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INAME: BUFFHAM, Benson, Mr.

IPLACE: Buffham residence, [redacted]

[redacted]

VIEWER: WILLIAMS, Jeannette

Williams

Okay. Today is Tuesday, 15 June, 1999. I'm in the home of Mr. Benson K. Buffham in [redacted] Jeannette Williams is my name. Mr. Buffham has graciously consented to be interviewed for the Black History Project. Mr. Buffham is going to re-cap his career as well, leading up to his assignment as a Deputy Director for NSA, and then finally, SUSLO London. With that, we're going to get started, and we'll ask Mr. Buffham to talk about his early education, and his military experience, and then how he came to be at SIS. Thank you, Mr. Buffham. Go right ahead.

Buffham

Well, as far as my education is concerned, I was brought up in [redacted] [redacted] graduated from high school from [redacted] and attended Wesleyan University in [redacted] where I graduated in 1941 with a BA Degree majoring in [redacted] (TR Note: corrects himself) I entered the Army in 1942, April 3rd, and took my basic training at Fort Dix and at Camp Lee in Virginia in the Medical Corps.

Williams

The Medical Corps!

Buffham

Yes. I was limited service, and the first group of us that went in that were limited service were all assigned to the Medical Corps.

Williams

What does limited service mean, sir? I don't understand that.

Buffham

Well, I couldn't pass the eye examination because I earlier tried to get in the Navy and get a commission in the Navy, but I couldn't pass the eye exam, so I was drafted by the Army. They didn't care about...but they made us...they called us limited service, and although I had been originally scheduled to go in the Signal Corps, the Signal Corps in Army term was an arm, and the Medical Corps was a service, so being limited service, they assigned us all to the Medical Corps. But they changed the rules while I was still taking my basic training and created limited service people to be assigned to arms, and so I was transferred to the Signal Corps and sent up to Fort Monmouth where we'd had some more testing and interviews, and I ended up being assigned to the Sig-

nal Intelligence Service. And we had the Army Crypt School at Fort Monmouth at that time, so I went through the school there (and was) introduced to Mr. Friedman's lessons in cryptanalysis and what not. I lived in a tent with a fellow named McGeorge Bundy, and one day McGeorge came back, and I asked him where he had been, and he said he had been applying for OCS. And I said, Well, we're not supposed to go OCS. Here at Fort Monmouth we're supposed to complete our studies and then go OCS when we get to Arlington Hall. Well, he said his brother, William Bundy, who was an instructor in the school, had advised him that it might be a good idea to go to OCS while we were up at Fort Monmouth. And I thought that night about that, and I thought, you know, if this is good enough for McGeorge Bundy, who we all thought was pretty smart, it's probably good enough for me, so I went down and applied for OCS. So a few weeks later when the school was moved to Vint Hill Farms Station in Warrenton, Virginia, everybody in the school was transferred except those of us who had been selected for OCS. So I went to OCS at Fort Monmouth and graduated the end of 1942, and then I was assigned from there to Arlington Hall Station. All my peer group, with the exception of McGeorge Bundy and myself, were down at Vint Hill Farms and became corporals and sergeants, and I was a second lieutenant up in...so that was a very fortunate thing as far as my career was concerned. Well, when I first went to Arlington Hall, I worked as a cryptanalyst, or "cryppie," probably for about six months or so.

Williams Now, I saw a...excuse me, Sir. I saw an organization chart, and your first assignment wasn't the commercial codes.

Buffham No, it wasn't. I was working on Japanese diplomatic communications. What happened was that a very good friend of mine at that time a Captain Mike Maloney, who was Frank Rowlett's Plans and Priorities Officer...(cut off)

Williams What was his name again, Sir?

Buffham Mike Maloney. He was assigned overseas, and he recommended to Colonel Rowlett that I replace him, so I became the Plans and Priorities Officer on the staff of B3. It would be like what later we'd call in NSA an O4-type job, but it was very small. There was only two or three of us: Margaret Hancock; have you run across that name?

Williams No, Sir.

Buffham Anyway, and it was then that I was also assigned as one of my duties the job with the just emerging Black unit.

Williams So, you were...(cut off)

Buffham So, I think Maloney had had that job before me, and when I replaced him I took that job on as well.

Williams So you were dual-hatted? You were Plans and Priorities...

Buffham Yes, Plans and Pri...right. Plans and Priorities Officer.

Williams ...on the staff of B3.

Buffham Which was headed up by Rowlett at that time.

Williams Okay. And then you were also chief of this commercial code unit at Bill Coffee.

Buffham Right.

Williams Now, you said Mr. Maloney...it wasn't Mister Maloney...

Buffham It was Captain.

Williams ...Captain Maloney. You said he had the job...did he have the job working with the commercial codes?

Buffham That's my recollection. But remember, we're talking about something that happened fifty years ago, and my recollections aren't that good. But that's, I think, was when I replaced him that then I was introduced to Mr. Coffee, Bill Coffee, and became the head of that unit. However, Coffee was really the operating head of the unit. I had other jobs to do at the same time, but he was full-time in that job and was really the expert.

Williams Now, so he was already in place, and his crew...they were already there when you took it over.

Buffham They were there. Right.

Williams And Herman Phynes acted sort of like Bill Coffee's deputy.

Buffham Right.

Williams And (B% Annie Briggs)...that's a name that shows up as a secretary or something; I don't know.

Buffham The name is familiar, but that could be the case.

Williams Okay. Did you exercise any oversight as to what that unit did, like did you review their publications before they were released, or...?

Buffham Yes, not all of them, but I was the reporting chain for them, so Coffee reported to me. I got all of his reports and reviewed them...(cut off)

Williams Prior to them going out?

Buffham Oh, yes. Not all of them, I would say, but anything...if they thought they had anything very...really significant, they would...Coffee would show it to me first.

Williams Mr. Buffham, where did you...where was your office in relationship to

where...

Buffham Where they were?

Williams ...where they were?

Buffham Ah, probably about a hundred yards or so away.

Williams Did you go into the same door?

Buffham I was outside Mr. Rowlett's office...or Colonel Rowlett's. You know, there were maybe fifteen or so people on the staff including his secretary, and the personnel people, and I had a little office with Margaret Hancock, and they had their own area. Then Coffee was really in charge of that area. I would go back and forth between my office--or my desk--and his desk. We didn't really have offices. I didn't have an office, you know. I had a desk outside of Mr. Rowlett's office. They had their own spaces.

Williams In a separate room.

Buffham In a separate room, right. And, of course, Bill Coffee sat right at the head, you know. As I recall, there weren't a large number of people. Would I be out of...from what you've seen, if I would say maybe fifty or sixty?

Williams Oh, that would be...I don't think I've seen numbers that high.

Buffham Thirty, maybe?

Williams Um, twenty to thirty at its height, because it started off fairly small.

Buffham Right. Well, it had been in existence for a while before I became familiar with it.

Williams Okay. Mr. Buffham, are you aware people...I know you probably are aware now, but as a second lieutenant, were you aware that the Signal Corps did not welcome the participation of people of color in that branch of the...the Army did not welcome the participation of people of color in certain branches, like the Army Air Corps, or the Signal Corps, those kind of...

Buffham No, I wasn't aware of that.

Williams You weren't aware of that. Well, there was a great deal of pressure on the part of the Black leadership to open up these branches of the service. We were concentrated in the service branches where you drove the trucks.

Buffham Oh, yeah. Well, of course, we had a large number of Black Americans working in what I would call custodian-type jobs...

Williams At Arlington Hall?

Buffham ...at Arlington Hall, and Mr. Coffee's unit was the only unit which was a professional unit that I am aware of. There might have been some Black Americans that were on the COMSEC side. You know, we had a large print shop for making codes and ciphers, and my recollection is that there were several Black Americans that worked in that area...

Williams In the print shop.

Buffham ...which would be more professional, you know, than custodian-type jobs.

Williams Right. And that was...(cut off)

Buffham But I'm really not too familiar with that except, you know, just casually observing things, because I wasn't on the COMSEC side at all. I know we had a big print shop, and my recollection is that we had some Black Americans working there, but that would be not quite the same thing as working in the operations part of the SIS site, like Coffee's unit was.

Williams And Bill Coffee did analysis...he did analysis?

