ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NSA-OH-38-80

with

Prescott H. Currier
CAPT, USN, Retired

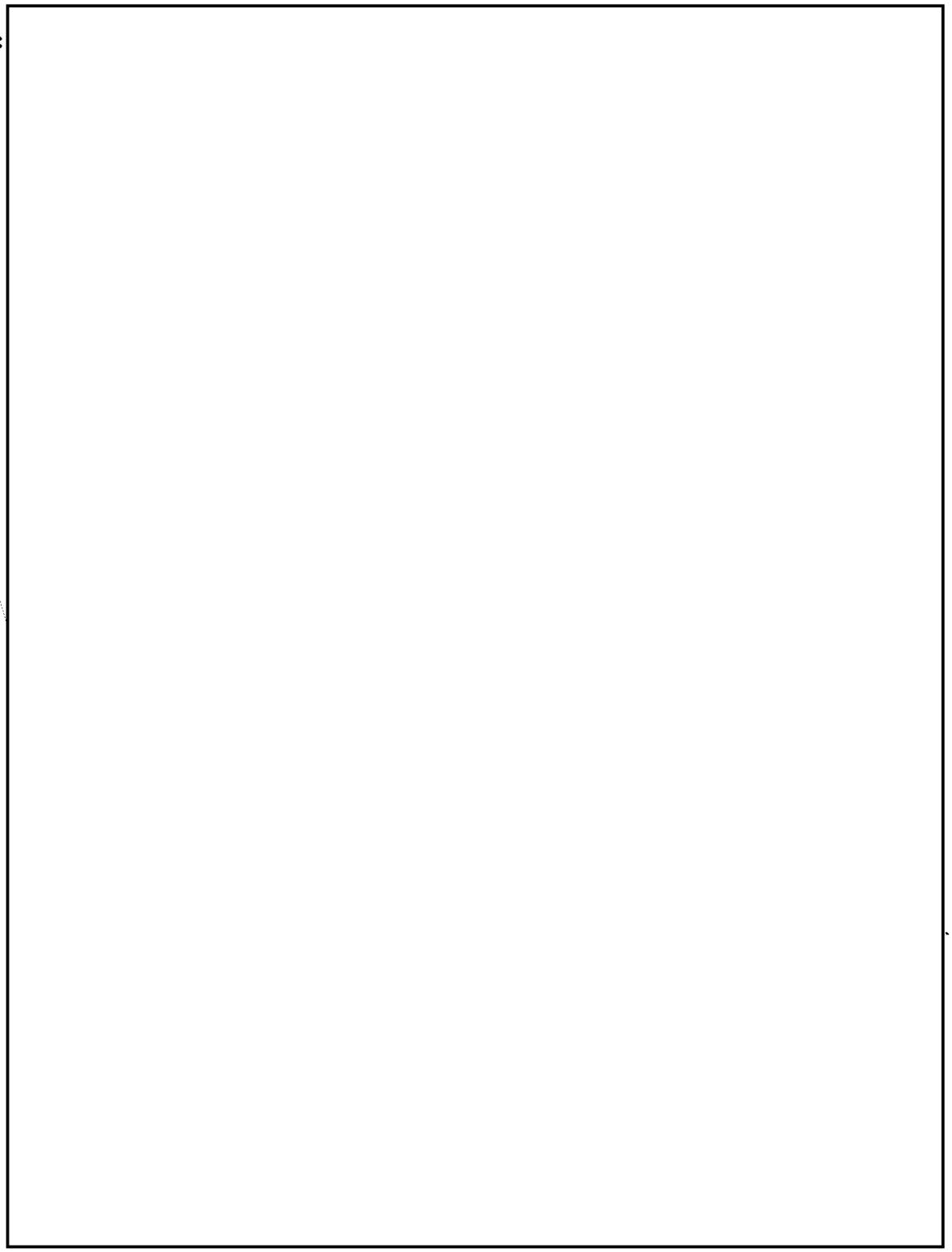
14 November 1980

M Conference Room
Hq Bldg, NSA

by H. SCHORRECK
R. FARLEY

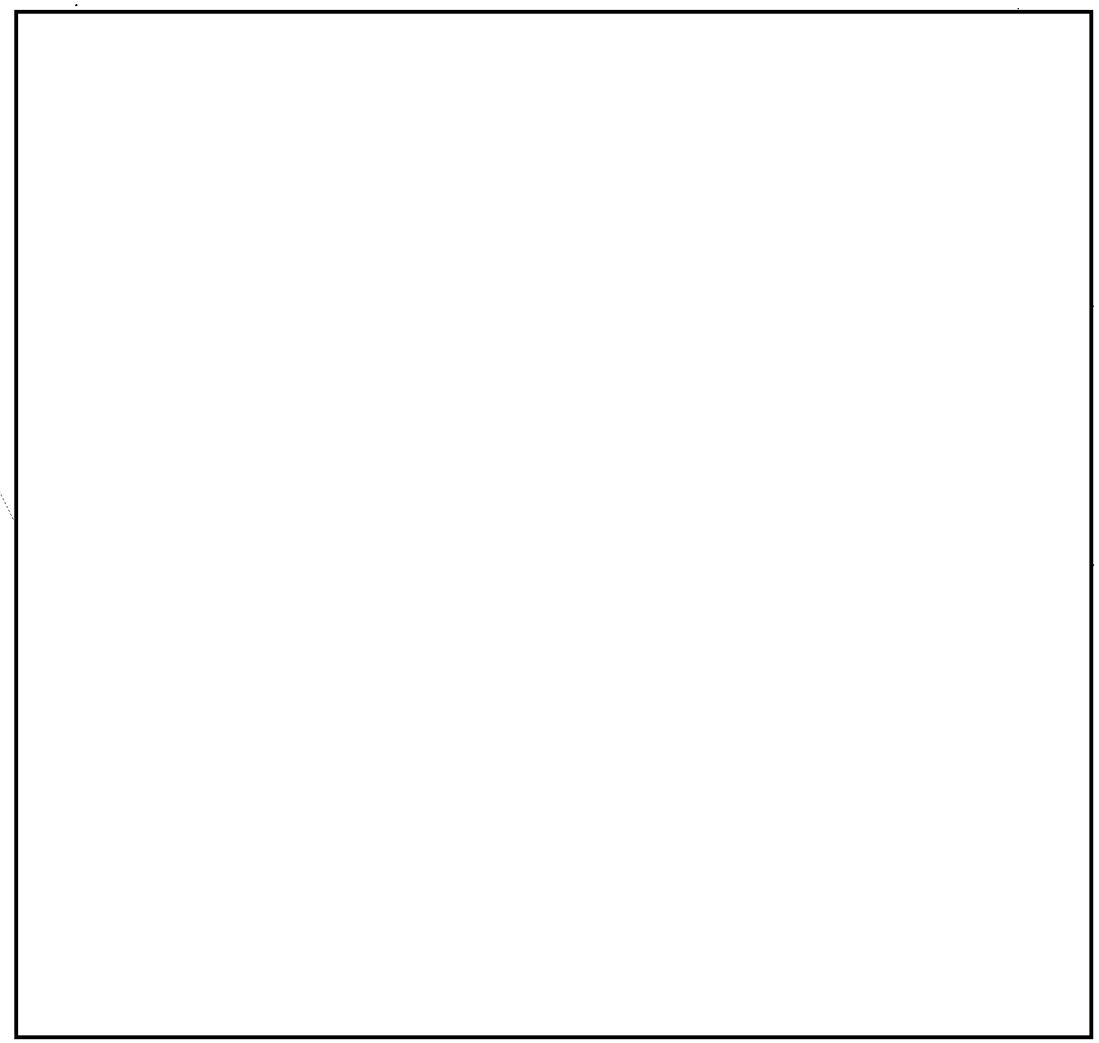
FARLEY: Today is the 14th of November 1980. Our interviewee, Captain Prescott H. Currier, a pioneer in the COMINT profession who served as a civilian and later as a navy officer with OP-20-G and other elements of the Navy Security Group from 1932-1962. The interview is taking place in the M Conference Room, Headquarters Building of NSA at Fort Meade. Interviewers: Mr. Henry Schorreck and Bob Farley. Classification of the three tapes TOP SECRET COMINT CHANNELS at the request of Captain Currier. Captain Currier will discuss his experiences as an expert cryptanalyst in the pre-World War II and World War II days at the Navy Building and Nebraska Avenue in Washington, D.C. Some of the more interesting recollections precede the actual interview on this tape. Captain Currier started to reminisce and then we began the interview.

CURRIER:



[redacted]

Now this sort of thing, as far as I'm concerned is really ancient history and there's no reason in the world why that shouldn't go in the records. Before I came in [redacted]



FARLEY: Capt, shall we get underway here and talk about...get some of this incidental material out and then get into the meat. Delighted that you are going to give us all this time and recall how it was way back when. Can we just get a little bit on your family background, Captain, and pre-navy days so that we can pick it up.

CURRIER: Well, my father was in school work...Dartmouth graduate. When he graduated he went into public school work; he was principal of the school in Holbrook, Massachusetts

where I was born. He moved to New Hampshire shortly thereafter. I went to New Hampshire public schools. Sometime about 1923 he decided that the state of New Hampshire wasn't paying him enough and he would go back to farming. He was born on a farm, so we went back to the town in which he was born. I lived on a farm up until I was... oh... with one interval, up until I was 17 and graduated from high school. Nothing spectacular or phenomenal about my childhood; I didn't do anything that was the least bit unusual. My uncle who was at the time a Captain in the navy whose other nephew had gone to the Naval Academy via a Presidential appointment, he persuaded me that I should do the same. I had had no briefing; I knew nothing about anything. I was the youngest, most naive youngster you can imagine. I didn't really know what I was getting into. I therefore enlisted in the navy. When I got to Newport, I didn't know where I was going, nor did I know why I was there, and it wasn't for three weeks after I arrived that I finally found someone who would listen to me and let me tell them that I came to go to the Naval Academy preparatory school in Newport, so they took me out of the little training company that I was in and I went into the Naval Academy preparatory class which is run at

Newport for enlisted men who came in for this purpose. There were some dozen or so. To cut a long story short, after the completion of this, which is something on the order of three months, which was simply an academic review course, didn't amount to very much, we all took the examinations...a physical examination and an examination to be covered in the review course. It turned out that I was 15 pounds underweight, so the medical officer called me in and said, "We just can't, There's no way in world that we can get your weight up in the next month, so you're not going to be able to go on to the academy preparatory class in Norfolk," which was another four months, I think, or five months, at the end of which...it ended sometime in May, at that time you go on to Annapolis for the summer with the class of plebes that come in. In the course of the interview with this man, whose name I've forgotten, I simply mentioned that my uncle was at that time president of the naval examining board. He said, "God sakes, son, why didn't you tell me that in the first place?" he said, "I would have passed you with a broken leg!" He would, precisely, however the time was not then until they asked me what I wanted to do, and I didn't have to foggest notion of what I wanted to do, so I said, in effect, "What have

you got?" And I went through a list of schools and I saw something called a radio school, which interested me, so I said, "Oh, I know, I'll serve out my time learning what you've got to teach me about radios."

FARLEY: You never did get to the academy, then?

CURRIER: Never got to the academy.

FARLEY: Ok.

CURRIER: No, I never got to the academy.

FARLEY: That's one of the things we were confused about, too.

CURRIER: No, never got to the academy. I'll tell you how it happened.

FARLEY: All right sir.

CURRIER: I went to radio school for the required time. I don't remember how much it was. I went to sea on the Whitney. At the end of the following year, we had a funny little communications officer, whose name I don't remember, but he was....he was not very smart, not really. And he came up to me one day and said, "Do you know...did you ever hear about ONI?" And I said, "No, I never heard about ONI." He said, "Well they're looking for people like you." I said, "Well..." He said, "I'm going to send you to Washington," ~~and~~ so off I went and ~~I didn't...~~ I didn't know where I was going or why. He didn't know either, by the way, because they wouldn't tell

him, but I ended up in the Kana intercept operator's training class up on the roof in the sixth wing at the navy department. This was really good fun; I thought this was great. And after the required time, and I've forgotten what it was...three months, I guess, four maybe, and that would have been, let's see, I guess the summer of '32, I went out to the Philippines and there were only...there were just four of us, eventually... shortly thereafter, we became six and then we became eight, but that was the total all the time I was there. But this was really great fun, I thought, and I set down to teaching myself Japanese and as well as I could, and saw some of these rather simple systems that were being used and set about breaking some of them and translating them and sending in reports.

FARLEY: Were you intercepting them, too?

CURRIER: Yeah, intercepting them and breaking the material, translating them, and writing the reports, and sending it in.

FARLEY: A triple threat.

CURRIER: Well, I got myself into serious difficulties. A message came out...we had no...we had a chief in charge at the time...but sometime at the end of the following year, we got an officer in charge, Goodwin...E.S.L. Goodwin, who was...you may remember...

FARLEY: Yes, I know the name.

CURRIER: He, one day, called me aside and said, "I have a very serious message from ONI. They want me to put you ~~on~~ under ~~to~~ surveillance and keep you." He said, "They feel that you've been doing something you shouldn't. ~~—~~ nobody, none of our language students....no one we've ever heard of could do this sort of thing. ~~—~~ it's just impossible, so they did. And the correspondence to that effect, and some of it is still available over in Nebraska Avenue, and there's still some downtown. ~~—~~ they just weren't about to believe that an individual could be an intercept operator, a cryptanalyst, and a translator and a report writer all in one. ~~—~~ this sort of just doesn't happen according to them, and I had quite a time getting myself out of it, but I eventually proved to them that this was absolutely the way it happened. That there was no hanky panky and I didn't have a pillow mate who spoke Japanese, who was teaching me back Japanese, which was one of the things that they were concerned about, and that I wasn't getting any information from anyone else, and eventually they believed it, and everything came out all right, so they...

FARLEY: Were they simple systems, ~~—~~ pretty simple Japanese systems?

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CURRIER: These were, the ones that I'm talking about now were fairly simple....series of simple transposition systems of three-kana code, something that I had never seen before, but it looked like fun to me, so I thought I would just have a go at it.

SCHORRECK: Was this at Alongapo?

CURRIER: This is at Alongapo, Station C.

SCHORRECK: Who was there with you, do you recall?

CURRIER: MacGregor was the chief in charge, Willis Ruk(?), a man named Horn, I'd have to go through a list to remember the others who were there. There was a man named Ritchie, a red-haired radio man who came later on toward the end of the time, certainly the end of the second year. I can't remember...I couldn't....if I racked my brain, I could think of others, but...

SCHORRECK: What were you told, Captain when you went there about the mission? What were you supposed to do? Did anybody tell you, or just...?

CURRIER: Now this....every....no, the only everyone "knew" that there was one target and that was Japan. ONI had set up all of their war plans...their orange war plans and there was nothing else. There was no other enemy. And there was no question in my mind, or in that of any of the others that I knew about, that there was anything

else to intercept except Japanese traffic and there was no question but what this...what we were doing was the one thing that we should be doing, no, there was no direction. We were all more or less...we compiled our own records. We kept our own TA records, our own frequency records. We forwarded a technical report as it were, once a month, which were written theoretically by the chief in charge, but I wrote them.

SCHORRECK: ...to Washington?

CURRIER: Yeah, from Station C to Washington and into OP-20-G. We, as I recall, never got any feedback at all. We compiled our own records. They accepted what we got...what we gave them, but there was no one here competent to do any, say, intercept control, for instance. We did all our own right, it was all local, and we kept track...I used to break the callsign systems. The...was, in fact, there was nothing that I did not do, and ~~get~~ kept the TA records, and ~~go through~~ wrote the reports and one thing or another.

