Oral History Interview

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Ann Caracristi

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by R. D. Farley

FARLEY: Miss Caracristi began her career with the Signal Intelligence Service, which later became the Army Security Agency during the first year of WW II. She served as an analyst on Japanese Crypt Systems, particularly the address group problem, throughout the war. Miss Caracristi will recall her experiences at Arlington Hall during WW II. This tape only covers the period from June 1942 through September 1945. The interview is taking place in the Deputy Director's office, ninth floor, Headquarters building, National Security Agency, at Fort Meade. The interviewer is Bob Farley. Miss Caracristi desires that this single tape be classified SECRET HVCCO.

FARLEY: Miss Caracristi, I appreciate the time. I know you're pressed since you have so much to do to wrap it up. You have two weeks to go?

CARACRISTI: Two weeks to go!

FARLEY: To sort of get this underway, if you would, just give me a brief resume' of your high school days before you went to Russell Sage. Your background, whether you had any

language experience or anything that would relate to SIGINT at all?

CARACRISTI: Nothing related to anything, about SIGINT.

FARLEY: Are you from Albany or Troy or up in that area?

CARACRISTI: No, I'm from Bronksville, which is closer to New York City.

FARLEY: So, right out of high school you went into Russell Sage? What sort of a course, what sort of a degree did you get?

CARACRISTI: I have a major in English and a minor in history and I got a bachelor's degree.

FARLEY: Tell me how you first heard about Signal Intelligence service.

CARACRISTI: I graduated in 1942, and I heard about it because, at that time apparently the Army, whatever we called it, sent letters to various colleges asking if the deans would recommend anyone to come work in this kind of work. I don't know precisely what they defined as requirements, but I know that I and a couple of other gals, who were at Russell Sage were asked if we wished to do that.

FARLEY: Did they explain what it was all about? What type of work it was? "An interesting job" - that type?

CARACRISTI: Not much. Very little. "Secret," was all it was described as. I think they sort've...said they wanted someone with imagination, or, I really don't know what criteria they gave, but I know that I was asked and as I said, this was June in '42 and we'd been at war since December. It seemed like an opportunity of doing something that might be useful. I

didn't particularly want to join the WACs or the WAVES, but I obviously, as I think we all did, wanted to do something that contributed to this effort. So it suited me just fine. It was a challenge...

FARLEY: Did they offer you a certain grade or a certain amount of money at that time? Or did they ask you to come down to D.C. for an interview?

CARACRISTI: No. They didn't ask for an interview. They said what the salary would be, and as you look back on it, it's almost laughable, but in proportion to the normal wages of 1942, and in relation to the salaries the GIs were receiving. What was it? $14 a month, or something? I think it was $1440 a year-that was the salary. But I don't even know that anybody was particularly concerned with the salary. That wasn't the point of it.

FARLEY: You came down and you were accepted right away? And put to work? Was that the way it worked out?

CARACRISTI: I was accepted before I came down. They sent a copy of Willie Friedman's...(Elements of Cryptanalysis?) The first one that had the lowest...it was Confidential and that was the classification and they said if you have an opportunity, go through this before you arrive. And that was the way they recruited, I presume everybody. I don't know.

FARLEY: So you came down in June of '42?

CARACRISTI: Yes.

FARLEY: Tell me about the reporting-in procedure. Did they have it pretty well organized?

CARACRISTI: I reported in at the Old Munitions Building and I don't recall terribly much about it. It seems to me it moved along fairly quickly. We were told that we were to go spend some time at a classroom, and the classroom was at Georgetown University...excuse me, at George Washington University and a woman named Evelyn Akely, as I recall, was the professor and we soon learned that she was exactly one lesson ahead of us. So we were all in it together.

FARLEY: She was teaching the basic crypt?

CARACRISTI: The basic crypt. That's right. We knew we were scheduled very shortly to move to Arlington Hall. I don't recall anything except what everybody recalls when they first moved to Washington. It was very hot. I guess, maybe we were in that classroom for maybe four weeks, five weeks.

FARLEY: Was a pretty big group?

CARACRISTI: I think not terribly big, about 20 people or so. But there were other classes perhaps going on.

FARLEY: What about your relocation? Did you have difficulty finding a place to live? Or did you share a room? Or did you go out to Arlington Farms?