Buffham Oh, yes. Well, what happened...there was a great deal of commercial coded material coming in, and of course you had to identify what codes they were in. We had a big collection of commercial code books. The practice of a lot of the international companies--or companies with international business--was to use the commercial codes because they were much more economical to use than the...to use...well, if they were using plain text, it would be very, very expensive. A commercial code group could represent a whole phrase, for example, so they saved a lot of money. So there was a tremendous use of commercial code. Well, nobody knew without actually going through the material what was being said, what was transpiring in that material, and that was important to know, particularly on a lot of the foreign lanes that were involved. We had the Office of Censorship, as you might recall, in World War II, and one of my jobs was to go down to Censorship every day and collect the international material which was flowing through them, but...which they weren't processing. They were only interested in things that were coming into and out of the United States. And of course they had no capability against diplomatic traffic, enciphered traffic, but everything had to be filed with them that was coming into or out of the United States, or transiting the United States, so they would be able to examine material that coming in and out of the United States, but they wouldn't be able to examine material, let's say, that was going from Tokyo to a number of foreign cities, or papers going from Berlin to a number of foreign cities. So that material was...all fell within the realm of responsibility of the SIS. And all that material had to be examined and gone through by our commercial code unit, and they were responsible for detecting anything that would be transpiring in that area which wasn't routine economic material. So that's what they were examining all the time. And of course

there was a great deal of traffic, because they were monitoring all the international communications, particularly from Rome, from Tokyo, from Berlin; all the enemy traffic, plus other material as well.

Williams So did they report...they didn't report the routine transactions. They reported something that was...(cut off)

Buffham Anything that was unusual. Anything that would be a violation of what we understood to be the international embargo type of relationships. That's what they were looking for, and sharing of that kind of material wasn't...that kind of information wasn't being passed, and they were missing it.

Williams At one point...(cut off)

Buffham A lot of it was very routine material, obviously. But it had to be gone through because you had to be sure that it was routine, that it was acceptable material.

Williams And the only way you could do that was if you looked at it.

Buffham Absolutely. So, they performed an invaluable service by going through all that material and making sure there wasn't anything in it that was...that would have been useful for us in the wartime operation.

Williams Mr. Buffham, you may not know the answer to this, but I'm puzzled because as you described it, it was an important task. But at one point...like in '40...when did you take over the...do you remember the date which you...kind of the year you took over?

Buffham Yeah, it would have been in '44, I'm pretty sure.

Williams Forty-four, okay. Well, in going back through the archives material in roughly '42, perhaps, this task was being worked--this was before the formation of the Bill Coffee group--this task was being worked by caucasians under John (B% Apolony). Did you know John Apolony?

Buffham Uh huh.

Williams John Apolony was my deputy division chief when I came into the agency, but at any rate, it was a very small group of people; John Apolony and maybe three or four others. And then the task, the mission just sort of folded, and it wasn't being worked by anyone. But as you described it, it was an important task during wartime to see what goods are going to whom and so forth and so on. Do you have any idea why they would have let the mission die? Was it a sense of priorities, that they didn't have enough people?

Buffham I would have thought it was priorities because there were shortages all the way through, and there was a tremendous amount of material that had to be analyzed and reported on, and so all during the war we were

faced with making priority choices. It wouldn't be as important, let's say, as some diplomatic traffic.

Williams

Exactly.

Buffham

You know, item for item, if you measured it up against a diplomatic item, it would probably be of, obviously, lesser importance, but it still was an important thing to do if you could muster the manpower in order to do it. And it was an important thing from the standpoint of having assurance that you weren't missing something important, that this wasn't being used as a way of...we're okay?

Williams

You're okay.

Buffham

...it wasn't being used as a way of transacting a lot of things which would be injurious to the war effort.

Williams

Okay. In 1944 you took over the crew. Did additional people come into the section while you were there?

Buffham

We had some increases--not major increases--but there were some increases in people.

Williams

Do you know how those people...did Bill Coffee go out and recruit people? Do you know anything about how they were added?

Buffham

I don't think Coffee would have gone out and recruited anybody. I think our...

Williams

Personnel?

Buffham

...regular personnel would have done that. And anyone that came along who seemed to have the attributes, the background, the education and everything to go into a professional area, they would have been assigned there.

Williams

Mr. Buffham, do you remember any names of individuals in that group? Now, I have a list--and I should have brought it with me, but I didn't--I have a list of people, but it's like a first initial and a last name, so I can't tell if it was Mr., or Mrs., or Miss. I have an earlier list and they're all women, but in going through phone books I can't find any of the names. Now, the women...the names could have changed and I wouldn't recognize it, so would you know any names associated with that group now?

Buffham

Not that I can remember. Iris ought to be a good source.

Williams

Okay. All right. I'll ask Iris. Okay, now Iris...(cut off)

Buffham

And I've known her forever, you know. And of course I've known Bill Coffee and Herman Phynes for...but it's hard...I think...(cut off)

Williams

Well, I...(cut off)

Buffham No, I think most of the people in the unit were women. There was a predominance of women, but that wasn't surprising because at Arlington Hall in that time most of the employees probably were female, of the civilian employees, because most of the men were in uniform.

Williams Right. Now Joe...you mentioned females. Let me ask you this, Joe (B% Fenneman) said that a lot of recruiting of the women occurred in the South. Do you have a sense of that?

Buffham Yes, I think that's true. I think I have a sense of that. I know that some of the people that went on recruiting trips, and they seemed to go down to southern Virginia, North Carolina, and places like that. That's where my wife came from, you know. She was from southern Virginia. But I think there was a lot of recruiting in the South.

Williams Why is that, as opposed to the North?

Buffham I don't know. Maybe it was just availability of...

Williams Manpower.

Buffham ...but I don't have any (B% regrets). I just know that they did a lot of recruiting in the South, but I don't know why. I wasn't in that part of the...(cut off)

Williams I know. Mr. Buffham, um...you were going to say something?

Buffham No.

Williams Okay. Did you have staff meetings like in 1944, '45?

Buffham Yes.

Williams Now, you represented the unit at staff meetings with the Chief of B3 or whatever?

Buffham Right.

Williams Did Bill Coffee...he only interacted with you. He didn't...

Buffham Oh, I think from time to time people like Rowlett would come down and visit the unit.

Williams Is that right?

Buffham Uh huh. They would see what was going on. Just a normal management (B% thing) they'd go around and see what...I don't remember General Corderman coming down to visit the unit, but I'm sure I came with Rowlett on a couple of occasions.

Williams What was the attitude of Rowlett? Earle Cooke was...(cut off)

Buffham Earle Cooke...Colonel Cooke...

Williams He was the chief of...(cut off)

Buffham He was sort of the chief of the operations, what we could call operations.

Williams Right. Okay. What was their attitudes...the attitudes of the seniors' toward this all-Black group? Did they discuss, you know, how are they doing? Or are they effective? Or did they ever talk about well...(cut off)

Buffham If Cooke talked about that he would have talked about it with Rowlett, not with me. Whether those conversations took place or not, I'm not sure. He...I really couldn't tell you. Rowlett was certainly interested very much in the unit. I could say that for sure because I worked...you know, I was a lieutenant. I didn't have too much to do with the colonels. Well, I guess Rowlett was a lieutenant colonel, but Cooke was a full colonel, and Harold Hayes came along later. These guys were a few ranks above me.

Williams Mr. Buffham, was there ever any comment that we're shorthanded, perhaps these people could do something else in another...on another target? There was never any discussion about moving people into other areas, was there?

Buffham Well, there must have been, because they were moved into other areas later on, you know, after the war ended. Everybody was more or less reassigned, and many of the people in that unit were assigned to this SHAMROCK Operation, so obviously there were discussions, but I wasn't a party to those discussions. In the meantime I had been moved from that particular role.

Williams Let me...before you talk about your moving, Bill Coffee moved before you did, right? Did he go to SHAMROCK? Do you know?

Buffham I think he did.

Williams I think he did too.

Buffham I think he did. Ah, this had been...my recollection is most of the people in the unit at that time went into the SHAMROCK Operation.

Williams Herman Phynes too, you think?