SCHORRECK: Was there anybody locally who was interested in what you had obtained?

CURRIER: No, no, no....

SCHORRECK: No even the intelligence officer from the Asiatic Fleet?

CURRIER: Well, that was Wenger...I'll come to that later.

SCHORRECK: Ok.

CURRIER: Yeah, the Asiatic Fleet was, as ~~the~~ a recipient, interested, but none of the material went direct from us to the

Asiatic Fleet. It all came back to Washington. Anything that they got came back to them from ONI in intelligence channels. There was no SIGINT...COMINT was not identified as such to the recipients in the fleet. It all came back to Washington and was regurgitated through ONI and back out into the fleet as intelligence without its source actually being delineated.

SCHORRECK: What did you think of that system?

CURRIER: I didn't have any thoughts about....do you mean what did I think about it now, or what did I think about it then? I didn't know about it then....I didn't know about it.

FARLEY: Security-wise.

SCHORRECK: Ok. What do you think about it now?

CURRIER: Well, it was probably less than good and it's a situation that was, in the course of being changed, this was early on, you have to remember.

SCHORRECK: Yeah.

CURRIER: And you get both the army and the navy, but particularly the navy who at that time had begun to realize the value of COMINT, and the people who really knew in ONI, and various of the other, very few of the other high commands were aware of the fact that this source was one of our best sources, particularly as far as the

navy in the Pacific was concerned. A system is something, as I say, at that time, there was no other system. People who produced COMINT did not talk directly with the recipients of the information. It all went to ONI and out, and this, I don't think that anyone thought that this was particularly bad. It was an inefficient system. Given an average circumstance, and most intercept stations had no ability to do anything other than copy traffic, keep track of what they'd copied, send the material back to Washington, write a weekly technical report on the condition of the receivers and the condition of the roof of the building in which they were, and that was about it. That's all that actually happened in most stations. It happened at Station C that there just happened to be someone there, me, who was interested in doing something else and for whom it was great fun, and I didn't see any reason why I shouldn't do it, so that during that period, things at Station C were, in fact, a bit different, but I didn't, I honestly didn't, as I can... looking back on it, ~~I had no...~~ I had no doubts about whether or not it was a good idea or a bad idea; it was just something that seemed to be fun for me and I looked forward to spending, I used to sit up all night many nights and when I came off watch, I would simply stay there, and I couldn't leave it alone.

SCHORRECK: Were you aware that this kind of thing had been going on through the '20s?

CURRIER: Oh, yes, yes, yeah.

SCHORRECK: Did you see any evidences of that? Any old records?

CURRIER: Oh, yes, yes, yeah, there was in OP-20-G, there were old intercept records, old traffic, yes, for instance, there were, I don't know whether you know or not, you probably do, but the navy for awhile had one, or two, I've forgotten which, two operators on the President Lines going back and forth across the Pacific.

SCHORRECK: I've heard that.

CURRIER: Yeah, and they all had, they had a receiver in the State Room and a voucher for meals, and that's about it I guess, and they produced a certain amount of traffic, copied at random as they saw fit, young... Jimmy Pearson was one of those operators. Yeah, that we knew, and we knew that from talking to some of the older people that they had been doing that since the mid-20s. Yeah, it was well known.

FARLEY: They collect anything worthwhile? Those people who were making the South Pacific run?

CURRIER: Not as far as I know, not a great deal. It was the same kind of traffic that was being copied in Guam and the Philippines.

SCHORRECK: Do you remember what kind of receivers they had?

CURRIER: They had an RA and...let's see, that was the low frequency. RT was the high frequency receiver, and the RA was, RB was the low ~~frequenc...a low~~ frequency receiver and it took up a space about half the size...about the length of this table.

SCHORRECK: My goodness. Was it any good?

CURRIER: Well, for those days, yeah, for vacuum-tube receivers, yes, they were good, rugged, standard navy receivers.

SCHORRECK: How about DF?

CURRIER: DF was effective. We had no DF. We never used any DF on any intercept targets. You're talking about the service DF in the navy?

SCHORRECK: Yeah. Well, the ones we used in the COMINT business.

CURRIER: There were none, no DF used in the COMINT business. Not that we can...

FARLEY: Early in the game, huh?

CURRIER: Not then, no.

SCHORRECK: Not then, no, ok.

CURRIER: If there were any Japanese signals that were DF'ed, it was done from somewhere other than the Philippines and Guam. I did not have anything to do with it and I didn't know that there was...I knew about DF, of course, and I knew that the navy used it and I had operated DF, but, no there was no DF.

Minato

? AO = MANCHUKO ?

(This would parallel stationing in overseas possessions, i.e. Taiwan, Korea.)

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P.S. I believe in Japanese Manchuko has four syllables.

FARLEY: Was there an abundance of traffic? Was there lots of Japanese?

CURRIER: There were buckets full of traffic. They operated 24 hours a day. There were four or five different kinds of traffic, of point-to-point traffic which was sent on schedule could all be copied very easily, and as I remember, let's see, AT was Tokyo; AK was Korea; AO was Monoyoto (Minato ?); AG was Taiwan; and so on, and the point-to-point traffic was handled mostly on schedule between about a dozen Japanese land stations. Now in addition, they were broadcast to the fleet, and then there was an enormous amount of fleet traffic, regular service traffic which was sent all sent in plaintext. Exercise traffic, which during an exercise period, and particularly during the 1933 maneuvers, it was possible to copy Japanese traffic on almost any frequency on the spectrum as much as you wanted to, 24 hours a day. I've never seen so much traffic at one time. It was just, yet it was just, the airways were swamped with Japanese naval traffic, and the there was no problem in getting traffic. The only problem was, which was a problem orginally, was to identify the circuits which were being copied and to determine which ones were of importance and which ones were not and in an exercise period, it

was not always possible to do this. In the first place, the calls were all ~~in~~ enciphered during an exercise period, ~~and the...~~ but the operators were sufficiently ill-trained to make enough slips so that you could identify ~~...you could identify~~ calls without a number, but it was almost impossible for an intercept operator to identify traffic by type or by addressee and originator while it was being copied, so that everything was copied. Some of it, and it was easy to identify ~~...to identify~~ exercise traffic, maneuver traffic by its heading and so on, so this is no real problem. And it was all enciphered in special ciphers which were used only during the exercise period, but there was no lack of traffic.

FARLEY: It was all manual morse, then?

CURRIER: ~~All man...~~ every bit of it was manual morse.

FARLEY: No plain...

CURRIER: No.

FARLEY: ...language at all. I guess they did...

CURRIER: Well, it was all plain language...most of it was plain language. It was unenciphered Japanese, but sent manual morse.

FARLEY: Manual morse.

CURRIER: Oh yeah, it was all manual morse.

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SCHORRECK: No machines, then?

CURRIER: None.

SCHORRECK: Could I ask you a little bit about the '33 maneuvers? Were you there when they tried, when they had the Gold Star?

CURRIER: I was there when the...~~yeah, I knew, I didn't...~~ I was never on the Gold Star, but I knew the Gold Star ran out of Guam and a rest and rehabilitation trip for the people on Guam, that was their principles, and as a supply ship for Guam, yeah.

SCHORRECK: ~~Yeah,~~ did you know that they had the intercept on board for the '33 maneuvers?

CURRIER: Yeah, I knew that ~~the...yeah...I knew that~~ there was an intercept team on the Gold Star, ~~and of~~ in the course of the maneuvers, ~~we knew that,~~ that's right, yeah. But those '33 maneuvers...we had, I guess it was about one of the first times that we put two men on watch at one time, but I never saw any of the traffic that the Gold Star intercepted, but I knew that there was a group on there who were doing this.

SCHORRECK: You all were alerted also for those '33 maneuvers.

CURRIER: No...depends on who alerted whom.

SCHORRECK: Ok. you alerted Washington....

CURRIER: There was no doubt when the maneuvers started... let me go back just a bit.

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SCHORRECK: Ok.

CURRIER: It was known through regular naval intelligence channels that that was to be a grand maneuver year. As a matter of fact I suspect this probably may have even been published in Japanese newspapers; I'm not sure whether they were, I'm only guessing at this, but I do know that "everybody knew that it was the year for grand maneuvers." As to when it was actually supposed to start, I expect this was governed pretty much by the weather, and when this actually started, it was obvious to any intercept operator that something very different was going on. There was no doubt about it. There was, for instance, a hundred times as much traffic as there had been. The addresses of all of the messages concerned with the maneuvers was readily identified, so that the situation was so obviously different that nobody had to tell anybody anything; it was just there. As far as having gotten a word from Washington that something was about to take place, no. If it happened, I didn't know about it, but I'm quite certain not.

SCHORRECK: Would you like to go back and tell us a little bit about Wenger's role in what was going on?

CURRIER: By the way, I've been visited by Jeffrey, by his son, a couple of times. As you know, he's trying to write a biography of his father. ~~Anyway...~~ and he has asked me about various things. He says that I'm one of the few people who knew his father in the 30's who had any personal contact with him. I didn't have all that much, but we did know one another. He was ~~he was~~ the Assistant Communications Officer for ~~the~~ AVIT (?) ~~navy attache~~, and he came out...I think he was assigned sometime late '32 or early '33; I've forgotten the exact dates, but on one of his trips to Alongapo... I don't know whether anyone had mentioned my name to him before or not. I really don't know, but I do know I remember the visit, and he said, "Come on over here and sit down; I'd like to talk to you about one thing or other," so we just chatted about the way things were going; how much traffic there was and what the situation was, and I told him what I was doing, ~~but...~~ so he said, "Tommorow, we're going out for some short-range battle practice, you come along with me on the Augusta." So I went out and spent the day doing short-range battle practice on the Augusta, sitting in Joe Wenger's state room. He had his bunk and his desk covered with papers of all sorts. ~~We just...he wanted~~

to show... He just wanted to show me everything, so it was difficult because about every 20 minutes or so we'd make a dip over 180 and everything would come sliding off the desk and table onto the floor, and we'd have to pick it all up and put it back and start over again. I never honestly knew why he felt he wanted to talk to me so much about things. We spent, as I say, two or three hours in our little shack in Olongapo and then the next day asked me out to spend the day with him in his cabin going over all the material. I think he felt a bit frustrated at that point. I think that he was having some difficulty getting across to his admiral, I think, how important he thought the material that we were producing would be to the admiral. And I think he just wanted someone, some understanding ear who would sit and listen to him. This, in retrospect. I had no thoughts like that as a nineteen year old, or however old I was, 20 years. These things did not go through my mind. I did't know why he was doing it. I enjoyed it. It was great fun. I loved to talk to him, and I thought it was a great experience, but I had no deep analytical thoughts about why Joe Wenger wanted to talk to me or why he wanted me to come out on the Augusta. I saw him once or twice after that in the following year, beginning, let's see... no, it must have been toward

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the end of 1934, we moved from Alongapo up to the house on the top of the hill in Marveles, which is just across from Corregidor. After we moved up there, I didn't... I don't think I still....he...I know, he went to the hospital at Kanya-tobo, his tummy was acting up; he had ulcers and one thing or another and he was, in fact, he spent quite a bit of his time in the hospital. In fact, he came back; he was shipped back and went to the hospital in San Diego, anyway, I did not see him again out there. In fact, I didn't hear from him again until I got home in '35 and I had registered at Dartmouth and I was about to go and I got a letter from him in sometime about mid-August 1935, asking me whether I would come to OP-20-G and work as a civilian. I was torn, but I still had memories of what great fun it was, so I at the moment, forewent Dartmouth and decided I would come to Washington, which I did. I'm glad I did.

SCHORRECK: Did you talk to Himmel?

CURRIER: Yeah.

SCHORRECK: When you got here?

CURRIER: Oh yeah.

SCHORRECK: While he was doing this?

CURRIER: ~~He felt....he...~~ things have come out since that time. I mean, I've known him for a good many years now, and in the course of talking to him in subsequent years,

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I've learned a great deal more about him than I knew at the time. So, anything that I would say about the way I felt about why he was doing what he was doing then is different than I feel about it now.

SCHORRECK: Sure.

CURRIER: I knew that he was very much concerned about the organization and operation of the "naval intercept service." He was convinced, and he had succeeded in convincing a good many fairly senior people that this was ~~the~~ a prime source of very vital information. That there was no doubt in anyone's mind that sometime within the next "x" years, five or six, the U.S. Navy was going to tangle with the Japanese navy. There was no doubt in anyone's mind at all, and all the war plans were written toward that end. His prime purpose in doing what he did was to convince those who received the information that they should support the development of a viable, active OP-20-G. The problems in those days and continued to be, subsequent to that, the fact that OP-20-G was under the Director of Naval Communications, and the Director of Communications and the Director of Naval Intelligence did not always see eye to eye, as evidenced by the fact, for instance, that all of the language assistants, students and so on, were always ONI people, loaned to

OP-20-G. They were never part of OP-20-G. It was never a COMINT operation, including translation. It was always ONI. All of the material went directly to ONI from OP-20-G and he, in the early days, late 20s, early 30s and the mid-30s, wherever he happened to be, he was trying to press this thought home to anyone who would listen. And there was no doubt in my mind that he was instrumental in producing all sorts of improvements. The actual degree of acceptance on the part of various of the senior people varied greatly. some of them continued not to have much faith and didn't want to spend any money to produce what was needed, but he felt very strongly about it and it was something that he felt all of his life, and he was one of the few men who became senior officers who had a complete grasp of all of the technical intricacies of intercept, traffic analysis, preparation, forwarding, the lot, in great detail.

SCHORRECK: The entire COMINT business?

CURRIER: Yeah, the entire COMINT business, and he knew it from the receiver to the recipient.

SCHORRECK: Do you think his grasp was greater than Safford's?

CURRIER: Oh yes. Safford was a funny character. "Nervous Nelly" was the way he has been described by some and he was. By the way, John Toland, who did wrote Rising

Sun and is now doing another book, which he told me was going to be the The Aftermath of Pearl Harbor, but I don't know whether...what the title of ~~it's~~ the book is going to be, or whether or not he's....what the situation is right now.

SCHORRECK: I think he's still working on it.

CURRIER: But he came to talk with me at some length, and all he wanted from me was personal characterizations of people who were around in the 30s. He said, "I can't find anybody who knows anybody." He didn't want to know any technical details. He wouldn't have been interested if I had told him precisely how everything worked. This isn't what he cared about. He wanted to know what kind of a man Friedman and his cohorts were...what kind of a man Safford was. He made me imitate him. He said, "What did he talk like? What was his wife like?" Well, she was a character too. She almost pushed me over one day. She did, seriously. We went to a gathering where she was showing some of her paintings and Safford was standing out in the entry way and I went out to chat with him and I was there talking to him just as a friend, and she came dashing across the hall, put both hands on my chest, and pushed me away and said, "You can't monopolize his time like that! He has other better things to do."

SCHORRECK: She refused to let him to talk to us. We had to meet him in Washington in different places, without her knowing about it. She didn't like it. Oh, she didn't like it at all.

CURRIER: Well she didn't want...not only, it wasn't only talking to him later on, but she didn't want anyone interfering with his duties toward her. And he had rather a hard time.

FARLEY: A very possessive woman.

SCHORRECK: Well, it's been said that Safford's contribution was more in terms of the COMSEC side of things rather than....

CURRIER: Oh, almost completely. Oh yes, it was, this is very true.

SCHORRECK: Was it a blessing to have the reorganization in February of '42? From an administrative point of view for the sake of the business?

CURRIER: I would have to say yes, but you must remember also even then I was very much immersed in what I was doing and I honestly was not ever really aware of any serious administrative difficulties. If anyone was having any trouble, leave me alone. I have a job to do, and that's about it, so ~~I...~~ that's a difficult question for me to answer.