CARACRISTI: No, I didn't go to Arlington Farms. I did share a room because I came down with Kitty Woolsey, who then later became Buff's (Buffham) wife...was his first wife. We were in a rooming house, just off Connecticut Avenue. Then later an apartment in Arlington.

FARLEY: At the school, did you get any sort of overall orientation as to what the mission of SIS was?

CARACRISTI: Very little.

FARLEY: They tried to keep everything pretty secret even then, I guess.

CARACRISTI: Frankly, I think that the number of people who had a sense of the overall mission was very small, indeed. They knew they needed to get some people aboard quickly and they needed to get them exposed vaguely to the business, but everybody was playing it by ear. I think this was just the beginning of the expansion. Its remarkable, if you look back on it, that, in fact, they were able to acquire and get sort've equipped a building such as Arlington Hall and such as where the Naval Security Group was, so quickly.

FARLEY: Were there any security briefings or did you have to sign an oath in those days?

CARACRISTI: Oh, yes. I'm sure you signed an oath, which was to tell nobody anything.

FARLEY: Did you feel that among your group, too, that you were supposed to keep what you were doing close to the chest, and not talk about it to even your closest friend?

CARACRISTI: Oh, absolutely.

FARLEY: And it wasn't frightening people; it was just telling them the facts of life, I guess, that it was secret work and to keep it secret.

CARACRISTI: Oh, yes. This was...Everybody accepted this and there was no question about it at all.

FARLEY: Did you get any advanced training in crypt or did they assign you to a job immediately?

CARACRISTI: I was assigned to a job immediately. I think I got through, I don't know, Crypt 2 or whatever it was. I was assigned to a job working the Japanese problem, and I remember being astounded that anybody could assume that it was possible to work against these communications, if you didn't understand or know anything about Japanese, but they said not to worry.

FARLEY: Did they give you a short course in elemental Japanese, to recognize any characters or words? You know, the basic...

CARACRISTI: I think about a one-week course was all I was allowed to master the language. I never did really need the language and there were a large group of people being trained around the country in the language.

FARLEY: Were you working on 2-4-6-8, the Water Transport System or another Japanese system?

CARACRISTI: Mostly, I ended up working on the address systems that were associated with the traffic. They were enciphered addresses, as you recall, and the decrypted addresses gave a great deal of information about order of battle. Again, however, I started as I think everybody did the first thing one learned how to do was to edit traffic. At all levels and ranks one edited traffic. And again, as I say, my strongest impression of all that was, that there was very little understanding of what was being accomplished. There was very little thinking through of how you went about it. Somebody decided that the traffic had to be edited, because it was going to be punched up and there were going to be sorts and runs of various kinds. It took a long time for somebody to say, "Well, gee, why don't we sort the traffic at least by date and time before we edit it and then we can get rid of all the duplicates and we could save a lot of money." That was a brilliant idea and so that was then done. Almost everything moved at about that rate. It was...whoever had a smart idea was able to revolutionize the process.

FARLEY: As you said, a lot of it was trial and error.

CARACRISTI: All of it was. As I recall, Al Small was the most knowledgeable person, and he was, in fact, head of the

section, or whatever it was. Wilma, then Zimmermann, now Davis was also there and I worked for Wilma during most of the war after the initial month or two.

FARLEY: Do you remember any of the organization designators?

CARACRISTI: Not really. I could perhaps dig them out, but....

FARLEY: We probably have them in the history files. How about the overall structure of SIS at that time? Would you remember anything about that? Whether there was a TA section or a language section or a crypt, whether there were separate organizations within SIS that you recall?

CARACRISTI: I remember that there was a group that worked with the Japanese problem, a Japanese military problem and ultimately, in due course, this all came under Kullback and this took a matter of time for this to sort out. There was the diplomatic problem which was under Rowlett. There were the linguists who ultimately were all in one wing of "B" building, as I recall, who dealt with all that. They were divided, I believe, some of them dealing with military traffic and some of them with diplomatic traffic. As far as the Japanese went, there was of course the German problem which was being done under Rowlett, as well, the Enigma. But Kully was the principal in charge of the Japanese military problem.

FARLEY: At your level in those days, did you see these high individuals, I mean, the people who had been around since the '30s. Did they come down and associate, or look over the shoulder? Talk with the analyst?