Buffham I don't know about Herman. I think Herman might have gone...or (B% stayed) at one of the analytic operations. But as I say, I was no longer in that position after the war ended, and the decision to employ a lot of the people in SHAMROCK...I wasn't a party to that decision. I don't know how that transpired. But Rowlett would have known. He would--and of course, he's gone so you can't ask him--but he would have been aware of the rationale for moving a lot of the people to SHAMROCK.

Williams Mr. Buffham...(cut off)

Buffham You see, that was...at SHAMROCK a lot of the SHAMROCK things were assigned to us after the war because the whole Office of Censorship went out of business. They were the people who used to receive a lot of that material during the war...

Williams Is that right!

Buffham ...because we had wartime censorship. Well, when the war ended and the censorship stopped, then the whole process of how that material came into the agency was changed, and we had to do a lot of things that we hadn't had to do before, because now there wasn't any Office of Censorship. There wasn't anybody looking at this material, handling this material, providing this material to the agency.

Williams Right. So that was a new mission.

Buffham That was a...yeah.

Williams For you, for the agency, and so this group probably moved over to process...(cut off)

Buffham Somebody had to do it, and I think that that was the...of course, after the...when the war ended, a lot of the rationale for looking at the [redacted] traffic became a lower and lower priority too, because you didn't have the interest then in seeing what was going on with the [redacted] in what they were doing, so the priorities changed much more to straight [redacted] type activity and not nearly as much on the [redacted] side.

Williams But then you had, after the war, Jack (B% Gorrón's) effort mushrooming, and he was looking at [redacted] traffic, wasn't he?

Buffham I don't know. Was he?

Williams I think so. I think so.

Buffham But I think he was looking at Soviet.

Williams Right. (1-2G).

Buffham Gorrón knows...my understanding...I mean, again, this wasn't anything that I was directly associated with at the time, but Gorrón and a number of Russian linguists were employed to look at the whole [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted] They were looking at [redacted] material, for the most part. There could have been some [redacted] material, but I don't think so. And the material into and out of the [redacted]

United States was being looked at pretty much by the Office of Censorship.

Williams Now, when the Office of Censorship would get what later became SHAMROCK material during the war, did they give it to us?

Buffham Yes. All the cipher material was sent to NSA, because they couldn't handle the cipher material.

Williams Okay. Okay.

Buffham But see, everything had to be filed with them that was coming into or out of the United States, so every bit of diplomatic traffic, for example, that was being handled by Western Union, or RCA, or any of the big, you know...all that material went to the Office of Censorship, and we received it from them. But after the war and those people went out of business, then we had to get the material directly.

Williams We got the raw material.

Buffham We had to get it directly from Western Union, RCA, ITT, all the carriers, and that material had to be scanned out, and material had to be selected out for forwarding to the various analytic elements of the...of course it was ASA then, but later NSA.

Williams And that's what we think the Bill Coffee group probably did.

Buffham I think a lot of them did.

Williams Mr. Buffham, what happened to you? You said you...after the Bill Coffee, and you were dual-hatted with Plans and Priorities?

Buffham Yeah. Well, of course, the...I stayed on as the Plans and Priorities Officer for a while, but then we started having coordination with the Navy...the Naval Security Group, and I don't know how familiar you are with it, but a whole structure was set up for coordination between the Army and the Navy, because the Navy basically did not have any task to do after the war ended. They had concentrated during the war on the Japanese Naval problem, and that disappeared. So we had a lot of analysts, and linguists, and people at the Naval Security Group, so they set up a joint coordinating structure, and I was assigned to what was called the Joint Processing Allocation Group, JPAG.

Williams I've come across that.

Buffham And a Captain Wesley (B% Wright) from the Navy was the head of that, and I was the Army representative on his committee...or his group. And we were supposed to look at all the tasks and problems being handled by the Army and by the Navy and to assign various problems back and forth between the two groups. There was also a Joint Intercept Coordinating Committee under, at that time, Navy Captain Dennis, and the

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Army representative of that was a fellow named Phil (B% Patton) who I had worked with very closely in intercept priorities. One of my jobs working for Rowlett was to establish the intercept priorities for the collection process, and so Phil Patton had the Intercept Control Group. They sent out all the assignments to the stations. So we worked very closely together. But he was on the Joint Intercept Group, and I was on the Joint Processing Group.

Williams

Where did the...(cut off)

Buffham

So that was pretty much of a full-time job for several years until the AFSA was formed, and then when AFSA came into being, the joint structure was no longer necessary, and I worked on the staff of AFSA-23 for a brief period of time, and then I was assigned as head of AFSA-23D, which was the Far East. And that was at the time of the Korean War, so we had the Chinese, and the Korean problems, and all the



Williams

Mr. Buffham, are you...getting back to the African-American issue...were you aware of the influx of African-Americans to do key punching, card punching, and to process that traffic that Jack Gorron's people were analyzing? Were you...?

Buffham

I'm not really familiar with that.

Williams

I was just wondering if in staff meetings or hallway conversations, if you were aware of the Agency going to great lengths to hire essentially manual labor and looking in the Black community to do these tasks? There was just a great need for a large number of people in the GS-2, GS-3 area.

Buffham

Probably CAF-2, CAF-3.

Williams

Yeah, I'm sorry. Exactly.

Buffham

Back in those days. Ah, I was never a part of that process. Of course, I was aware of the increase in numbers of people of Black origin, you know, being employed there, but I wasn't part of that at all. As I say, I was pretty much involved in this joint structure at that time, and we were setting up things like all the nomenclature for the crypt systems, and the TA notations, and all that kind of...and that was where I was working.

Williams

When did you get out of the military?

Buffham

In '46. It was summer of '46.

Williams

Okay. Do you remember what you were converted to in terms of a civilian grade?

Buffham

It would have been P1 or P2. It wasn't very high.

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Williams Did you ever think about doing anything else?

Buffham Yes. Well, when I graduated from college, I had applied for Harvard Business School, and I was accepted but not early enough to get in to avoid the Army...going into the Army. And then the war came along, and so those plans were sort of shelved, but then I applied again for Harvard Business School while I was still in uniform right after the war ended, and I was accepted, but I wasn't accepted in the first class, which was the one I wanted to go to; I was accepted in the second class, so Mr. Rowlett offered me this job in the meantime, and I got involved in that, and of course I was married, and we were having a child, and so I never went to Harvard.

Williams You stayed...

Buffham I stayed with NSA instead.

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Williams ...and had a brilliant career.

Buffham Or not with NSA, but at that time with ASA; later with AFSA. But I had planned to go to Harvard. That's what I had planned to do, go to Harvard Business School. I told you I majored in [redacted] I was always interested in getting a Master's Degree in Business Administration, which would have been pretty useful, I guess, back in '47 or '48. Probably would have done pretty well.

Williams Well, I think you've done pretty well.

Buffham I was very happy staying with NSA. I've always liked NSA, and the jobs that I've had, and believed in the mission very much, so I don't have any regrets.

Williams And you...oh, I would think not, and you had wonderful jobs, and you were able to travel extensively, and you love to travel, so that was great. What about Arlington Hall Station? Do you remember if the cafeteria was segregated?

Buffham I don't think so. As far as I know it wasn't.

Williams Okay. All right.

Buffham I'd be very surprised if...

Williams Well, you know, we did hear a story, and we can't verify it because this was an interview with someone who was told by Bernie Prior--and I told you Bernie Prior was the messenger--that when he worked...that initially, and I'm not sure if it was at the Munitions Building...

Buffham It could have been at the Munitions Building.

Williams Okay--but not Arlington Hall Station--that there was a black cloth that separated the two sides of the cafeteria. But Bernie Prior is gone. You

can't verify that.

Buffham That's possible at the Munitions Building, I suppose, but I don't recall anything like that at Arlington Hall.

Williams Okay.

Buffham There might have been defacto segregation...I mean, maybe the people might have sat together, you know, gone to lunch together and sat together, but I don't think there was any restriction as to where you could sit in the cafeteria.

Williams Okay. And where did you live at this time? You were living in...?

Buffham First I lived in Arlington, just out...we were within walking distance of Arlington Hall, and then I moved to Alexandria in about '48 or so. Lived in Arlington...I mean, lived in Alexandria. Then when the agency moved out to Fort Meade in, I guess it must have been probably in fifty...

