years ago. I am particularly impressed with our younger civilian and military workers who come aboard well trained, with high standards and with a strong sense of commitment.

- (U) *Was there a period when the morale at the Agency was particularly high? ... particularly low?*

(U//FOUO) There are always peaks and valleys in "morale;" it's a very subjective thing depending upon individual perceptions and where one works in an organization. When I came aboard at NSA I can say morale was high and it has generally remained so through the years. Conversely, however, there are periods when morale is negatively impacted, for example, media coverage of misstatements about NSA and its mission.

- (U) *What motivates you to come to work here at NSA every day?*

(U) I take pleasure in getting things to work.

- (U) *What would you say was the most memorable job or experience that you've had during your career?*

(U//FOUO) There were many. Every time I think I've had a "peak experience" another comes along which tops it. If I had to name some highlights, I would say:

- (U) I was called into work to process some SIGINT during the time of the Hungarian uprising against the Soviets [October, 1956]. I was a junior clerk at the time.
- (U//FOUO) During the Cuban Missile Crisis I went TDY to collection sites in Key West, Florida. People were preparing for a potential war and I could see sandbagged gun emplacements in various places.
- (S//SI) In the 1960's and early 70's, I worked with contractors to help develop some of the first SIGINT satellites. I had to become a pseudo-engineer -- although I had no formal engineering training -- to understand what was involved.
- (S//SI) During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980's I went through the Khyber Pass between Pakistan and Afghanistan on a SIGINT collection mission.
- (U) I got to East Berlin three days after the Wall fell. There were still Soviet troops in the city at the time and large sections of the Wall had already been torn down. 24-hour celebration was underway.

(U) The most un memorable experience I ever had was enduring performance appraisal camp at Warrenton, Virginia.

- (U) *Given all of your past experiences, do you think the "SIGINT business" is not as exciting as it used to be?*

(U) I wouldn't say that. There are still ample opportunities for people who want to travel to exotic locations, if you seek them out. For example, we still send collectors on trips to points around the world, and I know they are always looking for people to go to Iraq. I'd go there myself in a minute -- just for the experience -- except my wife would probably divorce me!

*(U) Footnote:

(U//FOUO) Railroad tracks connecting Annapolis and Annapolis Junction once ran parallel to Rt. 32, through Ft Meade, with a spur along Emory Road (the road between OPS1 and the SAB1 warehouse).

(U//FOUO) Note: Mr [REDACTED] currently works as a Senior Technical Advisor in the SIGINT Development of Russia organization (S2H1).

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