CARACRISTI: Oh, very much. I was extremely junior, but I knew Kully very well. Met Abe Sinkov, knew Willie Friedman. I don't know exactly how I knew them, but I did. I guess partially because I worked with Wilma and met them through Wilma and there was a lot of...The structure was extremely informal. There was very little bureaucracy involved at all. If you solved something or accomplished something it was...Kully was instantly at your side, leaning over the desk, complimenting you, helping you, what have you...although he was, whatever would now be sort of a group chief level, but he kept very intimate track of progress.

FARLEY: He's coming out next week, incidentally, so we hope to spend a couple of days with him.

CARACRISTI: Is he? Good!

FARLEY: He's never really been interviewed on an individual basis... he's always sat with Rowlett and Sinkov...sort of a Triumvirate. So this will be the first time we can really talk with him.

Back to the work procedures. Did you sit side-saddle or do any on-the-job training before you were given a certain project on your own?

CARACRISTI: Not much. As a matter of fact, I recall when I first was working on this address problem, I think it was Al Small who was in charge, or maybe it was a fellow named Frank Porter by then, who was in charge of all that, and Wilma

had been brought in to work on it, and she was off in her corner doing her thing, and Frank had me, and perhaps others, doing our thing and we later discovered that it was silly. We were trying to solve the problem the hard way by differencing everything and chaining differences, making great card catalogs. On the other hand, it really had half the answer which...Wilma was over on her desk working at the way, based on some...maybe it was captured information or something, which would at least put you on true base and you had a start and when we sort of discussed it with one another and discovered what was happening we realized that was a silly approach. Again, it was totally playing by ear, I think. Except for Al Small and Wilma to some extent, Kully to some extent, and it was growing so fast that the people, the very few people, who really had any experience and none of them had experience in the kind of one-time pad problem that was the essential Japanese military and water transport problem it was all--bring a lot of people in and try to deal with the problem.

FARLEY: Machine aids? Were there many machines that assisted the analyst in mid-'42, or did they come eventually?

CARACRISTI: The straight IBM sort machine. There was a lot of that, and we seemed to have an ability to get sorts and lists without too much trouble.

FARLEY: Remember the National Cash Register machines they used to use? Were they useful at all?

CARACRISTI: Yes, well, I never used them particularly, but then I quickly, or I didn't know whether it was quickly, but I ended up doing sort've a research of aspects of the problem in a small little group and I think the people who used the Cash Register machines were largely doing the big-depth-reading kind of projects and I never really did that kind of production line depth-reading of the textual material.

FARLEY: In your job, was it a general task or was there a mission that somebody said, "Well, today we'll do this or switch from what you're doing and work on another problem." Or was there just a volume of material that piled in day after day and you were responsible for getting as many addees out as you could?

CARACRISTI: I fairly quickly found myself in charge of this two-man team which was essentially doing the initial break-in of, and research on, some of the systems that hadn't been broken, so I, except for my original assignment where I was just editing traffic, which I was assured was the way to learn the problem, and which I don't think lasted too long, I really was never in quite a production mode. With time we structured ourselves and there were people who were simply recovering keys and recovering addresses and putting them out as there whole wings full of people recovering, reading depths, and recovering the keys for the textual material.

FARLEY: Did anybody ever question the source, the initial source of the material? Did anybody ever say, "Where did we get this material?" And I'm thinking--intercept sites. I remember one little lady was asked by General Canine--"Where do you get your traffic?" She said, "I just go down to the first floor and pick it up!" But did anyone ever say--"Where do we get this material?"

CARACRISTI: We knew it was intercepted, and we knew that there were various intercept stations. I don't know how I knew all that. I don't recall believing that it just happened from down the hall. No, I think we understood that. Somebody along the line obviously explained how it was intercepted. We had reason to know that there were intercept operators who were very fallible. I remember a couple of them who cheated in the sense that if they couldn't hear it they would fill it out and they would give us false hits and we would see phenomena that was very strange and then we would realize that it was not a valid intercept.

FARLEY: How long did you work on the address problem?