SCHORRECK: Yeah.

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CURRIER: I do know that when we moved from the navy department out to Nebraska Avenue, and we did get reorganized, we had really some very good people at the heads of these various divisions and sections, and it did, in fact, work, of course, much better than it had previously, but the problems were compounded a million times. I've gone over this in my mind several times, for instance, just the matter of getting all of the intercepted material from the Pacific to FRUMEL, FRUPAC and NEGAT, enciphered, by hand, on ECMs is staggering. No one who hadn't been around at that time who doesn't know what a communications center looks like or what's involved in getting hundreds of millions of groups of text continually from one place to another with an enormous amount in every case of hand encryption involved, is just...just doesn't know what things are like. Anyone who goes into a nice cool air conditioned comm center nowadays and sees a few people fiddling around on computer terminals and that sort of thing, doesn't know what it's like. As an aside, by the way, on this same subject, when we went over to England in...

FARLEY: Let me switch tapes, will you?

CURRIER: ....January '41

FARLEY: Excuse me.....

END TAPE 1, Side 1

TOP SECRET//SI

BEGIN TAPE 1, Side 2

FARLEY: We have transcribed your earlier one and it's great.

SCHORRECK: 70 pages... 75 pages.

CURRIER: Yeah....

FARLEY: Yeah, it's great.

CURRIER: This business of a comm center. The U.S. Navy, of course, didn't... I did not know very much about how the comm centers were working at that time, but when we went to England one of the things we had to do was to go down to the Admiralty, and of course, we talked with Joe Loomis, by the way, was our guide. I don't want to digress too much from what I was talking about before, but this bears on the comm centers. We went to the Admiralty, down into their comm center, all of the top level admiralty traffic was in four-figure code with a one-time pad, except for certain material that was sent in type X (Typex), which was the machine that they had gotten about two years before, which we saw a lot of. But what staggered me was in their so called comm center, there were probably five or six rows of tables, 25 to 30 long, little sets of tables on each side of which sat a... what do they call them, cryptographers, I guess, one of them, and there were probably, what, 75 or so, maybe more on watch at a time. This was in the

Admiralty comm center. The incoming traffic came in, was in pencil, was distributed to the decoders, decipherers, on the table. One man sat on one side of the table, wrote down the additive underneath the figure cipher, subtracted it in his mind, read the code groups to the man across the table, who, having worked on this for a considerable period of time, would have probably memorized at least half of the code values, so as this man read out a code group, he would write the code group down, so that he wouldn't forget it, then he would write its value down, without having to look it up in the codebook. About half of them he did, in fact, have to look up. It took him...he then produced a fair copy, in pencil, for distribution to the distributors, who saw to it that it went to its proper place in the Admiralty. Now at some point along the line, it must have changed format; I don't know what...it wasn't in the comm center...somewhere outside, they may have taken it, and I don't know whether they were actually typing up some of this material for the Lords of the Admiralty or for the High Command or not. I suspect they probably were, so, I don't think these pencil copies made their way to Winston Churchill, although they may have. He actually came down and would come down into the comm center himself and would look over the

shoulders of some of these people, anyway, this was the first time that I had ever seen that kind of a comm center in operation. The clutter and the numbers of people in Navy World War II Comm Centers were almost as great, except that we had a lot of ECMs and we didn't have pencils and pads and one-time pads enciphered. All of the traffic, as I say, all had to be enciphered by hand, deciphered by hand, and produced... well, they did have electromatic typewriters, I guess, but in any event it was essentially a hand operation. How in heavens name we produced what we did, I will never know. It was absolutely unbelieveable. The amount of traffic that was intercepted went to all three centers equally, at ~~the same~~ roughly the same time, so that in some cases, 30 or 40 copies of intercepted messages would all come in to one center, each of the three centers, all of which had to be sorted out, identified, classified as to system, then sent on to the people who were recovering the additives. They had to put them all together. This was, again, all a hand operation. There were waves all over the place up there who were keeping the records, and being sure that everything that came in was entered on the right sheet, all hand operation. I don't know how many people there were in our communications center there, but there must have been three or four hundred.

SCHORRECK: The thing got bigger...as the war went on.

CURRIER: And it got bigger.

SCHORRECK: And they started using the teletypes to bring traffic back from the west coast.

CURRIER: That's right.

SCHORRECK: This was all a courier operation in the '30s, wasn't it?

CURRIER: In the '30s, it was all courier, I mean mail.

SCHORRECK: That's what I mean.

CURRIER: registered mail.

SCHORRECK: And they put it on the clipper ships coming back from the Philippines.

CURRIER: Yeah, that's right, yeah. That was all mail, that's right. There was no hurry then; I mean, a week or ten days, or two weeks. Didn't make all that difference.

SCHORRECK: Right.

CURRIER: And the reports came back the same way.

FARLEY: Capt, can we go back to your civilian days?

CURRIER: Sure.

FARLEY: I'd like to pick up the thread again.

CURRIER: Yeah, I know I keep losing it. I'm sorry.

SCHORRECK: No, I keep asking questions.

CURRIER: No, they're all interesting.

FARLEY: Yeah, but I don't want to miss part of this. When you went to work for Wenger as a civilian...

~~TOP SECRET//SI~~

MRS. E.A. CLARK
(SEE SRH 355 I, p. 225)
THIS IS THE SAME PERSON
REFERRED TO AS "MRS. CARR
ON PG. 41)
FRED WOODROUGH
PHILIP CATE

CURRIER: Yes.

FARLEY: ...could you pick it up there? and....

CURRIER: Well, ~~when I...he....~~ I don't think I was given any amount of money that I would be paid, but when I arrived, I think yeah, the grade was SP-5, as I remember. I'm trying to think now, SP-5, that's Sub Professional, Grade 5. The pay was $135.00 a month, which was a lot, because I not only lived on it, but I went to school at night on it, bought a car, and saved money. On $135.00 a month. In any event, when I arrived, there were, let's see, Mrs. Driscoll and her cohorts, Mrs. Talley and Mrs. Clarke; that was the trio that worked on most of the "high-level" ciphers. In that particular time, it was the Red machine. Holtwick and Wright and a couple of chiefs...I'm trying to remember who else was there...not very many, worked on the Fleet Operational Ciphers, ~~which were...~~ which were four-Kana code, transposed in a form varying from system to system. Then, in the back room where the diplomatic and counsular ciphers were worked, was Doctor....

SCHORRECK: Wray?

CURRIER: Oh, no, no he didn't come 'til later. He was a Seventh Day Adventist...old man....~~a...~~his name's around...I've forgotten it offhand. Fred Woodruff (rough), Philip Gate (C), and I used to spend my time in all three places, and I don't remember, honestly, I can't tell you what my job was

supposed to have been. This, I guess I always end up doing this sort of thing. I spent a lot of time working on the Red machine. I spent probably most of my time doing that for the first eighteen months anyway, maybe a little bit more, and there's some very interesting stuff that came out of that; I'll tell you about that it later, I guess it's all right. Then somebody had to take over the Naval Inspector's Ciphers and so on, so I said I would do that. I also went back and worked with Fred Woodrough and Philip Cate on the Counsulate material, just to keep my hand in, and also spent some time working on the Fleet Ciphers, so I was in all of them. I was in all four sections in the course of two or three years. I expect the only thing that I had actual "responsibility" for were the so-called Naval Inspector's Cipher, plus work on the Red Machine, which I did quite a bit of. The Fleet Ciphers... ~~there were...~~ we had four or five people at various times working the recovery. ~~They had~~ transposition grilles, recovering the code groups, and at that point I didn't do any work on any of the...book breaking work, on any of that. As a matter of fact, I don't know who did. I think...wait a minute, I do, I think that was, most of that work was being done by the lang(uage)...the ONI people in the front room. They were the translators, Al Kramer, Berkeley,

various others of that ilk. They were the ones who were doing most of that and they were theoretically doing all of the translating of them.

SCHORRECK: Were you cooperating with Frank Rowlett and his group on the Red Machine?

CURRIER: Nope, nobody cooperated with the army under pain of death. Actually, the army wasn't working with the Red machine at that point; they had the Purple. The Red machine was Naval Attache only, nothing else.. The army did not work on that. At least, if they they did, they did it surreptitiously. They may have gotten it later on, but ~~they...in that...~~ from '36, '37, as far as I know, they had no Red machine traffic at all and didn't work on it. I may be wrong, but I don't think so.

SCHORRECK: You were saying that the Japanese Red machine was used for Japanese Naval Attache.

CURRIER: Yes, as far as I know, that's all it was used for. I don't think it was used for anything else.

SCHORRECK: They claim that it was used for Japanese Diplomatic and that it was succeeded by Kryha.

CURRIER: Not as far as I know. I can be wrong, but I never saw any Red machine traffic, and I'm pretty certain we got it all. ~~It~~ that wasn't Naval Attache traffic. This was diplomatic traffic, by the way. Naval Attache traffic is diplomatic traffic. I don't think that the diplomats used the Red machine for "overall"

diplomatic traffic. I can be wrong, but I certainly never saw any and as far as I know, the army never did any significant work on the Red machine. It's successor, which we never got anywhere with, at the time we were working on it, I've forgotten what we called it... NAT-something, maybe it was just NAT, I guess that's what it was. It was used at the same time as the Purple machine, but we never did any work on the Purple machine and we didn't know anything about, I, personally and Mrs. Driscoll nor anyone else, as far as I know ~~in the~~ in OP-20-G, knew anything about the Purple machine. I do remember, sometime, must have been '38, Friedman came over with I guess maybe Rowlett came too, I'm not sure...with a machine....god, how much was it. ~~and I...he~~ I remember him coming in and he set it up on Mrs. Driscoll's desk. She would hardly stay in the same room with it.

FARLEY: Tell us about Mrs. Driscoll. Was she a talented individual?

CURRIER: You know, I used to think so. When I fir... she was a yoemanette in World War I and she worked...did she work with Hebern? I can't remember. I think she did. when the... HCM...

SCHORRECK: That would have been 1920?

CURRIER: ~~A...~~ later than that...'22....

SCHORRECK: Maybe '22, '23.

AGNES MEYER DRISCOLL

JUNE 1918 - JULY 1919 CHIEF YEOMAN. PROBABLY CENSORED MAIL.

JULY 1919 - JAN 1923 NAVY CODE AND SIGNAL SECTION. STUDIED C/A AT RIVERBANK 1922.

FEB 1923 - JULY 1924 TECH ADVISOR HEBERN ELECTRIC CODE CO.

RETURNED TO NAVY 1 AUG 1924
(FROM GOVT. SERVICE RECORDS)

DNLY. 4/9/91

CURRIER: '22, something like that.

SCHORRECK: She worked as a cryptologist in World War I...did she or not?

CURRIER: As far as I know, she did not, but, as far as I know, she did not. She was a yoemanette; she worked in an office.

SCHORRECK: Ok.

CURRIER: I could ~~can~~ be wrong about that, because that really was before my time; I don't think she did. I don't think she got involved in cryptanalysis until she came with the navy sometime about '23, maybe '24.

SCHORRECK: I have a letter that says that they were going to send Aggie Driscoll to Riverbank to be trained...

CURRIER: Right, right....

SCHORRECK: ...but this was 1918 or '19, but the war ended and they said...and two other fellows, Chief Petty Officers, because of the fact that the war had ended, they never sent her, but she was supposed to go to Riverbank, but she never did.

CURRIER: Yeah, yeah, well....

SCHORRECK: Which led me to wonder whether she actually did get involved in cryptanalysis in World War I.

CURRIER: As far as I know, she didn't,

SCHORRECK: She may not have.

CURRIER: But again, as I say, this is something that you could find out better than I. I would just be guessing. I

don't think she did, but she did....I don't know where she got any formal training. I never knew, but sometime beginning about '22 or '23, or thereabouts, she did start working for the navy, and in the course of the next year or two or three, she acquired a certain amount of knowledge on the subject and set to work. I don't know whether she ever had any training; I think she probably didn't. She just picked it up. When I first knew her, which was in '35, she was spending full time on the Red machine, and she said that she was the one who first broke the Red machine traffic. now, the Red machine was an extremely simple device. You know what it was?

SCHORRECK: The six wheel and 20....

CURRIER: It's a Kryha, it was an old commercial Kryha, K-r-y-h-a, which was adapted by the Japanese for use in their diplomatic or naval attache communications. It was devised by Kryha with a 30 wheel and a 6 wheel in order that in enciphering a five-letter code of which two letters were vowels, it could be, not only pronounceable, but the commercial cost was one third less. Plain text was then defined as any five-letter group that had at least two vowels in it, so the machine was devised to encipher a five-letter code of which two of the letters were vowels, so that the vowels

would always come out vowels and the consonants, consonants. That was the reason for the machine in the first place.

SCHORRECK: Did he....did Kryha devise that for the Japanese?

CURRIER: No, no, no.

SCHORRECK: He just built it.

CURRIER: He just built it for commercial use and the reason I've just given you is why it was built that way.

SCHORRECK: Ok, and the Japanese...

CURRIER: The Japanese bought a copy, modified it and used the 20 and 6 feature, improperly. If they had used it properly, it would have ~~been.~~ taken a little bit longer to break it, but as they used it, they paid no attention to the letters that were put on the 6~~th~~ wheel and those that were put on the 20~~th~~. And they not infrequently would put, say, All high-frequency letters on the 6~~th~~ wheel or all low-frequency letters and the frequency of the plain text would give it away immediately, and you could identify without any trouble to all of the letters on the 6~~th~~ wheel. Once you've done that and you knew what the type of machine was, and we did know in advance, by the way. We knew it was the Kryha. I'm sure Mrs. Driscoll knew. I mean, if she didn't she was...she should have. She must have known. She knew the step. She knew it was step once, twice, or three times. She knew there was a

TOP SECRET//SI

EO 3.3b(3)
EO 3.3b(6)
PL 86-36/50 USC 3605

DWS 4/9/91

6th wheel and a 20th wheel. She knew that the keys must simply govern the stepping and that the sequences were varied from day to day. Given all this information, it's not an astounding feat for a cryptanalyst with the traffic that was available to break a system like this. It was not a difficult system. As I say, it was one of the first ones I ever worked on and it never occurred to me that it was the least bit difficult. And, of course, by today's standards, it was less than easy. ~~The... some of it...~~ We were talking about Mrs. Driscoll's ability; she had a certain amount of inate cryptanalytic sense, there's no doubt about that, but I can remember when I came back from England in '48, my job was called "The Director of Research, Naval Security Group, OP-20-G." I was "N." Mrs. Driscoll...let's see, Raven was N-1 Mrs. Driscoll was N-2, Howie Campaign was N-3, and I was supposed to be responsible for the three of them. From that time on, from 1948, that was the [redacted] by the way, as you may remember. Raven's section was doing the ~~forwarding~~ Coding (Covert?). Mrs. Driscoll continued to work on diplomatic ~~dressing~~ traffic and on anything else nobody could identify. Ninety-nine percent of the material that she had was 5-digit one-time pad traffic. She spent two solid years taking hand frequency counts of what was obviously one-time pad traffic. Now, I never felt that I should go tell her that the world had fallen, times

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had changed, so....and I thought, well...I talked, with...it was Harper, I guess. I remember talking with him about it too, and, but she and Mrs. Talley just went on in their own little way with 90 million groups of one-time pads, figure traffic, sitting down, day after day, eight hours a day taking hand frequencies. So, given this and a few other things that happened, I don't think she was any mental giant or genius. She did come along at a time when there was no one else there. Friedman was her opposite ~~member~~ number who got, of course, all of the publicity, which he saw to and she was little noted by anybody except the navy. They did appreciate what she did. She did a good job for them, when she did it, but...she was not in the big leagues, not according to my opinion. I never felt...at that time, I had no reason for feeling that, but as time went on, and I really found out what things were and how things went, the sort of knowledge that was required to do what needed doing, I was pretty certain that she couldn't survive in this world, and as you know, what happened to her when eventually AFSA was formed.

