

TOP SECRET//COMINT//X1

(U) Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

(U) Velva Klaessy

~~(U//FOUO)~~ "ANOTHER FIRST - Velva Klaessy, a member of the cryptologic community since 1944, was recently assigned as an NSA senior liaison officer by John J. Connelly, Jr., Assistant Director NSA for Personnel Management. She will assume her new post this summer. Miss Klaessy ... [is] the first woman to be assigned to a senior liaison post..." -- NSA Newsletter, February 1970.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Velva Klaessy spent approximately 35 years in the cryptologic business. While her assignment as Senior United States Liaison Officer (SUSLO), as described above, was a highlight of her long career, there were many other significant accomplishments along the way. During her years at NSA and its predecessor organizations, she established a record of outstanding work and breaking barriers.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Born in October 1915, Klaessy attended Iowa State Teachers College, earning a B.A. in mathematics. She was employed by the Iowa public school system from 1937 until 1944 when she joined the World War II cryptologic effort.

~~(S//SI)~~ She remained in cryptanalysis after the war with the Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA) and its replacement agency, NSA. For several years - until about 1958 - Klaessy was a member of the highly respected technical consultants group. This organization, made up of some of NSA's most talented cryptanalysts, assisted other analytic offices with their most difficult problems. If you were a permanent member of technical consultants organization, like Velva Klaessy, you knew you had arrived as a cryptanalyst at NSA. Initially, there was one Agency-wide organization that served all the SIGINT offices. However, as the organization of NSA evolved, the technical experts were assigned to the different targets. Klaessy, for example, ended up in the techniques group of

~~(S//SI)~~ While a member of the technical consultants organization, Klaessy, along with Chief Bernard A. Malloy, USN, spent July and August 1953 in the Far East training U.S. military personnel

What is

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noteworthy about her trip is that at this time, according to oral tradition, a woman never

went TDY to military posts [redacted] Yet, Klaessy made this trip. Apparently it was very successful, for her efforts were highly praised in the ASA monthly notes sent back to NSA. In the parlance of the time: "Though the field centers like to see the 'Meringue' of the NSA pie they much prefer the 'filling' that Klaessy and Malloy represent." EO 1.4.(c)

~~(S//SI)~~ In 1957, during her last year as a technical consultant [redacted] [redacted] Klassey was back overseas, [redacted] She appears to have served as an NSA technical expert, tasked to act as a cryptanalytic liaison between NSAW and the field sites. It is unclear how long she held this position, but she was apparently back at Fort Meade before the end of 1958.

~~(TS//SI)~~ When the Soviet Advanced Weaponry and Astronautics Division (AWAD) was formed in December 1958, Klaessy was part of a three-member team called the Advanced Weaponry and Astronautics Research Division (AWARD). AWARD was tasked to "direct that portion of the research programs of the other ... divisions [in the key component] which is concerned with space and special weapons fields." Answering directly to the chief of AWAD, Klaessy was one the highest ranking technical experts in the organization. To show the prestige of this assignment, one of the two other members of AWARD was Charles Tevis, who became the first director of DEFSMAC a few years later.

~~(TS//SI)~~ From AWARD she became deputy chief of the New and Unidentified [Soviet] Signals Division [redacted] and finally chief in 1964. She held this position only a short time before moving to an A Group staff position.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Klassey returned to what is now called the extended enterprise in 1967 when she was named Deputy Senior United States Liaison Officer (SUSLO) in Ottawa and then SUSLO in August 1970. As SUSLO, Klaessy represented the United States Intelligence Board and the National Security Agency in all SIGINT and COMSEC matters with the appropriate organizations in Canada. She was the first woman to hold a senior liaison officer post anywhere in the world.

~~(U//FOUO)~~ Velva Klaessy retired within a few years of her return to Fort Meade. She currently lives in Minnesota.

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~~(U//FOUO)~~ Author's note: If you have any recollections of Velva Klaessy that you would like to share, please email me at jefrahm@nsa.

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