CARACRISTI: Through most of the war, really, various aspects of it. We were feeding material into people like Herb Conley and Reg Parker and so on, who were doing, so called "traffic analysis problem" and were using the address information to develop order of battle. But in those days there was very little concern about the end product, at least on the part of a lot of people I worked with. It was the game of solving the problem. It was literally a puzzle to be solved and once you'd solved it, and of course, there was a great deal

of pressure to solve it quickly, but once you'd solved it then there wasn't too much concern about whether it got put into useable form and whether it was, in fact, helping the military commander make his decision. In a way, we were very attuned to supporting the commander, but we didn't question the process beyond what we were immediately responsible for, terribly much.

FARLEY: How was the ultimate intelligence provided to G2? Were they in the form of translations or was there a daily summary? Do you recall how that was handled?

CARACRISTI: I think there were several forms. There were translations, particularly the diplomatic material that were passed to G2. In a case of the kind of information I was dealing with, it was compiled. And as I say, the Herb Conleys and the Reg Parkers and the people like that, who were working the order of battle problem of compiling that information and getting it to G2.

FARLEY: Were there quite a few Britishers integrated?

CARACRISTI: Yes. Reg is one, of course, and there were several others.

FARLEY: Primarily cryptanalysts?

CARACRISTI: Well, Reg was a traffic analyst and there was a liaison officer whose name I should remember, John Something-or-other, who sort of covered the cryptanalytic side. I wouldn't say quite a few, there were probably four or five, altogether.

FARLEY: Most of them were pretty talented individuals?

CARACRISTI: Well, anybody was talented who had a week more experience than you did. So yes.

FARLEY: Just like in the Army, you'd salute anybody who had a uniform that was pressed. Because he'd been around a couple of days longer than you.

CARACRISTI: That's right.

FARLEY: Were you aware of the ULTRA classification? Was "ULTRA" stamped on much of the material that you worked with?

CARACRISTI: I'm pausing because... Yes, I was aware of the classification. But I don't recall whether it was stamped on all of our material or not. Being a cryptanalyst, I was dealing more with the raw material and the technical data and I really wasn't reading product, particularly.

FARLEY: I don't think it was. There was just too much raw material to be stamped. I never remember seeing it until Australia--when we were going to the Philippines and it was stamped on a box.

CARACRISTI: Oh! Marvelous!!

FARLEY: Of course nobody cared then. No one seemed to care. What field eventually became your specialty?

CARACRISTI: Well, I don't know that I ever had a specialty. After the war I left for about a year and went to New York and worked in the advertising department of the Daily News. Then when I came back I worked on manual systems, Russian manual systems. I spent a while doing that. Then, I guess, I began to kind of get into junior management levels because I was chief of a little unit that worked the manual systems. As things were reorganized and sorted, I sort of held other jobs that were managerial.

FARLEY: Back during WW II, did you ever get a chance to visit USM-1 or visit any of the intercept sites?

CARACRISTI: No.

FARLEY: I guess there weren't very many to visit, really.

CARACRISTI: No, I hesitated because I can't remember whether I actually visited USM-1 or not. I got down there eventually, but I don't know if whether it was during the war. We were very aware of the Vint Hill activity 'cause a lot of the GIs had been there and had been trained there and had stories about it.

FARLEY: Let's talk about the military vs. civilians. Was there any friction between the WACs and the civilian women? Did you notice any of the girls say, "You people make more money than I do?" Any resentment?

CARACRISTI: I don't recall any. So if there was any resentment, it wasn't on my side of the fence. Money was...Really the only thing I remember during the whole war about money was...there was one civilian lady who had been, indeed, "at the Munitions Building," which was the way one described the old hands, and she was concerned about getting a promotion and most of us thought that was appalling. Why would one worry about that? Because we didn't really feel the need or think in terms of it being a career, or in terms of it being something you should be out fighting for promotions. Again you were there, you were having fun, you were doing something you thought was worthwhile and you didn't expect to be doing it

all your life.

FARLEY: How did you gals relax after five o'clock, or after the midnight shift or whenever you completed your scheduled tour?

CARACRISTI: It was a very close group. I think we...The people who worked at Arlington Hall, had...were formed into many different little social groups. We went out for dinner. We did all the things one does. Anything to unwind--the day after payday.

FARLEY: Was there a lot of tension there? Did you feel that you were uptight at your job?