FARLEY: What sort of a spell did she have over the senior navy people at OP-20-G?

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CURRIER: I don't know that she had any, except that she was an odd looking woman anyway. Whether that had anything to do with it, I don't know. I don't feel that...maybe some of them felt that she was a real genius and if she left, the OP-20-G would collapse. After I had been there awhile I did not feel that way and I don't at any point remember feeling overawed. It may be that some of those who were not cryptanalysts and didn't understand the business might have felt that she was God's gift to ONI and that they couldn't possibly do without her. I don't know that this feeling existed; it may have. The...I don't know...I think that Joe Wenger felt, and Harper too, I think, probably, at that point...he was there early on in '36 or 7; I've forgotten now; I can't remember dates real well. He was there then. ~~Safford...~~ Safford was the one, I think, who really felt that she was someone that the navy simply couldn't do without. I'm pretty certain of this.

FARLEY: Was she difficult to work for?

CURRIER: Good Lord, not with me.

FARLEY: No, I was thinking of her ~~do~~minions, the people in her section.

CURRIER: Well, there were only...there were never more than two, Mrs. Talley and Mrs. CLARK ~~Carr~~, that was it. She wouldn't have anyone else. They were both mediocre

office type clerks who would do more or less what they were told and this not very well. And ~~I...~~ ~~I cou...~~ I never could understand why she insisted on having them with her. She would never do anything or undertake a job without the two of them. They were nice enough non-entities, but they had no talent.

FARLEY: Did you ever hear of any confrontation between Mrs. Driscoll and Frank Raven?

CURRIER: Yeah, but I don't...I can't remember any details.

SCHORRECK: It was over the Enigma.

CURRIER: Yeah, well Frank probably told you about it. I had very little to do with the Enigma and when I came back in April of '41, I brought a lot of material and we had....I remember we had submarine traffic and Frank was working on it. I do remember...I do remember just a bit of a spat or a confrontation or argument about Enigma traffic, but I couldn't tell you what it was about. I don't remember.

FARLEY: Ok.

CURRIER: You see, Raven...let's see Bobbie ~~Lee,~~ Ely and Frank Raven and Lynn and Brotherhood all came at the same time and it took me about six months before I could tell Lynn and Raven apart. They were both big. They looked to me exactly alike. They were about 8" taller than I, both of them, and they both came from somewhere out there, and then they came on active duty. It took me quite awhile before I could sort them out.

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FARLEY: You stayed there as a civilian until '41, was it?

CURRIER: No, ~~I came...~~ I went on active duty in October '40.

FARLEY: Oh, ok.

CURRIER: You see, I got a reserve commission...

FARLEY: Ok.

CURRIER: I got a reserve commission in '36. That's where I....

FARLEY: That's where I want to take up to, right.

CURRIER: That's, yeah..., so I sort of came in the back door.

FARLEY: How did you get that? Was it just ~~a...~~?

~~CURRIER: I...~~

~~FARLEY:~~ ...extension courses, or...?

CURRIER: Well, I was going to George Washington at night. At the end of the first year, Joe Wenger somehow planted the seed, and I've forgotten exactly what he said now, so I applied for a commission through ONI, through OP-20-G and ONI as Ensign CBX, USNR. And got a long letter back saying that I wasn't qualified. Then there was an exchange of correspondence and I don't remember precisely who wrote what or I don't know that I ever saw it all, but eventually I got another saying that I was qualified and they'd be very pleased to grant me a commission, provided..., there were certain provisos, and I've forgotten what they were, ~~but~~ that I do certain correspondence work and take certain courses. I did one in navigation and one in

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weather and...I can't remember, ~~I~~ not important. Anyway, I lived up to my end of the bargain and I kept my commission and then I went on active duty in ~~194...~~ October 1940, and, let's see, I'm trying to think when... yeah, it must have been October 1940.

FARLEY: But they didn't activate you immediately in 1936?

CURRIER: No, no, no. I worked as a civilian. I worked as a civilian from 1936 to 1940.

FARLEY: Ok, when you got your commission, did you stay right in the same job, in a given section.

CURRIER: I stayed right in the same job and I did as many things as I did before I got my commission. It didn't seem to make any difference at all, because I....I guess you have to understand (1) the section was small; there were very few people there who were really competent. Some very nice guys, a couple of old chiefs, some very pleasant people, some translators, Mrs. Driscoll, Aggie and her cohorts, a bunch in the back room, but there was no one there who really had any dynamism about him; any punch, and I felt quite free to roam, as I did, as I always have, I guess, and I determined what problems were there to be done, arranged that I got whatever traffic I wanted to work on....did what I had to do, and then when I finished what I was doing, I went on to something else. So

that, the section being small, and while there was an officer in charge at all times, he never knew, couldn't....he wasn't a technician...he didn't know what was going on, except in a very general sort of a way. He could not assign duties, because he didn't know precisely what duties there were to be assigned. and so that it was simply a matter of looking around to see what there was....this all in retrospect now; I don't think these thoughts went through my mind at the time, but I do know that it was all to me really great fun. I never enjoyed myself as much. There was so much to be done and it was all pleasant doing and a little bit exciting. The....breaking your system and reading it and finding out who did it and where it came from, that sort of thing, was just great fun to me and it always has been. I never cease to enjoy doing that sort of thing. I don't mind, or haven't minded over the years arranging for someone else to do it, or explaining to someone else how it should be done and organizing and administering the group, but I much prefer to do it myself.

FARLEY: Sir, was there an increase in traffic toward the end of '39 and '40. Was there a buildup of traffic before the war started? Did you notice that?

CURRIER: No, I don't remember noticing it. I'm sure there was; I'm absolutely positive that there was. The period from, let's see....'3....I'm trying to think....yeah, after the....'39 and '40 when there was a war in Europe, and when we began calling in reserves among whom Raven was among that first group of four, and he began building up with other odds and ends of people from various universities around about the country.... yes, there were increases in all sorts of traffic and that the organization at that time was beginning to grow. By 1939, it had increased from, let's say a total of I don't know, 50 or so up to possibly 100 or 150 and we....I remember we got additional space up the hall and set up a new section of the...yes, there was growth, and it was noticeable.

FARLEY: This is still the navy building?

CURRIER: Oh yes, still down in 6th wing, yeah.

FARLEY: You were in the 6th wing, weren't you?

CURRIER: Yeah, yeah.

SCHORRECK: Could I ask you, Captain, as you've said and as we know, ever since 1905, certainly World War I, we have been concerned with the Japanese navy.

CURRIER: Yes.

SCHORRECK: As it began to get later into the 1930s and war actually broke out in Europe, did we evidence any concern with the German navy within OP-20-G?

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CURRIER: Not within OP-20-G, no.

SCHORRECK: Why do you suppose that was, sir?

CURRIER: I don't think I knew why at the time. I'm trying to think why it must have been. We did...we intercepted some traffic on the Atlantic side, and I think that even in 1939 I'm pretty certain that there must have been some submarine traffic intercepted, but I had nothing to do with it and the reason that I find it difficult to answer the question is that I knew very little of what was going on. I knew that the traffic was there, but I don't think anyone was working on it, and for this reason, I don't think that OP-20G paid any special attention to the Germany navy. I don't think so. You might get a different opinion from someone else, but I don't think so.

SCHORRECK: Did you know at the time, or did you know at any time that Friedman had, in fact, purchased a commercial Enigma in 1929, 1930?

CURRIER: No, I didn't know that. It doesn't surprise me; I mean they were commercially available and...

SCHORRECK: Did you know that? Were you all aware of that?

CURRIER: I personally was not aware of that, no, but in retrospect I know...

SCHORRECK: They were....they were...

CURRIER: Yeah.

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SCHORRECK: Yeah, are we ready to go on to the trip?

CURRIER: What time is it?

FARLEY: It's ten...do you want to take a break?

CURRIER: Do you mind if I just take.....can I get some.....

SCHORRECK: Are we about 1940?

FARLEY: Well, we're going to, but I want to talk about the circumstances, the situation that led to your trip to England. Can you give us a little background on why?

CURRIER: Yeah, well, yeah well....

SCHORRECK ...and how you were selected.

CURRIER: I can't answer either one of those two questions honestly, but the first I heard of this was sometime... must have been about October, and I think the reason that I went on active duty in October was so that I could take the trip. I think this is true. Now, I did not know anything about the high-level talks that were going on that set the trip up, particularly the heads of government arrangements which had to be made before the trip was, in fact, decided upon. I did hear rumblings of...disagreements...that there was some... felt that we should not make the trip. I felt that the army pressed it, and I'm pretty certain that the navy felt that this was an inappropriate time for us to be doing this sort of thing. This sort of filtered down. I have no way of knowing where the opinions came from or how strongly they were held.

SCHORRECK: Do you think there had been some talk between our governments? We've never seen that.

CURRIER: I know that there had been some talk between them. I know it was set up in advance and I think if you will remember the visit...of Tizzard...in which he exchanged a certain amount of high-level technical scientific information, and I think, and I'm not absolutely certain, but I think at that time, and I don't remember the date for that, but the way, or the month, that Churchill, is alleged to have told Tizzard to look into the possibility of an exchange. Precisely how he did it or with whom he talked, I do not know, but sometime not all that long after that occurrence, Tizzard's visit, high-level conversations were started, and it was eventually agreed at a very high level that such a visit would be undertaken. The army were all for it. Friedman, particularly, wanted the visit to take place and wanted to go, and I think, although I've never been told, I think he wanted to go alone....I think. The disagreement on the part of the navy, I think, came from ONI, but again, I'm guessing, and I think the Chief of Naval Operations was convinced that perhaps we shouldn't do it, but he was overruled. The decision was taken at a higher level and an arrangement was made that the group "maybe one"

should go. Sometime about....it must have been in October. These dates, you should be able to check, because I think that this is fairly public knowledge, but it would be a good idea to go back to check this, because I think you could put it together properly. Friedman had his breakdown; went to the hospital. I remember this, so it must have been in October. It may have been a little bit earlier. At that point the plans had to be changed. The decision remained....we were going to exchange information. At that point, a team was chosen, two from the army and two from the navy. Why I was chosen, I haven't the foggiest, except that I guess there wasn't anybody else around who knew enough to do it. That was probably it. We didn't have, we really didn't have very many experienced people, even then. We had a lot of people who came in on active duty and we had a lot of regular duty...regular navy people who were assigned to OP-20 who had done training courses, special communications training courses. They came for a year, two years....Bob Weeks was one of them. He was here and he and I were chosen. I suppose I was chosen because I could be called to active duty, I had had a certain amount of experience, I did know what most of this was all about, and it would be well to have someone along who did. Bob Weeks did not know very much about it.

ROSEW WAS HIRED
IN DEC. 1939.

DWS 4/9/91

FARLEY: Were you a junior officer then, Captain?

CURRIER: I was a very junior officer.

FARLEY: You were just the lower...

CURRIER: I was a JG.

FARLEY: Oh, ok.

SCHORRECK: As you look at it, behind Wenger you were probably the only other person who knew as much as he did.

CURRIER: Yeah, yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think that's right.

SCHORRECK: Going back to the 30s....'32....

FARLEY: It's about ready....

CURRIER: So I think there were probably fairly good reasons for choosing me. I was the one who was there. Anyway, the army chose, as you know, Sinkov and Rosen. Sinkov was an old hand. He'd been around. He came to work in....

SCHORRECK: 1930.

CURRIER: ...'31..'3....1930, and Rosen came along somewhat later, late '30s I think.

SCHORRECK: '36, '37.

CURRIER: Yeah, anyway, we got together; we didn't actually get together before we went. We never had...as I recall... we never had a meeting; the four of us never sat down and talked among ourselves as to what we were bringing, what we were going to do, or what our duties were. or would be when we got there....never.

FARLEY: No plan of attack at all?

CURRIER: Nope, no, now this....

SCHORRECK: But you and Bob Weeks were briefed.

CURRIER: Briefed very briefly....no...unless my memory fails me completely, I do not remember being told anything except "watch your step"....see to it that we get whatever you think we should get and have a look around

SCHORRECK: What were you told then....what were you told to give them?

CURRIER: I knew what we were bringing. There was no secret here. We had the Purple machine; we had the Red machine; we had all of the JN-25 codebooks, recoveries, and additive lists. We had DF manuals; we had all of the navy RIFs on intercept operation DELOT, that sort of thing. That list of material, by the way, is available. It came out in several places. One was the Chicago Tribune.

SCHORRECK: Yeah.

CURRIER: Anyway, that material was known. We all knew what we had. Was no...and the British knew what we had, so there wasn't any...there were no secrets there. What we were not told is what we were supposed to get.

SCHORRECK: Could you talk about the...about the ECM or the SIGABA?

CURRIER: A....that

FARLEY: Would you hold one second while I....

FARLEY: Ask him again Hank.

SCHORRECK: Were you told anything about what you could say about our ECM and the Sigaba?

CURRIER: The answer is no, we were not told. It never, as far as I can remember it never even came up in the conversation, in the discussions or our briefings before we left. The Army people think often Rosen may have been, may have been told, but we were not, no.

SCHORRECK: So the four of you never met together?

CURRIER: We never, my recollection is that we never met together until we met down on the dock in Annapolis on our way, on the KING GEORGE. I'm sure that arrangements were made; why we never actually we called together and briefed as a group, I don't know, but we weren't. I think, now, I think probably I can explain it. It was still, the dichotomy existed and we were two, we were two separate nations even at that point, really were. And there was, it, the, and the distrust and sort of background ill-feeling went right to the top. It wasn't just, it wasn't just the....

SCHORRECK: They permeated both organizations.

CURRIER: Yeah, yeah, it did, it really did.

SCHORRECK: How were your individual relations with Sinkov and Rosen?

CURRIER: Fine, no problems at all. I never felt there was a problem you see.

SCHORRECK: What was your impression particularly of Leo Rosen?

CURRIER: A...golly, you see I, I don't know,

FARLEY: At that time.

CURRIER: Yeah at that time. I thought he was a brash young New York Jew and he didn't sit too well with me; didn't dislike him, but I didn't think at the time I would have wanted him for a close personal friend. I hope this sort of thing by the way doesn't get outside.

SCHORRECK: How, what is, how about his, were you at all aware of his abilities or?

CURRIER: No, no, none at all. I did know Sinkov because I had worked with him on a couple of minor problems and I had also worked with him on the Voynich manuscript with Sinkov, and I talked with him on several occasions about it and he and I and Rowlett, I remember going over some pages of the Voynich manuscript, so that I knew, I knew Abe, but I had never met Rosen, and I can remember.... speaking of Rosen, I remember one night some time up in Bletchley we were out for dinner with some people who lived somewhere, Layton Buzzard Way, I've forgotten now exactly and we had a little sort of sherry party which they had taken great pains to get the sherry together for, and Rosen was talking with one of the wives and they were talking about Vassar. And, oh yes, Rosen said he had several girlfriends at Vassar, one of whom was Lisa Morganthal, and then it occurred to me that all the people that he mentioned were all Jewish and I was, and I heard him in sort of the background role, British voices around

here, I heard this New York voice talking about all these Jews and I began to wonder how it was filtering through and how it stood with the others. As a matter of fact it was noticed that Sinkov and Rosen were both army and both Jewish and that we were both navy and were both Gentiles and this did not pass unnoticed I can assure you, it really didn't. It didn't really prevent things from happening. We had for instance, we were both given a car and a driver, we never rode in the same car. Bob Weeks and I rode in one car and Sinkov and Rosen rode in another car. We had our own car and our own driver and our own petrol coupons and we never rode together.