Williams Fifty-two.

Buffham No, I mean when we moved, it must have been probably about '56 or '57 we moved to Silver Spring. Lived in Silver Spring until I came back from Germany. I went to Germany in '58 to '60, and then in 1960 I got divorced. When I came back I lived in Silver Spring for awhile, and then when I got married, we moved to the District of Columbia. We lived down in southeast.

Williams Is that with harbors?

Buffham Ah, not...we lived...first we had a rental apartment and then moved to Harbor Square just outside of Fort McNair. We lived there for several years and then moved to Columbia for several years and then moved from Columbia into Chevy Chase the last couple of years I was Deputy Director, because I had to do a lot of things in town, and we were running back and forth all the time, so we moved to Elizabeth which is in Chevy Chase. And then we sold that place when we went to London, and then I came directly here from London 'cause we bought this place in 1970.

Williams Right, right. Mr. Buffham, we didn't go through your career. I'm checking my tape to see how we're doing. I think I'm going to turn it over now. It's a good place to stop. (TR Note: recorder temporarily shut off here.) So, we we're talking about your career, and you were on the Coordinating Committee and so forth, and...so what happened after that in terms of your career?

Buffham Well, after AFSA was formed, I was assigned to AFSA-23 which was the non-Soviet part of NSA at that time, and I worked for a while on the staff as sort of an O4 type along with one of the people who had come over from the Navy, Dr. Bill Ray. Dr. Ray and I were sort of the office

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people for the non-Soviet part of NSA--operations part. Then when the Korean War started, I was assigned to AFSA-23D as the chief down there. This was in 1950, so I had the Korean problem, and the Chinese problem, [redacted] and I stayed in that until I went to the National...I'm sorry, then when General Canine became the Director of NSA, he instituted a policy of rotating people around, and people were supposed to come up from the operations areas to be on the agency staff. Well, the first one taken out of the operations area was Mr. Phil Patton, and he went up and worked in the Plans and Policy Staff for a year. It was supposed to be a one-year assignment. Then I was selected to replace Patton. He came back and took my job. Then I worked...(cut off)

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Williams

Okay. So then you went up to General Canine's staff.

Buffham

Right. I went up to General Canine's staff. And then when my years was up, I was replaced by a Mr. Herbert L. Conley. He replaced me, and I went back to...ah, at that time...let's see...I think I went back on the staff of what was then called Prod. I was the Operations Officer for the whole Prod Organization. Then from that I applied for the National War College, and I was the third NSA individual to go to the National War College after Tordella and Sinkov, and when I got out of the National War College, I came back to NSA. It was now...had moved to Fort Meade, and I replaced Dr. Tordella as Chief of Collection. Dr. Tordella went to the Pentagon to work on the staff of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, who was a Marine general; I can't remember his name. But anyway, I replaced Dr. Tordella as Chief of Collection. During that period of time we did a complete analysis of all of our collection requirements. It was called the Intercept Priorities Committee--the IPC. We had representatives from all the intelligence agencies, and we interviewed all of the analytic chiefs as to their collection requirements and drew up a master intercept plan for NSA.

Williams

So, did that kind of pre-dated the NSRL or something like that...collection requirements?

Buffham

Yes, oh yeah. Yes, it was the first...(cut off)

Williams

I mean it was like the forerunner of that.

Buffham

Right, right. Let's see...talking about things a long time ago, somewhere in there I went overseas to Germany as the head of the...in '58 to '60, I guess, I was Chief of NSA Europe. I guess that...yeah, I left the collection job to become Chief of NSA Europe, and Herb Conley came from the National War College and replaced me as Chief of Collection. Okay? And I went off to become Chief NSA Europe. Spent two years as Chief of NSA Europe and then came back to NSA. I was supposed to become head of the agency Planning and Policy Staff, but Hank Herzog, who was head of GENS at that time, became terminally ill, and Dr.

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Tordella called me and said--he had become Deputy Director in the meantime--he called me and said, We're assigning you as Chief of GENS because Hank Herzog is never going to get out of the hospital. So then I became Chief of GENS.

Williams

Mr. Buffham, tell me...talk to me a little bit about the personalities. Share with me some anecdotes illustrative of their personalities, or what's your opinion of them, or...what was Friedman like? What was Sinkov like? What were those people like?

Buffham

Well, as you know, first of all, Friedman [redacted] really couldn't operate in a full-time capacity at the head of any large organization. I guess when Canine became the Director, he brought Mr. Friedman up to be his special consultant and advisor, sort of a Senior Technical Advisor to the Director of NSA. And of course, one of his principle interests at that time was training. He was always very much interested, as you know, in preparing training documents and bringing the workforce along. Lambros Callimahos was his right hand, and all of that, writing down of all of the problems and preparing the educational materials for people, so he served as a very senior consultant, and he sort of looked after all of the technical aspects of training of people. He was, I thought, a wonderful man. He and his wife became members of the...General Canine interceded for them and got them a membership at the Officer's Club at Fort McNair. He and Mrs. Friedman lived down right in the middle of the District, right near the Folger Library. He was so interested in proving that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare, you know. He and Mrs. Friedman had written several technical articles on that. Anyway, I had gone to the National War College, and so I was a member of the Officer's Club at Fort McNair, and we used to see them. They used to come down two or three times a week to the club for dinner. And we used to go up...Chris and I used to go up there quite a bit, so we'd see them at the club and have long talks with them. He was a very very fine person. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted] As a matter of fact, when we dedicated the auditorium as the Friedman Auditorium, we got the family to come back, and I presided at that particular ceremony. [redacted]

[redacted] He contributed so much during the early stages of cryptology--sort of the Father of Modern Cryptology. [redacted]

[redacted] Anyway, that's about all I

know about the time of Mr. Friedman. Rowlett, of course, was my mentor, I would say. I worked all my early times at Arlington Hall for Rowlett, and we were very disappointed when he left the agency and went to work for CIA.

Williams Now, he was unhappy. There were organizational disputes or...?(cut off)

Buffham Well, as I told you, General Canine wanted to mix the workforce up a bit. He thought people had been in the same jobs too long, and Rowlett had been in Operations all during the war and after the war, right up...this was, I guess, '53 or '54 I'm talking about now. So when Sinkov had come back from overseas in World War II, he'd been assigned in the COMSEC side of the house. (B% Kovac), of course, was R&D. So you had three of them: Kovac had been in R&D since the end of the war; Sinkov had been COMSEC since the end of the war; Rowlett had been in Operations since the end of the war. And General Canine decided that he would rotate them, that he would move Rowlett to COMSEC and brought Sinkov over to the Operations side, and Rowlett disagreed very strongly with that. So CIA, of course, was being formulated and brought into existence, and then Rowlett decided to leave NSA and go with CIA. So he went over to CIA, and some NSA people went with him.

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Williams Did you ever entertain the thought?

Buffham No, no. There was nothing in the CIA that was in my particular ballywick, but [redacted] and three or four people [redacted] who had been Machine Operations; [redacted] I don't know if these names mean anything to you.

Williams No they don't.

Buffham Well, they went. He brought them with him to CIA, and of course the unfortunate thing he did in CIA was he set up a SIGINT shop in CIA...

Williams Sort of competing.

Buffham ...competing with NSA. He worked with a fellow named Harvey in what was called DDP of CIA. And the Third Party relationships were handled by CIA, and there became a real division of opinion between CIA and NSA over the handling of this third party material, and who should play the various roles associated with the third party activities. And Rowlett took a very strong position of that's CIA responsibility. Of course, NSKID-6 had come out--later NSKID-9--which gave the Director of NSA vary specific responsibilities with respect to third parties, and these sort of undercut what Rowlett and the CIA people wanted to do. What the upshot of it all was that really NSA was vindicated and these responsibilities were assigned to NSA, and Rowlett no longer had a job at CIA. So at that time the Director of CIA called the Director of NSA, who was

General John Sanford at that time, and told him that Rowlett had to be re-assigned to NSA. So, he was re-assigned to NSA, but he came back as a technical advisor and not, you know, a chain-of-command...(cut off)

Williams

Division...right.