CARACRISTI: No, I enjoyed tremendously the job and used to put in long hours. We really worked from 8:30 in the morning (I don't remember coming in very early in the morning) 'til 7:30 or 8:00 at night, longer if it was a time of a key change, or something. Sometimes around the clock, if it were a key change and you needed to get back into business. So we were very much occupied with working and, I think, we officially had a six-day week and we worked at least that. It was very much working time.

FARLEY: Did they use time cards in those days? I don't remember.

CARACRISTI: I think they did. Yes, I believe so. Or a sign-in sheet or something. I think it was a sign-in sheet.

FARLEY: I know a lot of people donated a lot of extra time that they never even took credit for. As you say, "Get the

war over and get the boys home."

CARACRISTI: Again, that wasn't a significant aspect, at all.

FARLEY: You mentioned earlier, the old timers at SIS. Would you comment on Mr. Friedman, whether he was really in charge or was he working for the military? I'm talking about late 1942. Was it evident that he was, and I don't want to say "number two," but he was sort of shunted aside by the military in charge?

CARACRISTI: One realized that 1) He was the sort of genius of the outfit. Also, I guess, we knew he had problems from time to time, mental health problems.

FARLEY: This was after his illness? Or his breakdown?

CARACRISTI: I guess. I was simply aware that he had had problems and there were concerns. Vaguely you were aware that he was sort of being shunted aside. He remained as a great hero figure as far as being the father of cryptanalysis. Again, I don't think there was terribly much concern on my part or most of the people I dealt with, as to his particular role. Wilma was probably more aware of it and I may have been more aware by being a friend of Wilma's of what his situation was than most people were.

FARLEY: Was he a pretty formal individual, restrained in any way or was he sociable with everyone?

CARACRISTI: Oh, he was an extremely sociable person. When you saw him socially, he was a very interesting man, as you may know.

FARLEY: How about the military hierarchy there, the people on the top level, did you have any association with them? Remember who the chief was?

CARACRISTI: Corderman and so on? ((Yes)) Not much, really.

FARLEY: But you were aware of them being around?

CARACRISTI: Oh yes. But they were up there in Headquarters building and we had much interaction with Kully and the people who were doing the work.

FARLEY: Is there anybody else we should talk about in SIS? You did mention Abe Sinkov and Kully and Frank Rowlett, anybody else who comes to mind that you were impressed with or you enjoyed working with?

CARACRISTI: No, I can't think of anybody in particular. It was a very enjoyable work experience all the time and most of the people were very stimulating and interesting and they had...they were smart, they were fun to be with and talk to. There were Frank Lewis and some of those people were just lots of fun.

FARLEY: He taught us cryptanalysis. Like a water bug.

CARACRISTI: We used to have a lot of events, as I recall. Didn't Frank have a little orchestra? We had theater groups and one of everything. Amazing how all that could be done, despite all the pressure and there was a lot of pressure to get the job done, but people did it with a lot of enthusiasm. They worked hard/played hard sort of approach to life.

FARLEY: It was a release too, I would guess. They were doing what they were doing back in civilian life--or what they really wanted to do. I can't think of any other individuals who stand out.

How about the women vs. the men problem. Was it evident that an outstanding woman would not get a responsible job because she was a woman in '43?

CARACRISTI: On the contrary. Of course, after all, there were the military men and a few WACs and there may have been many more than I remember, but I obviously didn't associate terribly closely with most of them. There were the few civilian men and a lot of civilian women, and as I recall, there was Wilma, there was Mary Jo Dunning, there was Dehlia Sinkov and she was one of the ranking women around, so there were a lot of women who had important, in that context, jobs.

FARLEY: So a woman with superior technical ability would be recognized and be given a job of responsibility?

CARACRISTI: Sure.

FARLEY: I've never been quite too sure of this, whether those who should've come through did come through.

CARACRISTI: Well, probably there were some who should have come through didn't come through, but it certainly wasn't strictly a male/female problem. There may have been personality problems. There may have been all sorts of other problems, but I didn't perceive that it was a male/female problem at that time. There was probably more of a...I would imagine

that the hardest thing might have been to be a civilian male, in that context, to tell the truth.

FARLEY: Not being in uniform, you mean?

CARACRISTI: Yes.

FARLEY: That's a good point. Do you ever remember any period where the morale was pretty low among the workers across the board, the military and the civilians? For whatever reason, I don't know.

CARACRISTI: During the war?

FARLEY: Yes.