SCHORRECK: That's amazing.

FARLEY: That's carrying the separate services to extremes, isn't it?

CURRIER: Well I guess there were probably reasons for it, they figured that there were four of us and it would be uncomfortable in the back seat of a war department sedan with four people and they figured they had to have two cars anyway and then the natural way of dividing up four people, two of whom were army and two navy, to say nothing of Jewish and Gentile, was down the middle. So that's the way it happened.

FARLEY: When you got to Annapolis was it a secret mission, did they smuggle you down there at midnight?

CURRIER Yeah, no, we went down in the daylight but it was supposed to be a secret mission, but of course everybody knew about

it by the time we got there. In fact my wife knew about it. I left home, she...Mary Wenger called her and said that she had had a friend in Annapolis who just by chance had sawn...seen Pres Currier and Bob Weeks down on the dock in Anapolis with a lot of baggage. We, so, when I left, my wife didn't know where I was going or when I'd be back.

SCHORRECK: Is that right?

CURRIER: Yeah, yeah she didn't know. But she knew, she knew before I left this country how I was going; that I had gone to Annapolis and that I was waiting on the dock of Annapolis with a lot of baggage.

SCHORRECK: It's hard for me to picture, I know Annapolis so well, where did the boat come in.

CURRIER: Well she didn't, she was tied up out on the roads about two miles out, oh yeah.

SCHORRECK: Yeah, out in the middle of the channel.

CURRIER: Yeah and we had to wait until Lord Halifax came ashore and that was the reason we were sitting around waiting. We had the motor launches all ready, in fact we had the gear loaded, we had a lot of it of course, loaded in two motor launches but we didn't, it was rough and we didn't want to go out and bounce around out there and get everything all wet while we were waiting for him to come ashore. So we waited on the dock until we learned that he was about to leave, I'm told. We then went out but we

got there early and we still had to circle around in the rain and waves and so on. We kept reasonably dry, but I was worried more about our gear and it was all in wooden crates and I trust it was waterproofed inside. But that was our only real concern.

FARLEY: Did you...were you given sidearms at all to protect?

CURRIER: No, never had any sidearms. There's something which nobody knows except me and I've never told anyone before and I hope you take it off the tape, but I had a little police special which I had bought sometime before and I figured that as long as I was going into a war zone that I might as well, since nobody else was giving me anything I'd better put it in my pocket which I did. About a week after I'd been aboard the KING GEORGE I left it down in my cabin in a drawer. I didn't tell anyone; I should've told someone on the ship about it, I didn't. About a week after I went aboard we were somewhere, we'd gone down, we went down to pick up a beef convoy that right, we were in the mid Atlantic, it disappeared and I had to tell the exec about it and he was very upset to have a loose, in fact I had, I take it back, I did show it, no I take it back, I did talk to the exec about it before and told him about it and told him I had it, I did do that. But then it was stolen and he was, he was really quite upset. He said," We'll have to tell the Captain about it, we can't have stray firearms around this ship that we

can't control." So they had a search of the ship conducted very discretely. I don't think anyone except me, maybe a couple of others, knew that it was going on, and they never found it. I suspect it was thrown overboard and I lost it. But no, I never told that to anyone and no one else knows it as far as I know.

FARLEY: But I'm surprised the Navy didn't give you some sidearms or something.

CURRIER: No, no, no, we didn't have it.

FARLEY: They didn't consider that sensitive equipment in those days.

CURRIER: Well we figured it would be aboard a battleship crossing the Atlantic and what good was sidearms if we were to be torpedoed or, so I don't think there was any real reason giving us sidearms.

FARLEY: So it took you what...five days to cross the Atlantic?

CURRIER: Oh good Lord we were two weeks.

FARLEY: Well you ~~swoomed~~ SWUNG down by toward Argentina then?

CURRIER: Oh yeah, we went down and picked up a beef convoy and joined the escort and they....we had to keep pace with the slowest ship in the convoy which is 11-12 knots. In fact we lost a few on the way. And then when we approached the submarine zone we got additional escort. A convoy broke off and went into the channel and, we went up to Scarba, up around Ireland and up to ~~Scarba~~ and put in, put in Scarba. This was prearranged, that's where we were going, that's where the KING GEORGE was going anyway

NO! SCARBOROUGH

Scapa 45 IX

Scapa Flow

DNS

and when we arrived the Naval Attaches office of course had word that we were coming, and sent up a young fellow named McDonald, who was one of the Junior Assistant attaches, who made arrangements to get us and our equipment flown south in short flying boats. When he found out how big our, our crates were, it was discovered that only one of them would go through the hatch in the flying boat so we were marooned in Scaba (Scapa), we had no way of getting south, no way that had been previously planned. So the captain of the KING GEORGE was apprised of this fact, he as I recall, cast about to see whether or not there was any other type of Royal Navy transportation for us south. Found out that the NEW CASTLE was coming the next day, she'd come from the Med; she'd been out oh, almost two years without a refit and had been knocked about a bit and she was coming up to Scaba (Scapa) and was going down the East Coast to Shinesse (Sheerness) and into the dock yard there for refit. So he apparently individually arranged for us to go aboard the NEW CASTLE. So he got a trawler alongside and we loaded all our gear on the trawler and took it across to the NEW CASTLE. There was no place to store it below decks so we had to store it above deck, but it was done admirably, so we didn't loose anything. The skipper of the NEW CASTLE was a man named Rhory O'Connor, he wrote the seaman's hymn. He was a real character, he wore, his coat was brilliant red and he wore high-sea

Sheerness is on the Thames Estuary and has a dockyard there.

boots above his knees. He was a real, a real skipper, was really quite a man. Anyway, we got everything stowed and were assigned cabin space and we were to have left sometime in the....during the course of the night. On the way down we caught up with a convoy going down the east coast swept channel, which was kept swept all the way along the coast and down through to the Demvesturary(?). Thames estuary ? We caught up to the convoy and, just about daylight...we were not part of the escort, we wanted to get by it and get on, but there was a, a stuka came over and spotted the convoy and, us as part of the escort of course, and we knew that then something was, something was about to happen cause this was too good a target to miss. So along, not long before two more stukas appeared and I was down below, let's see, yeah I was down below in the ward room eating, trying to eat some lunch and the first thing I knew was I heard this terrific explosion and the ship just sort of moved over this way you see, and I was so scared I couldn't swallow my soup. My mouth went absolutely dry, couldn't swallow, never had it happen to me before, well I'd never been really scared before you know. But then my thoughts went to the gear, and then they started straffing see, back and forth across the ship and sounded like someone dragging a chain across the deck, steel deck, and I had visions of all this wonderful gear that we had being punctured, yeah, it was, they were all on deck in wooden crates. So

I began to think about it, and then I began to think more about myself and they..we got a lecture as to how long we would last in the water. They say if you, if you're not picked up in four minutes you've had it and they said put on all your heavy clothes and your life jacket and they said that'll extend your period of survivability for another three or four minutes probably. And so we did. Fortunately we never got really a serious direct hit so that we survived this and we survived this straffing and about an hour an a half later we all came up on deck and we went back to see...look at our gear, we expected to see it just splintered lying all over the place. Not all of the ammunition that had been used was ?penetrating? explosives, it didn't penetrate the wooden crates, it hit on the outside and exploded and there was not a single crate that had been penetrated by any of the machine gun ammunition. The deck was littered with copper jacketed, it must have been hundreds and hundreds of them all over the deck and right around the crates, the ones that were in front and on top had little pock marks in the them all over, but fortunately it was a good stout crate, probably an inch thick, at least, wood, and as far as I know there was never a penetration of anything else, didn't touch a thing.

FARLEY: Isn't that amazing.

CURRIER: Yeah it is, it really is, absolutely amazing. And the,

...so when we got to Sheaness it was all arranged that the material should be offloaded and they had cars there for us and we drove from Sheaness right up to Bletchley, um, arrived about, I don't know, ten, eleven o'clock at night I guess, drove into the grounds in Bletchley and got out, everything all, of course there were blackout curtains up everywhere, everything was absolutely black, went through a doorway with two blackout curtains, one ahead of the other, walked through into a rather brightly lit office and there was John Tiltman...the first time I saw him, standing there in his regimentals with his hands behind his back, he and Travis and Dennison, Dennison was in charge. And that was coming out of the dark into the light and seeing the three of them sort of standing there in a row and John went over to one side like this and so we all went around and shook hands.

FARLEY: Were you considered the senior officer of the group?

CURRIER: No, Sinkov.

FARLEY: Sinkov was.

CURRIER: He was a major.

FARLEY: Oh, I see.

CURRIER: Yeah. No, I was the junior officer, Bob Weeks was senior to me, yeah. Yeah, I had just been promoted to JG in October so I was very junior, yeah. In fact I was, let's see that was, yeah I guess I was 27.

FARLEY: Were the British pretty happy to see you?

CURRIER: Seemed to be, they...

FARLEY: Welcomed you graciously.

CURRIER: Yeah, they had, we had wonderful billets, Lord Cadman, who had a place in, called Sendly Park which was not far from Bletchley put us up and we had his entire mansion to our...the four of us, with the entire house staff, butler, and four maids and a cook and we all had our own bedroom, and we were very well taken care of while we were there. And of course we were driven to work every day and back, driven to lunch.

FARLEY: Think you want to get into any more details before we break for lunch, shall we hold off?

SCHORRECK: This is a pretty good place to break.

CURRIER: Yeah, I think it probably is, yeah.

FARLEY: Upon the visit after your arrival at Bletchley Park you had all the equipment there and you were just, you just met the troopers.

CURRIER: Oh yeah, that's right. Yeah we met them and were told where we would be spending our nights. It was really quite an interesting billet so to speak, the best one in the area I guess. Lord Cadman who was Anglo-Iranian, Anglo-Persian Oil Company and his son who was a thorn in the side of the people at Bletchley. He was trying to be helpful. He wanted to work and he wanted to come in and do something and of course he couldn't do anything and eventually he allied himself....this is quite an aside

with the, I don't whether it was the people who served the soldiers at the same side or what, but anyway he wanted to be involved you see. Basil was his name, the honorable Basil Cadman and he was being very helpful to us so that he arranged several things for us. For instance, we went to London twice with him during, just before, well it was after the big blitz, but while it was still going on, and we had a tour through the docks, all the way around and special remarks that he got from somebody, I don't know where he got it, and we met a dozen people or so that, this had nothing to do with business, this was just aside, but something we would never have seen otherwise.

FARLEY: Was his estate near Bletchley Park?

CURRIER: Yeah, Shenley Park was the, was Cadman's estate, it was about eight or ten miles

FARLEY: Oh, okay.

CURRIER: Not a very attractive area but a lovely house and completely staffed, so we were very comfortable.

SCHORRECK: Was everything open to you?

CURRIER: As far as I know everything was open. Now I had no way of knowing whether or not there were certain areas in...to which we were not allowed or didn't go. But each one of us did more or less what we, what our own services wante us to do; that is to find out everything we could about what was going on in the Naval section and in the Army

and Air sections. And in addition we all...the four of us, for instance, went into Hut 3, Hut 6, where the Bombe was and the work on the Enigma took place....

SCHORRECK: And you actually saw it?

CURRIER: Oh yes, oh yes. We were there for at least an hour or two twice, and stayed right there and watched the entire operation...had all of the techniques explained in great detail. The only thing that we did not get was the final writeups of all of the recoveries and precisely what the various Enigma machines had in common and what was special to each one of the uses; the Air Force the Tiger service in the army and regular navy and so on, but we did have a great man made available to us as much of the technical information as we could individually absorb. And this meant the precise details of how they set up, what they did with the traffic, how they arranged what the called "menus," which were really cribs, how they were run, and how the bamberismas (Banburismus *) worked which were two series of three to four inch paper tape with holes punched in them, which were then matched. It was a very early-on tape matching problem, with paper tape, fit in holes, through a scanning device, and the complete operations of the Bombe from bottom to top and vice versa, much of it I did not understand (I wasn't equipped to do it), but Sinkov, I think, probably got more out of it than anyone else. Rosen, probably

* see Hodges' Alan Turing p. 197.

too, but neither Bob Weeks nor I had that kind of background so that....while I knew what was going on, and I appreciated everything I was being told, we were not able to get as much from it as I think probably Sinkov and Rosen did. I never saw what they wrote, so...

FARLEY: Were you permitted to take notes?

CURRIER: Yeah.

FARLEY: Were you?

CURRIER: Yeah, sure. Took all the notes, in fact, I spent a lot of time going out and talking to people and just taking code groups, and, as I say, doing such menial things as tracing the German submarine charts and getting all the lower level systems, the hours of operation of the systems with the E-Boats in the channel, and all the naval items I could think of.

SCHORRECK: What did you do with your notes when you returned?

CURRIER: Oh, they all came back in a great big...several great bundles through the embassy. We didn't, as I recall, bring any notes with us. We did...one of the things we did, of course, we made trips all over the U.K. Bob Weeks and I, for instance, went up to York...to Scarborough, where one of the principal navy intercept stations was, and visited up there for two days and went through the entire intercept operation at Scarborough and were briefed on all of the others,

but this was an example of what went on. We visited a WRAN hostel and were introduced to all of the WRANs. They informed me that this was apparently a standard sort of navy joke - there were two kinds of WRANs, mobile WRANs and immobile WRANs, which is, in fact, true, but the mobile WRANs were those who could be transferred overseas and the immobile WRANs were those who had to stay home.

FARLEY: I wonder how they differentiated them?

CURRIER: Qualifications, you know, and attitude and age...

FARLEY: Age probably.

CURRIER: Age, I think, I don't know precisely what they thought, but then we spent a lot of time up there and we went through their DF installation and talked their a man named Brooke, who was a young scientist from Cambridge, who was running their DF operation.

SCHORRECK: How did you think that their setup compared to ours in terms of intercept site?

CURRIER: Well, a....our intercept sites at that time....I hadn't been in one, except, let's see....

SCHORRECK: Oh, that's right, you had come back from the Philippines.

CURRIER: Yeah, this was five years after I....

SCHORRECK: It had been five years..

CURRIER: ...so I really had nothing to compare it with, but I knew roughly how many people we had in our intercept

stations, and I knew where they were, but I had hadn't every visited one. One of the principal differences, of course, in their operation and ours was the fact that they continued all through the war to use pencil and paper. There was never a typewriter anywhere within a mile of any of their intercept stations. And all of their copy was hand-copied and they prod....yeah, they produced two or three carbons....one or two carbons, and that's it. And they were on, of course, all this on 14" pieces of paper....some 10"....bigger than legal size, and this involved tons of paper, of course, so that their handling was something which was fairly primitive, but it had to be, because everything....when you consider, everything that's copied is in hand, in pencil, on a large piece of paper, each one of which has to be handled, and numbered and filed and transported and...so that...this at the receiving end at Bletchley, when these enormous great crates of intercepts came in...large cardboard boxes with thousands and thousands and thousands of pieces of paper, this involved a sorting and handling problem that we did not have to contend with. The... after we left Scarborough, we arranged to go out to Chelmsford to look at the latest Marconi DF equipment, and we were authorized then to bring back an entire DF system; that is, all the antennae...not the receivers,

but all the antennas, and the internal systems for everything except the receivers. We did that and that was one of the things which made it very difficult when we came back.

FARLEY: Was their equipment more sophisticated than ours?

CURRIER: Yeah....

FARLEY: Their DF?

CURRIER: Yes, yeah, their DF was better than ours and that was one of the reasons that we wanted to get a copy of their ad hoc system was better than ours.

FARLEY: Did you have free roam or did you have a British escort throughout your tour of the _____?