Buffham

...a chain-of-command role as far as anything on the SIGINT side, because that would have been very bad. And there was a lot of the senior NSA people at the time--civilians at the time--were very much opposed to Rowlett's return since he had sort of turned traitor on the agency. However, that all worked through in time, and later on, of course, as his final assignment he became the Director of Training. Like Friedman, he was always extremely interested in the training of the workforce, and the documentation of (B% what had gone on). So I think he ended up as a very outstanding head of the training operation. From there he resigned, and of course, now he's been re-(1G). He's quite a hero in NSA which is somewhat odd considering some of the things that happened. But he's a...as I say, he was my mentor for the first ten years or so that I was with the business, and he was a very very knowledgeable, a very very capable man, extremely so. It was unfortunate that this...I think Rowlett was...I think Canine was right. I think the agency needed people moved around. It wasn't good for Kovac to always be head of R&D, and for Sinkov to be head of COMSEC, and for Rowlett to be the Operations guy. That really wasn't good. They had a lot to give in exchanging and taking jobs...I mean, all the whole workforce did, and you shouldn't let people become just wedded to one particular role, one particular assignment at NSA. So I think Canine tried, but it was a wrenching thing at the time for all the people involved and for the agency. Sinkov was a very gentle man. He was a very kind man. I think some of us probably thought he probably wasn't forceful enough in some of the assignments that he had, but, again, he was quite a brilliant guy and did very well. Kovac was also, I thought, a very fine person. He was...he stayed in R&D probably too long, and I guess he wasn't as good a manager probably as the other two were. He had a deputy...I'm probably boring you with all this.

Williams

No, no!

Buffham

Howard Barlow, who was very very forceful, who alienated a lot of people in the agency--and I think some of this probably rubbed off on Kovac--but eventually Howard Barlow went over to COMSEC, and Mitford Matthews, who was a very outstanding guy in the R&D side, became head of R&D. Kovac had retired, and that was big change, and a very good change, I think. Howard Barlow did much better when he went over to COMSEC. He had been in R&D too long, I thought.

Williams

Too long. Mr. Buffham, I have two questions...(cut off)

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Buffham I have this...I was the Inspector General at this time, and we did a lot of the work in the R&D area, and that's where I became aware of the fact that there were a lot of problems at that time in R&D.

Williams I'm going to ask you about that too. Let me put this down. Okay, now...I have so many questions. I think I only put one tape in my bag. I should have put two, but I can run down to the car and get another tape if I need to. Back to Tordella; what was he like? And the other question is, you became chief of...what? the Asian Division or...?

Buffham In '51 and '52.

Williams In '51-'52, so you were there when Minnie Kenny arrived, and...(cut off)

Buffham She was in the Chinese section. She was a Chinese linguist.

Williams She started out as a Chinese linguist, and so I'm going to ask you...(cut off)

Buffham That's when I first met her.

Williams What was it like, and were there any concerns on the part of the analysts who were already there that you had this Black female now coming in to work an analytic problem?

Buffham I'm not aware of any feelings about it.

Williams There wasn't a...

Buffham I think everybody loved Minnie, as far as I know. She was very capable, and she was very well-liked, and highly respected. She had a lot of good ideas.

Williams But when she first walked in the door, people didn't know her.

Buffham Well, maybe, I wasn't there then.

Williams Okay.

Buffham I mean, the Chinese operation obviously existed before I became Chief of 23. I went down there when the Korean War started. Then I took my ideas of management, and the structure, and what things should be like when I went down there. As a matter of fact, Hank Herzog was my deputy, and one of my...the head of...we didn't have what later became like O5's on reporting things, but I had become interested in that aspect in

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And Milt Zaslow was a young fellow at that time. He had been a Chinese...or Japanese linguist. They'd end up in the oriental part of the operation. I got with Milt, and that's when we first started sort of an O5 reporting operation. That was, as far as I know, the first time it had ever been done in NSA. But I digressed; we were talking about

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Minnie.

Williams

Well, yeah.

Buffham

But she was very highly regarded when I got there.

Williams

So, she was there before...

Buffham

And whether there had been any problems before that, I'm not...

Williams

She was there when you arrived. Okay. Dr. Tordella...what was he like?

Buffham

Dr. Tordella...well, of course, he's an engineer to start with, and engineer and mathematician. Can up sort of on the R&D and Collection side of the house. During the war he had been out at Bainbridge Island in a big Navy intercept station at Bainbridge. And he came from there back to the Naval Security Group. He was involved in the early development of a lot of the collection type of equipment. When I first got to know him, which was in 1948--that's the area he was involved in--I met him...he and I went to what was called a BRUSA, a British-U.S. conference, in 1948. Colonel Hayes, who was the Chief of ASA went, and at that time Captain--later Admiral--Wenger, the Navy people, and we had a delegation of maybe fifteen or so people, seven or eight from the Navy, and seven or eight from the Army. It was kind of funny because they split up the committee responsibilities. So lo and behold, I ended up as the head of the Collection Committee, so Dr. Tordella was the deputy of that committee, so we got to know each other very well. But any time a very technical question came up, I always deferred to Dr. Tordella because he was an expert, and we couldn't go wrong with him. So we got to be very good friends as a result of that. I was always very close to him, probably more biased towards him than most people in NSA. Some of my peer group would say he was too conservative. You know, Dr. Tordella was known by many people as Doctor "No" because every time you sprang a new idea on him, he would have reservations, and what not. But I think we were very very fortunate to have him and for him to become Deputy Director, and he was the first really career NSA person to become Deputy Director. When they talk about Ream and Engstrom who preceded him, they really weren't career people. They never had worked in the agency as civilians before being selected. So he had sort of come up through the ranks, if you will, and was a career cryptologist. He was conservative. He insisted on things being right before he accepted them, but it was probably a good thing because we probably had a lot of wild ideas at that time too.

Williams

And that was a difficult time. I mean, we were just organizing. We not only had to organize internally, but in reading through the archives there were tremendous disputes between the Navy, the Army, who's going to do what, and...so that...and the Air Force came along, so I mean, it was a painful growing period.

Buffham Right, it was. And, of course, he didn't become Deputy Director until the mid fifties. I guess it was around 1955 or '56 that he became Deputy Director. So he...well, he became Deputy Director, I guess, when General Sanford was Director? Would it have been that late? I'd have to go back and (1-2G) we're right. But anyway, it was somewhere in the mid-fifties, because when General Canine was the Director, of course, we had Admiral Wenger, and we had General (B% Ackerman), and then when Sanford became the Director, I guess maybe he had Ream and Engstrom at first, but then Tordella came in, and it must have been around late 1956--or later than that, '57--because I went...see, when he became Deputy Director it was just at the time that I went to Germany as the Chief of NCEUR, and I was Chief NCEUR from '58 to '60, so it must have been later than '55 or '56. It was later than that, maybe. But anyway, I know a lot of my peers felt he was a little bit too conservative. I think it was a role he had to play.

Williams At that time.

Buffham Yeah, it was the right role at that time, and it was...the wonderful thing for NSA, I think, was the fact that it was the first time we had a career NSA employee become Deputy Director, and in those days I think the Deputy Director was maybe more important than the Deputy Director is today. I don't know, some of these later-on organizations confuse me a little bit, so maybe I don't quite understand the structure as well as I did, but when Dr. Tordella was Deputy Director, and when I was Deputy Director, the Deputy Director was a pretty important figure; had a lot of authority and responsibility. Well, some of that was, of course, the Director that you worked for (1-2G), but as they changed the organizational structure later on it seemed to me that they sort of watered down the role of the Deputy Director.

Williams Now, when you were Deputy Director--and we're jumping ahead--you had a Chief of Staff, right?

Buffham No. We had no Chief of Staff.

Williams You didn't have a Chief of Staff?

Buffham No, no Chief of Staff.

Williams And no Executive Director?

Buffham No.

Williams So, who was third?

Buffham There wasn't any third. There was only a one and a two.

Williams A one and a two. And you had your DD's, deputy...I mean...

Buffham That's right.

Williams DDO, DDT.