CARACRISTI: Well, there was a lot of complaining always, naturally. I think everybody had the GI view of life, the government's bad. There are lots of people who were doing things well, but I don't recall any general low morale period. Do you?

FARLEY: No, I do not. I always like to ask that because sometimes we find out that way back in the far wing there was a problem in a certain section because of whatever reason.

CARACRISTI: Could have been.

FARLEY: Are you aware of any friction between the Army and Navy intelligence organizations, the OP-20-G vs. the SIS? Was that apparent during those days?

CARACRISTI: To some minor extent. Again, where I was working it wasn't a very real problem, but I was aware that the, for instance, on the 2-4-6-8, the Water Transport problem, there was some sort of competition about information that came out of that

that was useful to the US Navy as opposed to information that came out of the Navy traffic, the traffic that was being read by the Navy people. One was aware that there were some problems in that area, but I was not a party to it and it didn't affect my immediate operation, so I wasn't very sensitive to it.

FARLEY: Did you see many visitors from the Navy, any liaison types?

CARACRISTI: Not many. No. Not until after the war when AFSA was being formed and all that.

FARLEY: Do you think this was detrimental to our success? Our intelligence successes during WW II?

CARACRISTI: In retrospect, I'm sure you could look and say things could've been done differently and perhaps better had there not been that split, had it been a single organization. But I wasn't aware of an impact then, and I guess I don't now. I haven't done enough research back to see where it might have caused trouble. The wheel was probably invented at least twice and maybe more times, but it was being re-invented within our own area because, as I say, we took aboard hundreds of people in very short order and there wasn't much capability to train people. I mean, they were just plunged into doing the job. So there was certainly opportunity for a lot of ineptness. We might have been able to avoid some of that had you put the Army and Navy

together, but it would, just, in a way, have increased the size of the problem to have had them try to manage both those efforts as a single. So in one way, it may have benefited by being a little smaller on each side than it might have been had it been all together.

FARLEY: Within your small unit, at that time and maybe later on, were there any professional problems or any difficulties that you remember? Trying to get something done or not getting proper guidance in what you were doing?

CARACRISTI: You never really sought for guidance, particularly, because you assumed that you were going to have to figure your way out of most problems, since they were new problems, newly invented. In a technical sense, I recall when the Japanese introduced their double encipherment process on addresses and that was before they did it on the textual material and we managed to solve that and Kully came in and sort of gave the final help of assisting us over the top. So you got guidance in that sense.

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But there was a lot of competition. There was competition between...because there was duplication in a sense. I can remember competing with Frank Lewis to recover a new type

of keying information and there were people who were urging. A fellow who worked with me whose name was Ben Hazzard. Ben and I were determined we were going to beat Frank Lewis in recovering this. And we did! Oh that was nifty! You could say that was a total waste of everybody's effort. Why were two sets of people trying to recover it? But we were, and it was part of a stimulation of the place. There was competition with the British. Some of that competition was fun, but some people I'm sure took it as professionally challenging, humiliating, unpleasant. Others thought it was just kind of fun.

FARLEY: I've heard of some of the section chiefs setting quotas, too. "Did you recover so many additives, today?"

CARACRISTI: Oh yes, yes. There were some famous people again. Where I was, we assumed that all that "bad stuff" was going on in the depth reading areas, the water transport big production lines and that's where Frank Brugger was one of the slave masters down there in that wing. There was another fellow, an Army major or colonel who worked with Frank who had a great reputation as being an impossibly difficult task master. If you were to talk to people in that area you might find different responses to some of your questions than from me.

FARLEY: You mentioned the British. Was there close cooperation? What was the degree of cooperation between CBB in

Australia and Bletchley Park with Arlington Hall?

CARACRISTI: Well, Abe Sinkov, of course, was down in Australia and that was a very close exchange in relationship. Although I was not aware of, and probably didn't care about the details of how all that was happening, I knew that Abe was there and I knew he was working closely with the Australians. We had people we were sending off to Bletchley Park. Again, they weren't working the problem I was directly concerned with, but people like Arthur Levenson, and so on, had gone off and were in England and were working together with the Brits. I was at least aware that the product of the results of that were coming back and being exchanged. Our people in Rowlett's outfit, who were working the Engima problem were sending decrypts to the Brits. That was very close. At that point it seemed to me it was a totally free exchange. We did have liaison people working with us, and that seemed like a very open book.