CURRIER: I had complete....well, we didn't have...we had...yeah, someone came with us always. We had to because we didn't know obviously where we were going, but...and we had to be shown through these various places, but when we went to _____, I don't remember now who actually....I think maybe Joe Loomis came with us. I think he did. He was NID-2, yeah...he was a Lieutenant Commander. I think he came with us out to _____. And he also came with us down to _____; that's right, we went down to fly _____, another inter....naval intercept station down near _____, but we....when we went to Chelmsford, he just took us out there and we went

in and talked with the...talked with the people who knew Marconi installation, and went out and looked over all their equipment and went into an operating section where they had them and we reviewed the operation of the equipment and we'd give them a lot of figures on its reliability and that sort of thing. We didn't have time to check, but it looked pretty good.

FARLEY: Were you and Sinkov and Weeks and Rosen housed in the same area?

CURRIER: Yeah, we were all at Shenley Park, yeah.

FARLEY: Did you get a chance to compare notes in the evenings, or say....

CURRIER: Yeah, we did. I don't remember a great deal of actual note comparing; we didn't...we talked over what we had done in a general sort of way. This is one of the things we probably did, but I cannot remember very much about it. I'm sure, for instance, when we left the operation hut, in...or in HUT-3, the Bombe, that we did, in fact, sit down and discuss what we had seen and find out whether or not we all understood what we were being shown, but my recollection is that Sinkov really took charge pretty much of this part of it, because I simply didn't have the background. As I say, I knew what I'd seen and I knew what the operation was and what the problem was, but I didn't understand as much of the

detail of the operation of the Bombe, perhaps as they did. And Bob Weeks understood none. All of the hullabaloo about giving us information on the Enigma, which was made so much of, and has been since made more of, didn't strike me, at least in my recollection, that it happened quite that way. The...we did not return with anything but our own notes and our own impression of the way it worked and what the problem was and how to handle it. This was covered in as much detail as we could and in oral briefings when we got back. The fuss arose when, I think, the decision was made not to give us any hardware at all, and this caused pretty much of a fuss back here. I was not aware of it, because it didn't bother me at all. I wouldn't have been involved in it anyway, and I didn't...I didn't really know that we were...that we might have been able to bring back some of the actual hardware. When we got back, the upper-level discussions that went on to review what we had gotten and whether or not we had gotten all we should have, apparently ended up in a decision that we would go back and say that we thought we had...our people thought we had been slightly short-changed and could we have an additional meeting and such about the Enigma and the Bombe, which, in fact, took place, and it was then arranged that some time

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in '4.....Art Levenson can tell you because he went over in the first batch.

FARLEY: To Bletchley?

CURRIER: To Bletchley, yes. He and Ollie Kirby and Bill Monday and Joe Louvis...all of whom which you talked to.

SCHORRECK: That was the beginning of '43?

CURRIER: It was the end of '42 of the beginning of '43, I don't remember when it actually happened, but when it did happen, I was divorced from the Atlantic side completely and was entirely on the Pacific then, so I don't know what happened, but Art Levenson can tell you precisely what happened and when it happened and Howie Campaigne can too. He and, as I say, there was a group of about... what...30-40 went over to work in Bletchley for the rest of the war, and I think they probably went over sometime before these people; I've forgotten exactly. In fact, that's where Art Levenson met Midge.

Levenson et al arrived Bletchley in Dec 1943

OGA

FARLEY: Is that right?

CURRIER: Yeah.

FARLEY: [redacted]

CURRIER: [redacted]

FARLEY: [redacted]

CURRIER: [redacted]

SCHORRECK: [redacted]

OGA

CURRIER: [redacted] if I remember right...something like that. Anyway, yeah, they were married during the war in London.

SCHORRECK: So the navy was quite open; the British navy was quite open with you?

CURRIER: Completely open as far as....yeah, absolutely completely open. There was nothing that I could determine that was being withheld. As far as I could see, the entire naval section which was under Frank Birch, who was a real character....he, by the way, has written a naval history which you must have a copy of.

SCHORRECK: He's in the GC&CS history.

FARLEY: Yeah?

SCHORRECK: Yes.

CURRIER: He wrote the naval section.

SCHORRECK: Yeah.

CURRIER: And that's his, yes, yeah. As a matter of fact, you know, I would have thought that it would be worth, if you haven't already done it, going through the GC&CS history, taking out the early portions written by each one of the individuals who wrote the section, correlating it, and sort of using it as supplementary information on our version of this trip. I think you may find something in there that would be of use, because I'm pretty....I haven't read...

SCHORRECK: I'm not sure that they'd discussed that trip.

FARLEY: If so, very casually, right.

CURRIER: Look in the...

SCHORRECK: The Brigadier....I've talked to the Brigadier about it...

CURRIER: Yeah.

SCHORRECK: But I'm not sure that I've seen it in the GC&CS history. I'll look for it.

CURRIER: Look in Frank Birch's section; in the naval section and see what he has to say.

FARLEY: At any time did the British caution you that this is very sensitive information?

CURRIER: No. They assumed that we knew it.

FARLEY: Ok.

CURRIER: Yeah...

FARLEY: Because we get the impression all the time that the British really didn't want to talk about it....didn't want to tell the Americans much about it, because they had some security compromises earlier and they didn't want to...

SCHORRECK: Well Redman has furthered that. His comment was that they postponed the war in the Atlantic a year because they didn't give us anything, when that's not true.

CURRIER: No, Redman was a crank. I hope some of these things that I'm saying won't get beyond this tape. He was a very talented, patriotic naval officer with a capital "N."

SCHORRECK: Jack?

CURRIER: Jack Redman, and as a matter of fact, the older brother

SCHORRECK: That was the older brother.

CURRIER: And they were the thorns in the side of this arrangement for months after. And in the majority of cases, they had very little reason for feeling the way they did, as far as I'm concerned. They didn't like the British in the first place, and whenever they got an opportunity to give them the shaft, they did, and it was unfortunate, and I think that many of the things that they say should be reviewed considerably before you take them at face value.

SCHORRECK: Well, this is where some of the high-level opposition was coming from in the first place, wasn't it... without even knowing it.

CURRIER: That's right, yeah. Well, I think you'll find that John Tiltman will tell you about the Redm....he probably has...about his dealings with the Redmans.

SCHORRECK: Jack?

CURRIER: Yeah.

SCHORRECK: I know he told us about the business of the collaboration. He said that there was some initial ~~resonance~~ resistance on the part of the British, but then he told them, "You can't do that; they've come here and you've got to allow them to see what's available."

TOP SECRET//SI

CURRIER: There was apparently some...

SCHORRECK: And they did.

CURRIER: ....some feeling that...and they did...there was still some things that they withheld on...ab....principally about the Enigma, and how they obtained it originally and precisely what the situation was, but we had absolutely untrammeled access and we could have taken all the notes in the world that we wanted to, with their blessing. It may be that we didn't do as good a job as we might have done, but I didn't do as good a job as I might have done, because I didn't know enough. I took what we were given, but I was not aware of the problem in any detail, so I just damned well didn't know how much was available and what I should do.

FARLEY: Did the British ever indicate the Polish contribution to the solution of the Enigma?

CURRIER: Well, not at that time. Not until somewhat later... no, not at that time. No, these were the sort of things that we withheld, yeah.

SCHORRECK: Was there any kind of agreement that was signed between our navy and their navy, just between the two services?

CURRIER: Um....

SCHORRECK: Or used to negotiate such an agreement?

TOP SECRET//SI

CURRIER: No, what I'm trying to think was...the only agreement that was signed between the two navies was when I brought back a four-digit code system and additive books to be used for communications between us and the Admiralty. But there was no overall agreement that I know about.... that I had anything to do with, signed between the two sections, no.

SCHORRECK: I think that kind of _____

FARLEY: Do you want to talk about names, people?

SCHORRECK: Did you run into any of the people who've since become prominent....Knox....Josh Cooper?

CURRIER: Oh, Josh Cooper's a good friend of mine. I know him quite well.

SCHORRECK: Really?

CURRIER: Oh, sure.

SCHORRECK: What was your impression of these counterparts in terms of cryptanalytic ability?

CURRIER: Well, I don't kn...I guess I did think about it, but my own feeling was that in the main, they were several notches above us as far as actual ability was concerned. Particulary those young mathematicians who were on the Enigma and the Bombe....very impressive. I mean, Turing Alexander, a.....

FARLEY: Hugh Foss, or Frank Birch?

CURRIER: Yeah well, Frank Bir....Hugh Foss and Frank...Hugh Foss was a funny fellow, but he wasn't a mathe....

FARLEY: R.E. Jones?

CURRIER: Yeah, Jo...well....yeah, he was...not the name I'm trying to think of. Another mathematician in....anyway, it's not important, but they were all...they were all absolutely first-rate mathematicians. They were people like Howie Campaigne, Marshall Hall, a.....who were the other two from MIT...anyway, they were people of that ilk, and those groups were equal in ability and talent. There's no doubt in my mind, and we took over as you probably know in the following year and set up in a separate building out there in Nebraska Avenue...our operation on the Enigma and improved it considerably.

SCHORRECK: Right.

CURRIER: Yeah.

SCHORRECK: You were aware...I found some documents from the British in '43....late '43, saying that...they were letters to OP-20G saying that the navy had done such a good job in solving the four-wheel Enigma...

CURRIER: Yeah...

SCHORRECK: ....that the British weren't even going to bother with it anymore. That they were going to put their efforts on the three wheel. They couldn't solve the four wheel. We did.

CURRIER: Yeah, that was when we...that was when we produced our version of the Bombe.

SCHORRECK: That's right; that's exactly so. We started supplying Bombes to the British, but they won't want to admit that now.

CURRIER: Well, certainly Raven can tell you a lot more about that. Howie Campaigne can tell you a great deal about it.

SCHORRECK: You're going to have to talk to Campaigne.

CURRIER: He must, because you'll get most of that from him and all of his cohorts who were working right in the section at the time. Bob Ely...

SCHORRECK: That's another name.

CURRIER: He's a Philadelphia lawyer.

SCHORRECK: Is he?

CURRIER: Yeah. I haven't seen him for 12-15 years I guess. I think John Tiltman's kept in touch with him on and off over the years. How long it's been since he's seen him, I don't know, but he'd be a good one to talk to. He came with Raven at the end of 1940.

FARLEY: Anything more on the visit, Henry?

SCHORRECK: I think we can push on.

CURRIER: A....

FARLEY: Let me switch tapes....

End Tape 2, Side 1

Tape 2, Side 2 not used

BEGIN TAPE 3, Side 1

FARLEY: ...three for Captain Currier.

SCHORRECK: ....what we brought out....

CURRIER: Yeah, this is what I was just trying to think whether there was anything else that actually went on that was of any real importance, rather than just anecdotal.

SCHORRECK: Did you get any....did you get any idea that the British were working on the Soviet traffic?

CURRIER: No, none at all. I personally do not think that they were, during the war, but they did immediately after the war. They were able to pick up, I think perhaps more quickly than we, because we started... when I went to the Russian language school...you don't have to take this down if you don't want to....

FARLEY: No, I'll take it down.

SCHORRECK: That's fine.

CURRIER: ...but I went to the Russian language school in September 1945, which was only a month after the war, and when I came back in June of '46, we had already...had going in full force our Russian section on Nebraska Avenue, and that was one of the principal reasons that I went over to GCHQ as...I was the....I don't know what they call it...I guess the Senior Cryptanalytic Liaison Officer, or something. I don't know, I may not even have had a title, but that was the

principal problem.. [redacted] From then on, that was the problem on both sides of the Atlantic.

SCHORRECK: Was there another name for that before.....

CURRIER: Before [redacted]

SCHORRECK: Bourbon?

CURRIER: Bourbon was any Russian as I recall.

SCHORRECK: Yeah.

CURRIER: Anything Russian was Bourbon.

SCHORRECK: Right.

CURRIER: [redacted]

SCHORRECK: We had been getting some of that during the war, hadn't we?

CURRIER: As far as I know, I never saw any Russian traffic during the war. Now whether or not there was any lying around, or whether we were intercepting any, inadvertently, I honestly don't know. I guess we could find out, but I really don't know. I never saw any and I never had anything to do with it, but [redacted]

the name [redacted] and so that when I came back in '48 to Nebraska Avenue, we took over the "in" job, our entire Russian section was [redacted] and we in fact, all...most, almost all of the high-level efforts on both sides of the Atlantic was on [redacted] All of the good people were working it.

SCHORRECK: Was your purpose in that visit the same as it had been in '40...to collaborate on the Russian?

CURRIER: It was a two-year tour, one of the first after the war to further the collaboration because it was...it was the crypt liaison side of it for the...for all of us. The army had one man there...two, in fact, we had two and the army had two. Dale Marston and Cecil Phillips and, let's see, who else was there....Patton. He was there for a year, Phil Patton.

SCHORRECK: Cecil Phillips later became involved in the...with the Russian agent...

CURRIER: Yeah.

SCHORRECK: ...problem.

FARLEY: Is he still around?

SCHORRECK: Yeah.

CURRIER: Yeah, he's still...I saw him this morning.

FARLEY: He's still in the building then.

CURRIER: Yeah.

FARLEY: Good, I'll talk to him.

CURRIER: Yeah, he was there. I'm trying to think of the others that also were there.

SCHORRECK: In fact, he was the one that was telling us that some of that goes back into the war...the Russian traffic.

CURRIER: There is...that's right, but most of that intercept was [redacted]

SCHORRECK: Right, that's right.

CURRIER: And that's the material that was what we had in our compartmented area for so long down here under...

SCHORRECK: British file, or was it another?

CURRIER: ....you know...her name was Marlene....was Malone when she was in the army. She married....God, what's his name....

SCHORRECK: Pritchard?

CURRIER: No....I can't think of his name.

SCHORRECK: Oh, I know who you....I talked to her the other day.

CURRIER: Anyway, she had that section for years, and they ran.. and Gardner....oh, what's his name, anyway, he was our representative in the [redacted]..special section...involving this traffic. She ran it over here for a long time and then he came back and took it over or vice versa, I don't remember, these are all things you can check if you need to, but it was that material that produced and it was closely held, it produced an enormous amount of extremely useful information on

agents. Some of it was useful twenty years after the fact.

SCHORRECK: That's exactly right. This is stuff....Rosenberg's stuff is in and the Hiss stuff, both of them.

CURRIER: And there's a lot in there. [redacted] Now this material was [redacted] but this was one of the more sensitive sources of information for a long time after the war... very very close together.

SCHORRECK: They closed it down.

CURRIER: Yeah, well I guess they....it's run it's course.

SCHORRECK: In fact, they've given us the records.

CURRIER: Yes, oh, they have?

SCHORRECK: Some of them. [redacted]

CURRIER: Well, you know, Tippy Studdy. Do you know Tippy Studdy?

FARLEY: No.

CURRIER: [redacted] OGA

OGA
EO 3.3b(3)
PL 86-36/50 USC 3605

FARLEY: Yes, yes.

CURRIER:

[redacted]

[redacted]

FARLEY: Even though there have been a couple of magazine articles trying to expose it.

CURRIER: Yeah, yeah.

SCHORRECK: We were going to ask you about the "Winds Execute."

FARLEY: Shall we get him back from London?

CURRIER: Ok.

FARLEY: The equipment you brought back was the DF equipment, and....

CURRIER: The DF equipment and, let's see, we brought back some of their code recoveries and that sort of thing on the German stuff and we brought back all of that sort of material that we copied on the submarine charts and the operational manuals that had been captured, which we either photostated or I copied by hand. The...as much information as was available on German air raids and that kind of thing....methods of operation, that sort of thing. Mostly navy, though. Now I don't know what Sinkov actually ended up with.