Buffham Yeah. We had the Deputy Director for COMSEC, and the Deputy Director for Operations. We had a Deputy Director for Research and Development. And we had Assistant Directors at the staff. Staff was all the assistant directors, and line heads were deputy directors, and we just had a Director and a Deputy Director, so when the Director wasn't there, there was only one person; that as me. If I wasn't there, there was only one person; (B% it was him). We didn't have exec's or chief of staff. Well, maybe that's a good way to organize. I don't know. So there was only one dep...I was the Deputy Director, and Dr. Tordella was a Deputy Director, but the other people were Deputy for Research and Development, or Deputy for Operations. They weren't the Deputy Director. There's only one Deputy Director. There's only one DDIR. That was Dr. Tordella. The only thing that probably Dr. Tordella might have regretted is that he probably stayed on as Deputy Director a little longer than he should have. It's like J. Edgar Hoover, he should have quit when he was ahead instead...(cut off)

Williams Why do you think that?

Buffham Why? I don't think he wanted to leave while things were in a flux. Of course, he served under so many Directors. Gosh, it must have been about seven or eight Directors, at least, that he served under.

Williams He was Deputy Director for 15-20 years?

Buffham Sixteen, I think.

Williams Sixteen years!

Buffham So, let's see. I became deputy in '74, so he probably became Deputy Director in '58. But anyway, I think also, just to be candid, I think he would have probably retired when Admiral Gaylor was Director, but I don't think he trusted Gaylor to make a proper selection for a replacement.

Williams Well, I appreciate that.

Buffham And I think there were two or three of us that were probably in the running to be Deputy Director when I was selected, and I would say he thought all of us were pretty good. He might have favored me a little bit over the other two, but the other two were pretty good people. And it wasn't his ultimate decision to make, but he had...(cut off)

Williams He was (1-2G) his part.

Buffham But I think he would have left a little earlier if he trusted the selection process. I think when he left he did trust the selection process. I think he would have been happy with me, or maybe one or two other people. He

would have been unhappy with some other people.

Williams

You were the first...you came back from Europe...

Buffham

Yup. Came back from Europe, and it GENS, and then the agency was reorganized, and then I went from GENS, which disappeared, it became part of A. If you recall, A Group was really composed of GENS and AFSA, so when GENS and AFSA disappeared to become A, obviously there was some redundancy, and they were forming the Inspector General position at that time, and so I went on and became the Inspector General, the IG.

Williams

Now, was that a Congressional mandate that an IG be formed?

Buffham

No. It wasn't a Congressional mandate. I think it basically came within the agency itself. I think if there was any model for it, it was probably the fact that CIA had set up a very powerful IG operation, and their IG at the time of the Cuban missile crisis played a very important role in the subsequent analysis of what had gone wrong in their...the agency's operations during the Cuban missile crisis. An IG certainly became something that everybody was looking at at the time. So when...they were making a pretty massive reorganization at NSA and at that time decided they ought to set up a IG shop, and actually I was given a pretty free hand in designing what would be the organization responsibilities of the IG. We had a lot of security implications. My deputy was Dave (B% Velyle) who had been a very senior guy in the security organization, and Al (B% Grooms) had also been a very senior in that, but we formed...I insisted on forming a strong operational part of the IG and got three young people from operations who I felt were pretty outstanding: Gerry Burke, Bill Kvetkas, and Harry Donahue all came from operations, and one guy from the R&D organization, whose name I can't remember. But we had a cross-section of the whole agency in the IG operation as we formed it, and we did operational surveys of the various elements of NSA, which is why we would go into the R&D organization, for example, and do an audit of everything that was going on in one of the divisions of R&D, and do the same thing in COMSEC, and the same thing in Operations. The goal wasn't to find somebody at fault. The goal was to go in and see what was being done, and to see if there were ways that the operation could be improved. Not a question just of personnel, but of the mission, the whole thing that was going on, you know, make a very complete audit of what was happening, and come up with a series of recommendations which were designed to improve it. Sometimes the recommendations would be to replace people, but more basically, really, it was to help them get a proper structure, help them to get the proper manning, help them to get the proper talents and what not. That's the IG operation as I envisioned it at that time.

Williams

Anyhow, did you get the...when you would make a recommendation as

the IG, did you get strong support from your Director? I mean, you responded...you reported to the Director. Did you get strong support, and were the recommendations implemented?

Buffham Yes. We got very strong support...Admiral Frost was the Director at that time, and Dr. Tordella was the Deputy Director. We had a lot of problems at that time with the Security Organization, and the Chief of Security was replaced.

Williams Was that how you became aware of the Dunlop case, or that incident?

Buffham Well, yeah, because Velyle and Grooms worked for him, and we had another guy from the security organization. So yeah, and I knew a lot about what was going on in the Security Organization because the people I was working with were from security.

Williams The Chief of Security was replaced, or did he stay in the agency, or did he resign?

Buffham He resigned--Reynolds. He was...(cut off)

Williams He was ineffective or...?

Buffham Well, let's say, yeah, [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] He was actually...his name was Wes Reynolds, and General Canine had hired him. He had asked Mr. Hoover to recommend one of his senior people as the Director of Security for NSA, and Hoover recommended Reynolds. And Reynolds did technically a very good job. At that time was the first time they were setting up for industry to do a lot of classified projects, primarily hardware being built for the agency, but fairly far-reaching. And Reynolds and his staff--but principally Reynolds--set all the industrial security standards for handling NSA types of material. So he did a very good job in that. But actually, I guess [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted] I think we found a lot of things wrong in the R&D setup when I was the IG, and we made some major recommendations there that probably were sort of instrumental in getting Mr. Matthews, Mit Matthews, made the Chief of R&D.

Williams Were you aware--getting back to the Black History Project--were you aware of concerns on the part of the Black workforce...of the Black population of the workforce at that time in the late fifties, early sixties that they seemed to be limited in their opportunities because they were assigned, for the most part, to (B% INPRO) or the processing arm of...at that time it would have been NSA-53 or...they were just limited. I mean, there were a few that had gotten out and were doing things, but most hadn't.

Buffham The job that I was involved in at that time didn't permit me to make that kind of analysis or bring that to my attention very much, but I wouldn't be sur...I mean, I'm not surprised that there would be that kind of feeling, because the restrictions originally, I think...well, obviously, you know, in today's light they were very improper. The only thing I can say for the agency was I think the agency was doing a lot better than most agencies and was actually pretty aggressive in opening up new channels and new possibilities for African-Americans. I knew more about that when I became Deputy Director because I had several senior African-Americans come and see me and talk to me about opportunities for them in NSA. And I agreed with them.

Williams So, you didn't delve into that as the IG?

Buffham Not as IG. Didn't get into it while I was in the IG. We would have gotten into it if any African-Americans had come to us, but none came to us at the time. Now, later on several Black Americans, like Doroithia Smith, were assigned to the IG, and I think that would probably be a good thing in that she would...had people come to her in her official capacity and make complaints and point out things that were happening.

Williams I have two questions: was she the first Black to be assigned to the IG's office?

Buffham As far as I know she was, but I'm not positive. But as far as I know, she was.

Williams And when I was in the...(cut off)

Buffham I think there's a...do you get that (B% Big Mac) letter?

Williams Big Mac?

Buffham Friendly IG, and...

Williams Oh!

Buffham There is a letter that is put out, and I've gotten several copies of it,...

Williams Really? No.

Buffham ...sort of keeping people up-to-date on personnel changes and what's going on. It's unclassified.

Williams No. Maybe it just goes to former IG's.

Buffham I don't think so. Let's see if I have a copy of it. (TR Note: recorder shut off momentarily here)

Williams (cut in) I'm going to say what we were talking about. I was asking Mr. Buffham about the role of the IG as being a representative of the workforce when somebody thought that they had problems, at least to inves-

tigate what the issues were.

Buffham But I think that's what you normally think of for the IG, and we certainly did that. But we also wanted to make sure that the role of the IG was that they could go in any part of the organization and audit it to see if there was something going on that could be improved, and we looked at both the personnel, and looked at the organization, we looked at the manning, looked at all the...every aspect of the unit, and then we filed a report, which we would send not only to the unit, but to the chain-of-command. Now, whether they still do that or not in the IG, I don't know.

Williams They do. They still do that. Did your reports get out in a fairly timely fashion because that's one of the concerns...or it was one of the concerns when I was in the IG's Office. It took a long time for the reports to get out.