FARLEY: So there was a pretty generous exchange of recoveries and technical achievement.

CARACRISTI: Oh yes.

FARLEY: I'm up to about 1944 maybe early '45. What was the machine processing situation by then? Had it improved pretty much? You talked about in the early days that somebody discovered that it would be simpler to put various questions on the machine? How about in late '44, '45? Was much of the

spade work being done by machines?

CARACRISTI: We continued to use basically just to sort and list capability in the area I was in. Again, I was aware that there were machines to assist decryption and, in fact, some of the material was, I guess, being machine decrypted of which I was aware. We were still pretty much doing "sort and list" kind of things through the end of the war, really, in my area.

FARLEY: It had advanced somewhat.

CARACRISTI: That's right. Our knowledge of how to get the most out of it had improved a lot, but I don't think the basic IBM support system, although it was enlarged, was not much enhanced in capability.

FARLEY: Overall, or just in your particular case, what would you say was the overall problem effecting your element? Lack of personnel, too much traffic, not enough knowledge on the part of the analyst. Is there one problem that stands out?

CARACRISTI: Well, we thought we were doing pretty well. I didn't perceive there being terribly many problems. We were turning out the information. We were doing it in a pretty timely way. We had developed ways to forward information in for analysis. I don't recall even being terribly aware of not having enough people, because we seemed to be able to meet most of the requirements. I think there were problems in the production side of the message decryption which were

probably different from the ones I was facing.

FARLEY: As an aside, would you discuss the physical working conditions in maybe July or August?

CARACRISTI: Hot. As you know it was indeed very hot and sticky. One just got used to it, I guess.

FARLEY: Didn't they, in war time, send people home because it was unbearably hot in some of those buildings?

CARACRISTI: I don't think so. I really don't think so. That was after the war. When people went around reading the humidity and temperature quotients.

FARLEY: I guess they were reminded that the GIs in the jungles couldn't go home.

CARACRISTI: I remember the first time I went to Arlington. When we moved to Arlington Hall as opposed to being down at classroom at George Washington, I was in the attic of the, what is now the Headquarters Building. It was very hot. Somebody had a supply of salt pills. I tried one of those and that, of course, was a terrible mistake. You don't need that kind of help. Nevertheless, it was hot. I think occasionally people passed out from the heat, but...

FARLEY: Some of them from overwork, too, from working too many long hours, I would guess.

CARACRISTI: Again, I don't believe that was...maybe they did. I don't think people worried about that.

FARLEY: Do you remember any time where people had to be shifted from one problem to another because of a new priority? Maybe we got into a certain system or a certain address?

CARACRISTI: Yes, I remember people shifting around.

FARLEY: Were most of them competent enough to sit down at a new problem, for instance, working Japanese and then going to French or working Italian and going to Japanese? Could they do that? Were the systems basically compatible?

CARACRISTI: My war time experience was so totally involved with the Japanese. Briefly, at the end of the war, I moved in to the area where they were looking at the Chinese problem. In a way, it was almost...if you would remember now that at the end of the war, Corderman gave his famous "Here's your hat, what's your hurry" speech. It made it quite clear that now the war was over we probably didn't want to do much SIGINT anymore and anybody who could get themselves off the government payroll, really ought to. Which was certainly something we all thought we ought to do anyway, so we started disappearing. Prior to leaving, I spent a very brief time on the Chinese problem and I don't believe it was all that different. By then the motivations or your desire to do it were such that it wasn't terribly fruitful.

FARLEY: This was after VE Day or VJ Day?

CARACRISTI: Yes.

FARLEY: Were we doing anything with the Chinese? Were we reading their systems?

CARACRISTI: No. We were not doing much of anything. It was decided that maybe we ought to begin an effort or pull together an effort on it.

FARLEY: You may or may not want to answer this? Were we reading Soviet traffic throughout WW II?

CARACRISTI: I don't believe so. No, I don't think we were.

FARLEY: You don't know whether we had any effort on it or not?

CARACRISTI: No. I believe the effort started very late. When I came back after being away a year, I began working the Russian problem. There had been an effort which had been ongoing for, I suspect, just before the end of the war, perhaps. It started out as a very sensitive thing because it was an ally and we were looking at the diplomatic traffic and had some success in that. That's about the degree of effort. Then we were getting material as a result of captured material. Enough to make people want to look at some of the military low grade material and we were intercepting some and we decided we should begin to mount a capability, at least. That's when I came back. That's the area I joined.