SCHORRECK Did they have any contributions to make toward JN-25?

CURRIER: They had contributions, but nothing that didn't duplicate what we already had. They...we were way ahead of them on additive recovery and book recoveries, but they did work on it and the....Malcom Burnett who

came here from Singapore as the first liaison officer between the Royal Navy and us. In fact, he took my house in '46, and I went to GCHQ. Nearly ruined it. Yeah, they did....they continued to make contributions, but they didn't have anything that I considered to be significant at any point, and I don't recall ever having to rely on anything that they produced. I don't think there was anything unique, I'm quite certain, because we had, oh a hundred times as many people on it, so that there was no real requirement. They got everything; almost everything that we produced as far as I know, but I don't recall getting anything from them. They did quite a bit of intercept, of course, in East Africa and Colombo.

SCHORRECK: They got gradually pushed back further and further. They started in Singapore and then they wound up in...

CURRIER: Colombo, first.

SCHORRECK: Colombo and then Killindini.

CURRIER: Killindini, yeah.

SCHORRECK: And they....what was they ability? Was it good, or.... I don't think it was that good.

CURRIER: It wasn't all that good, no. Of course, we had...when we lost Guam and the Philippines, all we had was Pearl. But it's surprising how much we got.

SCHORRECK: Well, we picked up with...Bainbridge Island got some

CURRIER: Bainbridge did, yeah, Lou Tordella was also in charge of Bainbridge.

SCHORRECK: That's right.

CURRIER: Would you excuse me for just a minute. I have to make another trip.

FARLEY: I don't think we need to get into any detail on your trip back on the Revenge and the Overton, because you've covered that pretty well.

CURRIER: No, that's not, that's not really very important anyway.

SCHORRECK: Interesting, but....

FARLEY: Was it...Farrago mentioned it in his book, The Broken Seal?

CURRIER: Yeah.

FARLEY: But when you got back with all the equipment and supplies; I mean codebooks and ciphers, back to OP-20G, did you brief a group of people or did you just get with the top man and try to explain what happened?

CURRIER: We had several conversations. I do not remember ever sitting down and briefing a group of people. I remember talking with various people in the section, but I never went up, for instance, to talk to anybody in ONI, ever. I talked to Safford.

SCHORRECK: Were you pledged by the British not to say anything?

CURRIER: No, no, no. And arranging for communications, for instance, and that was one of the things that I had to do with that bloody one-time pad until we set up something else. I, let's see, did I go out to Cheltenham

with that? Yeah, I think I took...I went out to Cheltenham with that Marconni DF equipment, but I had no hand in setting it up or using it. In fact, I wouldn't have been of any use to them anyway, because I wouldn't have known how. But I did, I think, saw that that was delivered and then came back and went to work. And this is understandable, I think, in a way, because I went, at that point, went right back into the Pacific room, and put out of my mind almost completely anything that I had learned about the Atlantic War and the Germans. I had, from there on, I had no use for it. Well, I was there to answer questions if anyone wanted to ask anything about what had happened or what I thought about it. It soon dissipated and people, I think, lost interest as far as I could tell. But as soon as we actually set up our liaison channels and they assigned people to us, Foss, let's see, Foss was the first one who came to Nebraska Avenue. Burnett was at the Navy Department and he left and I think that Foss came next; called him lend-lease Jesus. Yeah, he was next and then Baltworth, but for the rest of the war, we always had at least GCHQ liaison officer at Nebraska Avenue who had complete access to everything as far as I knew. He was in and out of both the Atlantic and the Pacific sections, and quite frequently,

he would show me the reports that he was writing on TZ and TY and TT doing, and as far as I know, he had complete access to everything and our people on the other side also did. We did it a little bit differently however. We didn't....let's see....the U.S. Navy, as far as I can remember, during the war, did not actually send a liaison officer over there. I may be wrong. Do you know whether or not they did?

SCHORRECK: I don't think we did.

FARLEY: A lot of army troopers, but I don't know how many others.

CURRIER: Yeah, well, outside of those 30 or 40 people who went over to work at Bletchley, which included Howie Campaigne, I think was among them....Joe Eachus....Joe Eachus was there, and these are all mathematician types. Not all of them, most of them. In fact, Joe Eachus married Barbara, who taught me to play Brahams. Yeah, Joe Eachus, Howie Campaigne, a couple of others, who were navy reserve types, mathematicians, all of them went to Bletchley to work with the joint group. So in that respect, we did, in fact, have navy representation, but I don't remember ever having a reporter-type; a liaison officer who reported back precisely what was going on, although there may have been one of those who was assigned this.

FARLEY: Back at OP-20G....

CURRIER: Yeah....

FARLEY: ....did any of the junior officers or your fellow officers, were they curious about your trip to England and what happened and try to find out what was relevant?

CURRIER: Yeah, they were curious when I went and the plans were being made for me to go. It happened all of a sudden, in fact, it happened the day before Christmas. I was supposed to have gone. (I guess it was three or four days before Christmas.) I was supposed to have gone before Christmas and I'm told that the hold-up was that King George VI did not get in with Lord Halifax in time so that he had to delay our departure for about a week. It seemed to me we left on the second or third of January or something. But yeah, they were not overly curious, in fact, there weren't all that many people around to tell you the truth. Yeah, we were still pretty thin, but I remember that I was fussing around for orders and they were having a Christmas party and I couldn't find anyone to sign any papers. Raven says he remembers it. He remembers more about things that I did than I do. I kind of hope he can be sure he remembers.

SCHORRECK: That's what he said, yeah.

CURRIER: He had a very vivid memory. No, there wasn't all of that curiosity, no.

FARLEY: When you came back, Raven in one of the interviews complained what you just fed them a little tidbit now and then after the meeting in London and wouldn't tell him the whole story.

CURRIER: Well, I don't know; I don't remember doing that conscientiously. I suspect that probably what happened was that I, when I got back I found that there was an awful lot of work to do and I couldn't be bothered telling even went on with that that I didn't think was all that important, since I brought over what I was supposed to bring, I brought back all the notes and material I could, and it was given to people who I thought would use it, and since most of it was on the Atlantic side, not on the Pacific, I did not concern myself with it anymore. And it may well be that Raven's impression was right, that I was busy working on the Japanese and I couldn't be bothered with the German.

FARLEY: He claimed that he and, I've forgotten the other officer, had a deal that each one would independently interogate you at lunch and then afterwards compare quotes.

CURRIER: Well, it's possible, but I don't remember it happening that way, but as I say, his memory is better than mine.

FARLEY: Good.

CURRIER: But I think the explanation really is, seriously, is that I guess I sort of lost interest in the Atlantic War and I knew what I had brought back and I thought those who needed it had it, and that I was quite busy well occupied with the Japanese, so I worked that.

SCHORRECK: What did you think about the "winds execute" message?

CURRIER: Whether it existed or not? No. I don't think it existed.

FARLEY: You don't think it existed?

CURRIER: No, I don't think so. I think I would have known. Safford got me into a corner one day and said, "You did remember that "winds" message. You told me about it," and I said, "No, I didn't. I never said any such thing." There was a rumor going around; which fed on itself, and people told me, "You must remember seeing that," and then suddenly someone would say, "Yeah, maybe I did. Yeah, I did. I can't remember where, but maybe I did see it," and this sort of thing, as I say, fed on itself and reached a point where there were several people who were certain that it existed. I never saw it, and I never really talked to anyone who had any hard evidence that they had seen it, so my own impression is that this sort of a system did in fact, exist, as far as the Japanese were concerned as "east

wind rain," that sort of thing, but if, in fact, they put it into effect I don't believe we got any "execute" message. I really don't believe it, but I can't prove....

SCHORRECK: Wouldn't have said anything anyway...

CURRIER: No.

SCHORRECK: ...that was of any strategic importance.

CURRIER: No, it was just of interest when Safford, in testifying before the Pearl Harbor Committee, made so much of it.

SCHORRECK: That's right.

CURRIER: But...

SCHORRECK: Everybody knew that relations were strained anyhow.

CURRIER: Yeah, that's right.

SCHORRECK: And it never did indicate where the Japanese were going to attack.

CURRIER: No, and I certainly never saw it, and as I say, I never knew anyone who had seen it. In nothing but this little room....

SCHORRECK: Somebody has come forward now, I can't remember his name...

FARLEY: Ralph Briggs.

SCHORRECK: Ralph Briggs, who was an intercept operator at Cheltenham, and he has come forward and said that he actually copied the message.

CURRIER: Well, he may have; he may have. I never saw it.

FARLEY: Well, that's a.....

CURRIER: There were a lot of things that I didn't see that you must realize happened and I don't know anything about. I certainly don't remember.

FARLEY: In fact, the author, I've forgotten his name again, working with Raven and Captain Currier....

CURRIER: Toland...

FARLEY: Toland heard about this Briggs report and tried to get a copy of it. I don't know whether he did or not.

SCHORRECK: Freedom of Information.

CURRIER: Yeah.

FARLEY: Did he get a copy of it?

SCHORRECK: Yeah.

FARLEY: He did. It was sanitized....

SCHORRECK: ...it was the sanitized version.

CURRIER: Well, as I say, if the message existed and if it was copied by anybody, you couldn't prove it by me.

FARLEY: Do you think the army might....I know you can't speak for the army, but did you ever hear anything that the army might have intercepted it, and failed to deliver it?

CURRIER: No, never heard anything; never heard that. By the way, there is something which I did hear and this is nothing...not first-hand information. Did you ever read a book by a man named Disco Poplov? Dusko Popov

SCHORRECK: Yeah.

CURRIER: Did you read that? Do you remember in it his allegation that he talked to Hoover and told Hoover that he had gotten a request from the Japanese through the Germans to determine what the effect of a torpedo attack on the Italian fleet was? Do you remember that?

SCHORRECK: Yep.

CURRIER: And that Hoover didn't like him in the first place and "poo-pooed" it, and that he sent word to his agent in Hawaii and briefed him on the subject, and this was never made known to anybody. About five years ago...four years ago, I guess....when I was doing sort of consulting around here...came in more frequently....I went up to see Norm Boardman and showed him this and said, "Would you get in touch with the FBI in their files and see if you can get for me any informtion on the subject?" He did, and we got it, and it happened exactly as he said in Hawaii. So, I must assume, working back from that, that the original interview of Poplov with Hoover was correct.

SCHORRECK: Hum.

CURRIER: I've got that paper at home. I hope...I don't know whether Norm Boardman kept a copy here or not.

FARLEY: We'll look for it.

CURRIER: But an interesting side.

SCHORRECK: Yeah, very interesting. Boardman's working over in the office.

CURRIER: He is? You might ask him about it, if you remember. I don't know whether he got it and gave it all to me, or whether he kept a copy, but it would be....he got it from...whether he got it from the FBI here, or whether they got it in turn from Hawaii, I don't know, but I got a copy of the actual briefing. So Poplov (Popov) was right. So maybe Hoover was the one who got us into this mess.

FARLEY: Could be, yeah.

CURRIER: Could be, yeah. Well, anyway....

FARLEY: Let's go on...

CURRIER: Yeah.

FARLEY: Back at OP-20G, when you got back from England it was in the early '30s?

CURRIER: April....April....April '41.

FARLEY: I'm sorry....'41...

CURRIER: We were there about three months....middle of April... April '41.

FARLEY: And you were at OP-20G through Pearl Harbor?

CURRIER: Yeah.

FARLEY: What do you remember about that day; about Pearl Harbor day?

CURRIER: My wife has to keep reminding me where I was.

FARLEY: Down in the honeymoon belt?

CURRIER: I think she said I was downstairs stoking the furnaces, I've forgotten. I honestly don't...I really don't remember, which is very strange, because most people do. I remember being told about it, and "to get the hell down here," but I don't remember....I honestly do not remember where I was. I really don't. I think what my wife actually said was that we were at a party somewhere. Somebody had the radio on and it came on and we all piled around, but I honestly don't have any idea.

FARLEY: But you weren't on duty at the...

CURRIER: I was not...

FARLEY: ....on secure watch?

CURRIER: It wasn't....didn't happen on my watch, no, no, but we had not had actually watches as such set up before that. But we damned well soon after that did.

FARLEY: Was that because of the message talking about "needing more booze in Berlin?"

CURRIER: I don't know. I take it back, there were, as Raven can tell you, there were watches on verbal round the clock, but there were people like Al Cramer who didn't think they needed to do anything until tomorrow morning if he would happen to be tired in the afternoon. So I

think probably while the watch was on, the link between what the watch officers produced and ONI who was the consumer, was a bit weak.

SCHORRECK: And that was finally xed out entirely. ONI was xed out

CURRIER: Yeah, right.

SCHORRECK: Didn't get anything, except from another source.

CURRIER: That's right, but you see all of the language people were old ONI people who worked in OP-20G. They weren't OP-20G people at all, and they were controlled by them and end product was controlled by them. They were the ones who did the translating. Fred Woodr~~uff~~ough was hired, and Cate, were hired by ONI. Worked in OP-20, but they were hired by ONI who paid for them. Fred's sister was originally, Dorothy, and all that period before Pearl Harbor, all of the language people, as far as I can remember, were all working for ONI in OP-20 spaces on OP-20 material.

SCHORRECK: Did that change?

CURRIER: Yeah, that changed. As soon as war broke out, all of the language trainees, the Japanese language trainees who came to OP-20, all of them and every one who had been on the ONI payroll shifted over to OP-20. Even before we moved out to Nebraska Avenue, which was in February '42?

pg. 'c' says '43

SCHORRECK: What happened to you then?

CURRIER: Well, from the time...from Pearl Harbor on, let's see, Rosey Mason came...he arrived, I think, about the 1st of February '42, so there was a period of a couple of months anyway where things were not well organized and I felt pretty much alone, there was some doubt as to who...where the chain of command was, as I remember, and we were not in all that good shape to do anything operational, but when Rosey came, he and I assumed alternate twelve on and twelve off watches we put up with.

SCHORRECK: What section were you in then?

CURRIER: What turned out to be GZ.

SCHORRECK: Ok, yeah.

CURRIER: The operational translation end of the business, but it also involved...it also involved all of the book breaking, code recovery, and that kind of thing, so that he and I were the only two for about three months who were equipped to do Japanese or any thing of the sort of thing that GZ did in subsequent years. We got about four or five old retreaded language officers who had since left the navy back on active duty, but as Rosey said, "They're all useless." He said, "I guess you and I are going to have to do this until we can get someone else to help out,"

which we did. Then when we moved out to Nebraska Avenue in '43, we set up the senior watch list, made up of me and Rosey Mason and Ruff Taylor came back very shortly thereafter...there were four of us. There were three of us originally, and Rosey took all of the...let's see he took all of the day watches, and we split up the night watches between the other two of us, and whenever we....we worked during the day and stood watches at night, so that there were many eighteen hour days, about every other day was an eighteen hour day. Then we got a few more people, Red Laswell, Vance Holkum, Phil Richardson, who not all were equipped to serve on a senior watch desk, but there were usually....there were just four of us, actually, who served on the senior watch desk and did all of the final outgoing translations and annotating... this sort of thing, in addition to working in the section during the days. It was really....we were running...one of the four of us was running GZ at all times during the war, and a very satisfying way of doing things, I guess.

SCHORRECK: Did you stay in OP-20G the whole time...I mean in Washington?

"VANCE HOLKUM"
IS
BANKSON TAYLOR "BANKS"
HOLCOMB
ANNAPOLIS '31
"PHIL RICHARDSON"
IS
GILL MACDONALD RICHARDSON
ANNAPOLIS '27

DMG 5/9/91

CURRIER: I stayed in Washington, except for one....no, actually, I was there for the entire war in GZ. They were going to send me to Pearl, but Rosey said, "No, you can't do that," and so I didn't go. Then the next year, he went. We were having problems...personal problems, really. It started out by healthy competition, but it soon ended up with a, you know, a lot of unpleasantness, and nobody trusting one another, and so on, so they thought to avoid that sort of thing to obviate it, they switched the senior officer of each section and so Rosey Mason went out there and Red Laswell came here.