Buffham Well, I thought they got out pretty fast, of course we didn't...we were just starting...(TR Note: audio temporarily out here)

Williams (cut in) Okay, we were talking about Black concerns with security during the height...well, during the fifties and sixties when Security certainly had a mission to prosecute. But was there...do you think that Security perhaps focused on Black Americans from the aspect of they would be likely targets because of their position in American society, that they would be likely targets for conversion or for attracting to that (B% side)?

Buffham I don't have any information on that. I'm not aware of that.

Williams I'm thinking, you know, much like labor unions that...okay.

Buffham The Black Power Movement or something?

Williams And the Black Power Movement, and so forth.

Buffham I'm not aware of anything.

Williams You didn't...when you investigated Security, that didn't come up? Okay. And after you left the IG's Office, what did you do, Mr. Buffham?

Buffham I became the Exec for (1G) in the Production Organization. General Davis was the chief, and Ollie Kirby was the deputy, and I was the number three man in the office there. I was there for about a year, maybe a little longer, and then I became Chief of A after that. Mr. (B% Conley) moved...Mr. Conley was always hollering about Personnel and how the personnel people weren't supporting him properly, so they moved him to Personnel, which was good for me because then I became Chief of A which was a really good job to have at the time. So I became Chief of A, and that is, of course, where I met Jim Pryde doing an important job in A4 at the time.

Williams Yes. Now, this would have been about '63 or '64?

Buffham Ah, Chief of A? Probably 1964 or later.

Williams And at that time Mr. Pryde was probably Deputy Division Chief?

Buffham I think so.

Williams He was Deputy Division Chief of A4...I want to say A44, maybe.

Buffham Well, we had a special mechanism set up that time, (B% remember)? We set up a special unit with DIA. It was a mixed unit; we had a deputy chief from DEFSMAC, and then the chief was from NSA, and the deputy was from Defense, Jim Pryde. I guess he...didn't he eventually become chief of that?

Williams He did. He eventually became chief.

Buffham He was...he's from DEFSMAC. But that's...he was in that organization. Because it was kind of a funny organization, I can't remember exactly what position he first occupied when I met him, but he was in it and eventually worked his way up to being chief.

Williams Yeah. Were there other Blacks? You became aware of Minnie Kenny, and by this time I'm not sure where Minnie Kenny is, but in GENS-5, are there...?(cut off)

Buffham She stayed, I guess, she stayed in...she would have been in B Group at that time.

Williams She was in B Group, that's right.

Buffham Because I later became Chief of B. When the Southeast Asian War broke out they moved me from A to B. I get to go do all the wars!

Williams Okay. All right.

Buffham But basically, I spent several years as Chief of A, and that was a real good job.

Williams You were Chief of A when I arrived in the Agency. (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36

Buffham Was I?

Williams Yeah, because that was '64. And I worked for [redacted] in A45, and then I moved to A43, and I'm not sure who was the chief of that. I thought it was--and I'm going to let this go on tape, but I'm just going to make this observation--I was uncomfortable, and I thought it was very strange that they take this youngster right out of college, a young female right out of college, and they put me in A45, which was responsible for writing the reports on the activity. Now, how are you going to write the report if you didn't have a clue? I know nothing about missiles, and space activity, and so forth, but they put me at the end of the process. And I requested to go back into A43 which is at the beginning of

the process, so I could understand, and I could learn, and that was the right thing for me to do. But it was a dumb decision to take somebody out of college, especially a female with no military experience.

Buffham Did Amato do that?

Williams That's how I was assigned when I came into the Agency.

Buffham You didn't go through an intern program?

Williams They didn't have an intern program at that time, and that's where I was assigned. Because then, as I said last night...(cut off)

Buffham You could have done very well on some tests (1G).

Williams Well, English was my major, so I scored well on the writing test, and that's where they plopped me, but you can't write well if you don't understand it.

Buffham I agree.

Williams And then the intern program opened up, and they let...because when I...the intern program started in '65, this reincarnation of the intern program. I think there were a number of intern programs. This one started in '65, and you had to be coming out of college to participate. Well, I was already here, and there was a lot of...there was a huge outcry because the interns had opportunities that those of us who were on-board didn't have, and so forth and so on, so they opened up the intern program to on-board employees, and I applied, and I was in that group that went into the one intern program. And that is where I met Minnie Kenny. I was an intern working in B Group...B12, and Minnie was...I'm sure she was on staff or she was (1-2G) or something. Um, but enough about me. This is not about me; this is about you. So you stayed in A Group for some time, and you came across Jim Pryde. Now, you were certainly aware of Herman Phynes.

Buffham Oh, yeah. He was in G Group at that time.

Williams He was in G Group. And are there other...?(cut off)

Buffham And I think Bill Coffee might have been in G Group too.

Williams I don't think so because I used to see Bill...I would think he was in A Group because I would see him in that A4...(cut off)

Buffham No, he might have been in A1 at that time.

Williams He might have been.

Buffham He might have been in A1. You know who would know, Chris would know.

Williams Chris would know. Because...

Buffham (3-4G)

Williams Because I used to see him in the corridor where A Group's offices seemed to have been concentrated. That's where I would see Dorothea.

Buffham Dorothea Smith?

Williams Yes. She was in that area. She was a beautiful girl. Very attractive.

Buffham Yeah. Very fine. She died quite suddenly.

Williams Yes. Had cancer.

Buffham When I was...shortly after being Chief of A, she came up to brief me on something. That was the first time I really (3-4B).

Williams Oh, is that right.

Buffham Some problem had come up that she was handling, so she came up to the office, and we had about an hour or two while she ran over the problem. She was very impressive.

Williams That's what I was getting at. Were there other Blacks that impressed you, Sir, as...

Buffham (B% Mostly)...Jim Pryde (2-3B).

Williams Certainly Jim Pryde.

Buffham Those are the two that stand out to me when I was in A Group.

Williams Dorothea and Jim Pryde. And then you moved to B Group.

Buffham Then I moved to B Group, and I was there probably about another two or three years in B Group. Then, let's see...then I became Deputy Chief of Prod. I think that's what they called it, Deputy Chief of Prod.

Williams Who was the chief at that time?

Buffham General Morrison.

Williams Oh, yeah, yeah. I talked to him...he called looking for Tom Johnson just the other day, and I picked up the phone.

Buffham He was the chief, and I was the deputy, and then, I think, I went to as rep to the Pentagon as NSAREP Defense.

Williams And were you the first in that position?

Buffham Milt Zaslow was.

Williams Milt Zaslow.

Buffham Zaslow had gone down, and he served a year there, then I went down and served a year. When I left there, I went up to become the Assistant Director for Resources Management--they called it then--and the Comptroller. Well, it's bigger than that. What was the...(B% I had a...) One of the division chiefs was very impressive...Black...(TR Note: pause here while Buffham looks for something) We had a structure there of, I think, three line divisions, and I selected Al to be the head of one of the divisions. He was the first Black to become a division chief. He had maybe about 125 or so people working for him. It was a good thing to do, I felt. I think he did it very well. (1-2G) told me he died.

Williams Yes, he did. He died; I don't know when, but yes, he's deceased.

Buffham He was very, very capable, very, very impressive. Had a marvelous vocabulary and was very articulate; very smart, and a golfer.

Williams And a golfer! What more can you say!

Buffham When I became Deputy Director we...opening day at Fort Meade and Al Coleman, and Jack Harney, and myself, and somebody else were the opening foursomes.

Williams So from there, is that when you became Deputy Director?

Buffham Let's see...that could be. I can't remember any other job before that. I guess I became Deputy Director after that.

Williams And your Director was Admiral Inman?

Buffham No, it was General Allen. General Allen was the Director, and when he left he was replaced by Inman, and Inman came in. Then I was with Inman for about a year, and then...so I've been the Deputy Director for a little over four years.

Williams Wow! That's a long time.

Buffham I didn't want to do what I felt was Tordella's one mistake which was staying on for a long time, and I talked to Inman. It wasn't a good thing for me to retire right then because the retirement process was such, I would benefit by staying on for a couple more years. So I suggested I go to London and that Bob Drake replace me, and Inman said that was good. He would agree and support that. Since I had been appointed by the Deputy Secretary of Defense...by the Secretary of Defense (TR Note: corrects himself), I had to get relief from the Secretary of Defense, so I wrote a letter to the Secretary of Defense and said I had Admiral Inman's support, and I (2-3G/B). It was okay. So then I went to London for the last two years.

