



## (U) 'Odd Jobs' Before NSA (part 2)

FROM: SIGINT Communications  
Unknown  
Run Date: 09/02/2005

(U) Here's the conclusion of our review of former "odd jobs" held by NSAers. [Part 1](#) appeared yesterday. Thanks to all who sent in their stories!

- I spent 30 years flying for an international airline prior to being hired on by the Agency. As a **flight attendant supervisor** and as Director of Customer Service, I dealt with all the problems that occurred in flight and many that got my attention on the ground. It was great fun and I sometimes wondered why they were paying me to have dinner in just about any foreign capital on the planet and to be exposed to so many foreign cultures that would only enriched my life. Having said this, I wouldn't trade my current position in SID for all the tea in Beijing or Darjeeling!

-- [REDACTED]

- Perhaps the strangest job I held was as a "**Mosquito Bite Test Count Subject**" for the [REDACTED] while I was in high school.

The job consisted of driving a 4WD truck to pre-determined points in forests and swamps around the county. These were marked on a topographic map by the commission's chief entomologist. When we arrived at each site -- usually something of an adventure in itself, as these tests were conducted from about an hour before to an hour after sunset, out in the boondocks -- the Test Count Subject would step out of the truck and remove his shirt. The subject would stand still for exactly one minute and the observer would count how many mosquitoes would bite the subject. Statistics would be recorded, and then we would be off to the next site, where the observer and the subject would exchange roles. Usually from four to six sites would be hit in a two-hour period. Bite counts could range from just a couple to...dozens....

Over time a map of the most mosquito-ridden areas in the county was built up, and the data on frequency of mosquito bites could be correlated to terrain, elevation, vegetation, weather data, and other environmental factors. I'm sure this contributed to the scientific body of knowledge in some small way, but nowadays I spend the entire summer coated in DEET!

-- [REDACTED]

- **Nanny** for 4-year old daughter of Sunny von Bulow's first husband at a **palace in Marbella, Spain**. (Sunny von Bulow was a Newport, R.I. socialite who died under mysterious circumstances. The movie "Reversal of Fortune" told the tale of Sunny and her second husband Claus.)
- Banking intern, Bank Duta, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Night-shift Memorex VHS tape winder in Maine factory and day-shift Clam Shack cashier

-- Brenda Martineau

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Before coming to NSA I...

- Worked at the Great Adventure Safari Park in New Jersey where, for a time, I was the **girl with the big stick standing at the exit of the baboon enclosure**. Baboons are mischievous and as cars exited the enclosure, they would play tricks to distract the gatekeeper so one of their cohort could sneak out with the exiting cars. I was the girl who stood by the gate waving a big stick to chase them back. In truth, they often escaped, but were always waiting to get back in for the morning feed.

Be warned. Rhinoceroses have been known to charge the passing cars. Tigers sometimes amuse themselves by ripping tires off passing cars. Don't feed the ostriches or the monkeys; the warnings are real. Never trust a kangaroo or elephant that you haven't tamed yourself.

- In college, I worked in a Neuropsychopharmacology lab where we **performed behavior studies on rats** to monitor their reaction when their normal sugar water treat was swapped with sugar substitutes. Typically, they refused to drink the water with saccharine and objected violently to water with Nutrasweet.

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Prior to coming to work at NSA in 1982, I worked as (not necessarily in order):

- a convenience store clerk
- a shipyard welder
- an offshore oilfield roustabout for Texaco
- sales manager for Warner Publishing
- an "instrument man" for a surveyor
- construction superintendent for U.S. Home

The odd part is that all these jobs taught me something relevant to various aspects of my career here.

-- Brian P. Shriner

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- As a 17 year old, I drove a rusted-out Ford Pinto Station Wagon for a drug store **delivering prescriptions and large heavy oxygen tanks** to a senior citizen home. One can only imagine rounding corners at a higher than recommend speed in this car with large oxygen tanks rolling around!

-- anonymous

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- My last job before coming to the agency was directing the recruiting **advertising campaign** for the Army Reserve. Just a month before joining the Agency, I was at Fort Drum, New York with a film crew and Army Reserve river crossing and medical units on their two week annual training. The spots aired after I was already at work here and now have been replaced by the "Army of One." My ads were part of the old "Be All You Can Be" campaign.

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- I spent a summer working third shift at a slaughter house where I had the opportunity to **"box hog heads" and "push hogs."** The first job is pretty clear, but pushing hogs entailed pushing carcasses hanging from a track in a storage area to the cutting floor, where they were obviously cut and packaged before being shipped. Considering each carcass was about 100 lbs., and we pushed close to 1000 hogs a night, the job was pretty exhausting.

-- Troy Turner

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- **Craps dealer** in Las Vegas for 4 months. Before that I was a Shift Supervisor for 8 casino parking lots.

-- Richard D. Joffe

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- (U) As a teenager I worked as a summer camp counselor in Prince William Forest Park near Quantico, Virginia. It wasn't until recently that I found out that the U.S. Army's Office of Strategic Services, (OSS) used the park land exclusively for training spies and radio operators between 1942 and 1945. I find it ironic that the cabins, craft halls, and dining areas that I had I spent my childhood and teenage summers in were used by OSS recruits as they learned how to use weapons, radios and codes, to make and disarm booby traps, as well as learning Morse code and ciphers, covert radio practices, and the martial arts.

-- [REDACTED]

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- I worked as a volunteer **Search & Rescue (SAR) dog handler**, searching for children and hikers lost in the wilderness and for survivors trapped in the rubble of collapsed buildings. My "sniffer" dog and I trained on most weekends, were on call 24/7, and dispatched to all corners of Virginia and adjacent states, generally at night, and often on multi-day searches (catching a few winks in my truck between search tasks). We also deployed on 10-day missions with a USAID-sponsored SAR task force to the embassy bombing in Nairobi, two earthquakes in Turkey, and an earthquake in Taiwan.

Among the more satisfying moments was finding a group of children lost in the Great Dismal Swamp near Norfolk. Among the most gut wrenching moments was hearing the bulldozer begin its removal of an earthquake house's debris immediately after I reported that my dog indicated no one was still alive in the house's rubble. I fervently prayed that my dog and I had called it right.

-- [REDACTED]

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Previous to my time at NSA, I...

- struggled as a part-time standup comedian and actor, including running an improv comedy troupe (but there's nothing funny about NSA);
- spent a summer reorganizing the expansive archives of "Strange" magazine; nothing like eight hours in a basement, swimming in clippings about Loch Ness and spontaneous human combustion;
- turned down a job offer as **Resident Archaeologist for the Government of the [REDACTED]** (the annual salary they offered me, when I converted it to dollars, would not have covered my airfare to [REDACTED] in the first place).

-- [REDACTED]

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- **Taught belly dance and robotics** at a summer camp for underprivileged girls.

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- Prior to NSA, I worked as a waitress at Joe's Crab Shack the summer after my first year at college. Waitressing is obviously by no means an "odd job," but the fact that I had to go through more hours of training to learn choreographed dances than to learn about the food itself made the job "odd" and interesting. In fact, the other waiters, waitresses, and I had to learn several **choreographed dances** in order to entertain the customers during the busiest time of the day -- dinner. In order to help out the extremely backed-up kitchen, my coworkers and I had to break out on the dance floor and dance what-seemed-like-an-eternity-2-minute routines to distract the customers from the fact that the kitchen was backed up and that their food was not coming out any time soon. Oh, how little did they know. Needless to say, we never got tipped extra for our moves.

-- Anonymous

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*Have a good Labor Day!*

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TOP SECRET // SI / TK // REL TO USA AUS CAN GBR NZL  
DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108