FARLEY: Were we monitoring British traffic at all from a COMSEC aspect? During World War II.

CARACRISTI: I would doubt it, from a COMSEC aspect I don't know, for sure, but I doubt if we had the resource to do very much of it, if we did any and I think it was probably not done.

FARLEY: We're up to VJ Day now. Was there an abrupt drop off of incoming raw material?

CARACRISTI: Oh yes.

FARLEY: Almost to a standstill?

CARACRISTI: Yes. There were.

FARLEY: How did they keep the people occupied then if there was no work?

CARACRISTI: That was a severe problem. There were only so many people who were going to be historians. That indeed is a source of Corderman pulling together people out on the grass, on the greens, and the compound at Arlington Hall and saying, "The war is over and its been very fine, and we appreciate your contribution," which was essentially the message. I think he believed as we all did that there would no longer be a need for much of a cryptanalytic effort.

FARLEY: It was a rude awakening for quite a few people, I imagine, wondering what they would do day after tomorrow. You have to make new plans.

CARACRISTI: Well, but most people had planned anyway. Most of the people had no intention of staying on beyond the end of the war. It was just a matter of sort of working out the details of when you left. Most people assumed it would

pretty much close up. Corderman's speech was a good-faith speech. He really thought it would. It was only a year later or so it became apparent that no, we weren't really going to go out of business to that extent.

FARLEY: Good thing we didn't.

CARACRISTI: I think it probably is a good thing we didn't.

FARLEY: You were around when ASA was established in September of '45, AFSA. Were you at a level there where you could be even concerned about the establishment of a single superior agency governing the intelligence organization of the services? Did you have any thoughts on it then?

CARACRISTI: Yes. I think in our sort of chit-chatty way, we worried about that, but I didn't worry seriously about it because it wasn't really my concern to do that. There was a lot of worry about how one would integrate the Army and Navy and, of course, when it actually happened a great deal of jockeying for position between personalities of the Army and Navy. Who was going to be chief of this, and who was going to be deputy, and so on. On the part of many people it was quite a difficult integration.

FARLEY: That seems to come through with most interviews.

CARACRISTI: Again, I don't recall it was all that difficult. I always...later I thought it was very unfortunate for people who kept the "We-and-They" attitude of "He used to be with

the Army" or "He used to be with the Navy." After you were together it really didn't seem like that was particularly important. There were some of our people who were unfortunately kept that through their total career, that awareness of "I was Army" or "I was Navy."

FARLEY: Still wear it on their shoulders?

CARACRISTI: Yes. Strange.

FARLEY: We have five minutes left and I'd like to ask a couple of quick ones. Some one wanted me to ask you this general question. What would you say was the greatest thrust of the COMINT profession in WW II--cryptanalysis or intelligence?

CARACRISTI: That is sort of wild. I think there was...again. We were concerned with cryptanalysis. Intelligence was sort of down there, in the Pentagon with the Al Friendlys and the people like that. They were the ones who were making sense out of that and getting it to people who could use it. We were by no means in the mode we are now, thinking that what we produce should be delivered directly to a commander. It filtered through the G2 and we did not have that sense, most of us, of intelligence needs. Our loyalty was to the man in the Pentagon,...knowing or trusting that he would get it to the theaters, but not feeling that direct connection that we now feel.

FARLEY: Then we were producers of raw material and that was it. Whatever happened to it was somebody else's concern.

CARACRISTI: I think there was far more of that attitude.

FARLEY: One final question. During WW II, from the time you came in mid '42 'til you left to go to the newspaper, what would you say was your most satisfying accomplishment or achievement or what you're most pleased about.

CARACRISTI: I think I was really able to solve some of the little crypt systems that allowed a great deal of traffic headings, at least, to be read. That was satisfying.

FARLEY: Very satisfying.

CARACRISTI: Yes.

FARLEY: I wish I had about four more hours...

CARACRISTI: Four more hours?!!

FARLEY: Thanks very much! Maybe later on when you're retired and relaxed we may continue this. What is the classification of this tape?

CARACRISTI: SECRET, COMINT Channels.