SCHORRECK: He was a Marine officer, wasn't he?

CURRIER: He was a Marine, yeah.

SCHORRECK: That never did subside though, did it?

CURRIER: Not really...

SCHORRECK: That feeling...

CURRIER: No, you should have seen some of the messages that Rosey wrote. They were really honeys. There was quite a lot of...it got to the point where it was really very serious. I don't know that it actually impeded operations, but it didn't help any. They, I mean, silly things, like not trusting one another's recoveries; having to check everything.

SCHORRECK: Right.

TOP SECRET//SI

CURRIER: _____

FARLEY: Shall we talk about a couple of individuals? You mentioned Brotherhood early in the game, what sort of a person was he?

CURRIER: Not very impressive.

FARLEY: Technical ability, and personality?

CURRIER: Not, well, personality was sort of minus one, and as far as I know, he was never particularly good at anything, but I, with reservations, I did not know everything that he did, so I....he never did anything I thought was really first-class. Nobody liked him; almost nobody. Ruff Taylor hated him. He wouldn't let him in the room with us. I remember one time, I asked Brotherhood out of the kindness of my heart to go have lunch, so I thought I'd go around to see if Ruff Taylor wanted to come along too, and Ruff wouldn't let him in the room. He made him show his badge when he came in...told him to "wait out there." Yeah, he was...and Ruff could be cutting.

FARLEY: Did Taylor rank him?

CURRIER: Yeah, oh, yeah; he was...I did too, you know, I never knew anyone who liked him. He was just an unpleasant guy for some reason. I think he tried it hard enough. He was in....was it real estate...something....

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FARLEY: Was he a manager at....or couldn't he manage?

CURRIER: Well, I never saw him manage anything, but as I say, he may have done things that I didn't know anything about later on, so I honestly....all I know is that when he first arrived for the first year or so after that, nobody really had any use for him, and as I say, I didn't think very much of him either, but I don't know what jobs he ended up doing, so I really can't tell you precisely how he did.

SCHORRECK: How about Mason?

CURRIER: Rosey Mason? He was an _____. He was probably one of the two or three people who made a greater impact upon what we did. He was a terrifically personable guy. He was extremely capable....a very good organizer. Profane to the point of pleas....great pleasure. He was one really... and a....he had a mind of his own and he was really very good. There were very few others that I've ever met who I thought as highly of as Rosey. And I was very disappointed when I was SUSLO. He was going to come over as naval attache and he had his problem and....his stomach problem, not his throat, and they had to switch....let's see...and Frost....I can't remember now....I think Frost finally came. Anyway, Rosey Mason did not come and

I was very unhappy because I was looking forward to it. This was the end of the first year that I was SUSLO and I thought, well, if he's going to be here for two years as naval attache well, this should be great fun. But he didn't; he never came. Then he eventually became Commandant First Naval District, which is sort of a dead-end job for people who really can't do anything else. That was after he had his stomach problems, and then, of course, later on, he had throat cancer. He retired, and he still...I talked with him on the phone about two years ago and Roger Pineau told me that he had talked to him very recently and he's going to talk with him again, so he's still... he's still around; I don't know whether he wants to talk or not. He talks through an amplifier so that his voice....I don't know whether it would even record well.

FARLEY: Is it intelligible?

CURRIER: It's intelligible, but in absolute monotones. If you've ever heard...

SCHORRECK: Yeah, I have. What is Pineau doing?

CURRIER: He just retired. He lives in Bethesda and he's now writing a book on contributions of Japanese Language Officer's during World War II.

SCHORRECK: Really?

VAN DERROLL = EDWARD VAN DER RHOER
author of Deadly Magic (New York: Scribner, 1978)

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CURRIER: Yeah, that's what he came up to see me about.

SCHORRECK: Good.

CURRIER: God...which reminds me...I've got to call him...yeah... Um...and he's gotten a lot of information. He's gotten... he's been working with the people at Nebraska Avenue, and he's gotten a lot from them. He's sent me some as a matter of fact....some lists of people to see if I'd remember....could remember, more about what some of them did...what they looked like. We were interested in Van Derroll, who did this.....well, as I said, my recollection of Van Derrol was one of the least able of the language students and who talked more than anyone else I can think of except J.J. Instrom, who was also a language student. And I was....I say never impressed with anything that he did. He was always expressing a desire....I remember....mostly on the min....also entirely on the minor ciphers and I never thought very much about him, but Raven called me on the phone after he saw the book and asked me if I'd read it, and I had not yet read it. He said one would gather enough after reading the book that Van Derroll was the one running TC and if it hadn't been for him, we would have lost the war.

SCHORRECK: Frank Raven did a review of that book.

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CURRIER: Oh, he did?

SCHORRECK: Yeah....not too good.

CURRIER: Yeah.

FARLEY: Is that the one he said to "avoid if you can?"

SCHORRECK: Yeah, "avoid that one, if you can."

FARLEY: Raven mentioned the "lone John Leitweiler" as being a character. Was he really a character?

CURRIER: Yeah, he was a character in many ways. He was... he was sort of mid-west Seventh-Day Mormon type or something like that. He was a mixture of all sorts of things....very countrified. Whether or not part of this was put on or not, I don't know, but he was and he impressed most people with the fact that he wasn't all that bright, but you damned well better do things his way. I don't think this is true, by the way. I think he was as intelligent as most of us, but he had a strange way about him of talking and acting and insisting that things be done....going very much by the book...this kind of thing, which was a little upsetting to someone who was trying to get a job done. And I don't think he's remembered all that kindly by some of his subordinates, but I don't recall ever having any run-ins with him. I can remember talking with him many many times on various things. I liked him. In fact, he lived fairly close to us on

_____, but I remember he....early on, actually before the war, he was, I think, one of about eight or ten students who came to take the special communications course at OP-20, and the first thing he did when he arrived was to plant a garden and everyone kidded him about it. He had a big garden and he used to raise potatoes, and anyway, he got sort of a reputation for being this sort of country bumpkin type, but he spoke very very slowly...very deliberately and went through all phases of everything before he had us end this evidence. So this irked people.

FARLEY: Was Raven an ideal navy officer?

CURRIER: Oh...well, it depends on what you mean by an ideal navy....he....I wouldn't had wanted to put him to sea running a ship, but...and...nor was I, by the way, as far as that was concerned, but Raven was very damned good at what he did, in fact, I'd venture to say that probably of all the people that I know, barring one or two, he was the best all-around cryptanalyst that I've met.

FARLEY: Good.....

END Tape 3, Side 1

FARLEY: Alright, Cap....a....Henry...

SCHORRECK: Captain what, if you could kind of summarize what you say were the Brigadier's contributions to cryptology. And this is just for us. You know, we're publishing his collective works and I would just like to get your impression.

CURRIER: Well, it's a difficult question to answer in a few words...really is...very...extremely difficult, but there is not doubt in my mind that he has an innate talent which he exercises with great skill and that has probably done more, not only in producing end product, but in encouraging others to work and be a part of the organization. This is one of his great contributions, really, because everyone that I've ever known who had known John Tiltman at any time in his life, particularly the younger people... they all looked up to him...and no matter what they did and how they developed in their future lives, they always looked to him as their original mentor and feel that he is really one of the greats. There were certain things that he could not do, and admits that he can not do, just the way I do. High-level mathematics is absolutely out of his camp. He does have no use for computers, and while he's certainly willing to use their product, he would much rather sit down

with a pencil and paper, and he has solved some extremely difficult problems, some that many others have failed at, and he's been doing it for a very long time, and he has a sense (an inborn sense, I think) that gives him a true feel of the problem by the time that he's gotten into it far enough to start forming conclusions which is something that many people never acquire; I mean, they can go on working for the rest of their lives and punch buttons in the computer and still not really get a feel for the problem and know precisely what lay in the minds of the people who produced it in the first place. As a result, he has, for instance, he did, certainly during the war and before the war, he was, for instance, their chief cryptographer, and this means that he was not only a cryptanalyst, but he did, in fact, produce quite a few systems for their use....not machine systems, mind you, but hand systems which were beautifully devised, and he has a great great ability in this regard. He, I think, probably, he was head of [redacted] let's see... well, I guess it wasn't long after the war, actually he was made head of [redacted] but he was never part of their directorate...not really, although he was actually in the top level of their administration.

As I remember...although I may have this just a bit wrong, he was never actually a part of their directorate, the reason being that many of their top people felt that John was the best thing that they had [redacted] but that they didn't feel that John would do in the directorate, trying to oversee the work of, not only people [redacted] but throughout the entire Agency, and this is a quality that I think probably many of us also have that....while we may be absolutely first class doing a job that we know best, we're not all that keen about telling someone else what to do, or to arrange things for them to do. John is very good with a small group, and he's absolutely first class alone, and has, as I say, contributed probably more than any half a dozen people that I know of, and he's been at it longer, and this is one of the reasons that he is... he started right from the very beginning...'2.... actually 1923 is when he really started...took a Russian course and went off to [redacted] and stayed there about ten years and worked principally on Soviet ciphers. He was the one who was producing almost all of the material that they got.

SCHORRECK: That's marvelous.

FARLEY: Did he retire from GCHQ?

* Should be Simla, India where he was from Sept 1921 - 1929.

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CURRIER: Yes, he did. He retired from GCHQ...retired's the wrong word. He has a small...or did have, at least, a small army pension and he...I've forgotten exactly when the situation was, but I think that he didn't work a sufficient number of years for GCHQ to get an acutal pension. He took...I believe he took severence pay, but I may have it wrong. I don't think he did, and I'm pretty certain that he gets no pension from GCHQ, but he does still have, and continues to get a small army pension, I believe, yeah, I think that's right.

SCHORRECK: He....he is somewhat unique. There was one other person who has ever worked, as far as I know, in a foreign cryptologic organization and that was Yardley.

CURRIER: Yeah.

SCHORRECK: We were kind of...

CURRIER: Two...that's right.

SCHORRECK: The Brigadier, when he came here to work for NSA as a private citizen...

CURRIER: Yeah, under contract.

SCHORRECK: ....under contract...did that cause the British government any anxiety?

CURRIER: No, absolutely not.

SCHORRECK: None?

CURRIER: No, they were completely in accord.

SCHORRECK: Did...was...do you think there was any negotiation back and forth to do that though?

CURRIER: A....I think information passed, but whether or not you could call it negotiation, I would not be too sure.

SCHORRECK: I don't know whether we asked their permission, or...

CURRIER: I'm sure that the fact that we were about to offer him a contract was made known to them, I'm sure, because we are...we're very close, and I'm sure there was nothing held back...nothing withheld on either side, and I'm just as certain that they were in complete accord, and there was no problem...absolutely no problem at all.

SCHORRECK: I have one other question. The Brigadier received OBE...

CURRIER: Yeah...

SCHORRECK: ...in...at the end of '34, when he came back from India. Why was that?

CURRIER: Well, that was for the work that he did on...

SCHORRECK: ...on the Russian ciphers?

CURRIER: ....on the Russian ciphers.

SCHORRECK: Ok. He was very young to get an OBE.

CURRIER: A....you may...I don't know whether that is very young or not...

SCHORRECK: I really wasn't sure, but...

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CURRIER: I'm not sure. I always say I'm not sure. I suspect that the average age of OBE recipients is somewhat higher than that....I would guess.

SCHORRECK: I would think...had the Brigadier worked at an administrative level, he probably would have been knighted.

CURRIER: A....he probably would have been.

SCHORRECK: Yeah.

CURRIER: Yeah, yeah, he probably would have been. The knighth... well, the KCNG goes with the Director, GCHQ...has for quite some time...well, not quite some time, since the war.

SCHORRECK: Since the war.

CURRIER: Yeah...before that...Dennison, for instance, who was with the Admiralty in the famous room 40, was a retired Schoolmaster Commander, and he came here once to the war, but he was never...and not after the war...right at the beginning of the war; in fact, I remember taking him around, but he was never knighted, nor was it ever considered. Travis, I believe, was the first...was the first one, and that was in...about, let's see... Travis....Travis took over before the end of the war and he was Director, GCHQ, '46 through '50, or something like that. I've forgotten the exact dates. And it was

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in the course of that three or four years that he was knighted, and I think that was the first KCNG for Director GCHQ. Sort of goes with the job, as anyone who becomes a....almost all Major Generals get a certain degree of knighthood. Lieutenant Generals get another and Full Generals get another, and then if they're particularly liked by the Royal family, then they get a KG or something, which is unusual.

FARLEY: Capt, I hate to cut this short...it's been so interesting, but I know your _____ are bad....

CURRIER: I really shouldn't talk anymore....honestly, right now, but I would very much like to see you organize a couple of groups so that we can go over maybe some of the same ground, but other material too. It would be very helpful if you could get two or three other people together.

SCHORRECK: How long did you stay in the business, Captain?

CURRIER: Well, I was in it from 19....well, you can say from 1932 to 1962. Well, actually I wasn't out of the business then. I was still in it. I came back to NSA and I eventually...I didn't retire...I resigned from NSA and stayed on...kept a....to get my clearances and my consultant's badge.

SCHORRECK: Well, what we'd like to do then would be to...when you can arrange it for you to come back again to pick up at the end of the war.

CURRIER: Yeah.

SCHORRECK: On through.

CURRIER: I think probably there is...there's quite a bit more to be learned about some of the technical aspects of the earlier days, which might be worthwhile in a history. I don't know how much detail you'd want to go into, but I think some of that should be recorded. It would be helpful, however, if we were to do this again, to have some of the things that have already been written, sort of in outline form to allow me or whoever's doing the talking to arrange their thoughts in a more logical order that makes it much easier to transcribe. Hopping around is....

SCHORRECK: One of the other things we can do is to send you a transcript of your tapes...

CURRIER: Yeah...

SCHORRECK: ...so that you know what you've talked about.

CURRIER: Um hum, yeah.

FARLEY: What do you think the classification of this one will be....SECRET....HVCCO....

CURRIER: Well, it....well, I suspect it'd better be....no I think you had better...be probably more...

FARLEY: TOP SECRET...?

CURRIER: Yeah, I would, because there are little things that keep coming up all the time that I think would... I think...had better be....

SCHORRECK: No problem at all.

CURRIER: Yeah, I would think so. I wouldn't mail that to me.

FARLEY: No....we'll have Colby smuggle it out.

SCHORRECK: What we'll do is just come down and come in and read it, and then...along with some other things.

CURRIER: Yeah, what I would like to do, really, if you do this again, and I hope we do, and I hope we get some others, is to have a day of preparation before we do anything.

SCHORRECK: Exactly....exactly....if we have somebody in the area, we'll do that, but it's hard if you're going to be here for one day. This could take all day. It could take another day just to read it.

CURRIER: What I would like to do is to sit down and go over at least an outline of a lot of the written materials already been done to order things in my own mind, to jog my memory, give me points of departure, so that I really know what I'm talking about. Rambling is alright, and I keep remembering things, but it's not the easiest way to get information out of someone.

SCHORRECK: Sometimes it can be helpful if the person that we interview can kind of guide us a little bit as well.

CURRIER: Yeah, sure, that's right.

SCHORRECK: And that's the benefit of reading beforehand.

CURRIER: Yeah, right.

SCHORRECK: Well, thank you very much, Captain

FARLEY: Yes, we appreciate this....it's been...it's been fun as well as informative.

CURRIER: Well, I like to do it...yeah.

END Tape III, Side 2