Williams And that was a...I understand that's a wonderful assignment.

Buffham It's very nice. I enjoyed that.

Williams Who would you expect to see if we had an exhibit of...in the museum on Blacks who contributed to the mission over the years? From your perspective, who would you expect to see in that exhibit? Jim Pryde.

Buffham Oh, of course Jim Pryde. Well, the ones that I mentioned. I think Al Coleman was very outstanding. There were a couple of Blacks in the R&D Organization--engineers--who...

Williams Yes, we've not talked about them.

Buffham ...were very, very good, and I can't remember (B% the people) (2G). We've got Al Coleman's name, but there were a couple of very outstanding guys in the R&D Organization.

Williams Let me help you out, if I can. The names that come to mind are: Carroll Robinson, whom we just talked to.

Buffham Yeah. Did you?

Williams Yes, we did. And [redacted]

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Buffham Yup. I know both of them.

Williams Okay, okay. Now, there was another individual [redacted] we want to talk to in a couple weeks, but he worked with [redacted] but Fred and Carroll are the names...they immediately come to mind.

Buffham Yeah, right. Those are names that (B% I know), especially Carroll.

Williams Okay. He was the first African-American in a super grade. Jim Pryde surpassed him. Jim got a, I think, a (GS)-17, and Carroll was a -16.

Buffham Yeah, I know Jim. He was a 17 when he was head of DEFSMAC.

Williams Right. And Carroll retired as a 16. Carroll had (2-3G). Ah, let me see.

Buffham Although...those are the people I would think of, and Ralph Edwards.

Williams Ralph Adams. Ralph Edwards, the television guy, and there's Ralph Adams.

Buffham Right. Adams, Ralph Adams. Certainly Ralph Adams. He must have been (1G) an 18.

Williams Well, we went to this new system, Senior Cryptologic...and you don't...he certainly was that.

Buffham And I don't know...yeah. I would think he was at the...what we would call the 18 level.

Williams Right, he was. Okay. I'm just writing down these names so that I don't forget them.

Buffham Doroithia Smith, I think she was a 14 when I knew her last, but I don't

know if she went on and got higher grades or not.

Williams I really don't know what she retired as. It's unfortunate that this project started as late as it did. That...(cut off)

Buffham Well, you have Minnie Kenny should be on that list.

Williams Oh, yeah.

Buffham She must have been...she must have been on (2-3G).

Williams She was a senior. She was a senior exec. Yes, she was. Minnie retired as...she retired from the Director of EEO. That was her position. Prior to that she had been Deputy DDA. I will tell you that...I'm sure there were other factors contributing to Minnie's decision to retire, but I think a big factor was the fact that the EEO Office, which is responsible for investigating alleged wrongdoings and discrimination and so forth anywhere in the agency, it appeared that the EEO Office was subordinate to the Chief of Personnel, or to the...like Human Resources, like DDA, and previously the EEO Office, like the IG's Office, was a dotted line from the Director. You can't have an investigative body with that kind of responsibility that's subordinate to a key component, and Minnie protested that, and it didn't work out.

Buffham I think maybe her husband's health (B% might) at the time (2-3G).

Williams Well, he passed before she retired.

Buffham I know, but he must have had some physical problems.

Williams Oh, yeah.

Buffham Let me just call and...

Williams Okay. (TR Note: recorder shut off here) There you go. Do you care to share with me more...anything. Any observations about your career and things that you would like to be remembered, or something funny, something significant?

Buffham Is the machine still on?

Williams The machine's on, yeah.

Buffham Oh, okay. Well, I think we've done...

Williams Have we done a good job?

Buffham I think we've done a pretty good job. I'm not sure I got everything chronologically straight, you know, because I really hadn't thought about this ahead of time, so everything is sort of off the top of head, so dates and things may not really check out exactly right. But I think we went through most of the highlights of where I had been assigned and what

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not. I think that's about it for now.

Williams

You had some really important jobs. What was...when you were Chief of A Group--let's go back--the Chief of A, the Chief of B, and Deputy Director, what were some tough--one or two--tough issues that you had to grapple with? Something that stands out.

Buffham

Yeah. I'm trying to see, I mean, we had a lot of disappointments due to lack of technical success. The main thing we were always trying to do was to widen out our exploitation, and there's a lot of bureaucracy in NSA to overcome, so some of these were management problems that were pretty severe. Ah, nothing very specific comes to mind right now. I was trying to think back in the Vietnamese War, we had some tough technical problems, like the Tonkin Gulf problem. SIGINT was very important in trying to determine exactly what happened in the Tonkin Gulf and the intentions of the Vietnamese towards our forces. And I'd say, from the technical standpoint, that one of the most difficult things that we had. Going back to the Korean War, I guess, one of our big problems in the Korean War was linguists. We had a fantastic amount of material that we couldn't handle because of the language problems. And, of course, on the Soviet problem the big problem was the [redacted]

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[redacted] in those problems as we wanted to. I guess also we've always had a lot of problems with CIA. Most of them they worked out pretty successfully, but I guess early on we had a lot of turf problems with the people from CIA, and that occupied a lot of time trying to get those straightened out. From what I understand today, things are in pretty good shape, but those were major problems. We've always had difficulties in drawing the line as to where NSA's handling of material stops and when the intelligence agencies responsibilities begin, and I guess when you go back in the early history of NSA, people from the intelligence agencies wanted to draw that line at a level of exploitation that wasn't really acceptable to us. So we had lots of problems, lots of battles with the intelligence community as to just what the NSA responsibilities should be. I think one of the best things we ever did was to establish the cryptologic support groups--CSG's--and I think I had a lot to do with establishing those and really getting NSA expertise at a point in the commands and in the intelligence agencies where our people could make their maximum contribution.

Williams

When did that happen, Mr. Buffham?

Buffham

CSG's really, I suppose, started in the late sixties, early seventies. It was a continuing process. I mean, first we were able to establish groups like with the unified commands, because as distinct from the Army and Navy, the Air Force, or CIA, or State, the commands didn't have a structure that fed them the intelligence very well. So our first CSG's were sort of at that kind of level and down with the JCS to provide NSA

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expertise. As far back...we really started doing things along those lines back in the late fifties. When I was Chief NSAEUR we started putting people down at the J2 EUCOM level. That's where people like Gerry Burke got a start working with the J2 of a unified command, so we could have somebody who was really knowledgeable about SIGINT and what SIGINT could provide and what it couldn't provide; someone to advise the command and to see that the structure of information flowing to the command was the best that NSA could offer, the best SIGINT structure. It sort of started off by putting the integrated people in, but eventually that evolved into having their own little NSA CSG. And I think that's been one of the...I don't know whether the CSG's still exist or not.

Williams

Oh, yes!

Buffham

Oh, they do?

Williams

Oh, yes, and they're creating more. They just created a CSG--that's been in the past 2 years--at FBI. Yeah, and people demand it. I mean, when they get to using NSA's product and so forth, they want a CSG.

Buffham

So that all started, and there were a lot of battles in establishing that kind of thing, and the...like the NSA participation, which I still hope goes on down at the White House Sit Room, you know.

Williams

Yes, that's very strong.

Buffham

Those were activities that I supported very strongly.

Williams

And I'll tell you the other thing is, as a SOO--did they have SOO's when you were there--Senior Operations Officer in NSOC?

Buffham

Yeah.

Williams

Okay. Well, as a SOO, we relied on the CSG's to give us information...tip us to what was going on in the community they were supporting, and that was very useful to me, especially the CSG at State. We would contact the CSG at CIA, the CSG in the Pentagon, because our Director, General Minihan...we would brief him every morning, and General Minihan wanted to know what was being said, what was the thinking of the customer, so that was good. CSG's are a very strong force.

Buffham

Yeah, that's good.

Williams

As a Deputy Director, you worked for a couple of different Directors. How...General Inman was described as being brilliant.

Buffham

Admiral Inman.

Williams

I'm sorry. Admiral Inman...as being brilliant. Talk a little bit about the...your interaction with him, and your perceptions, and so forth.

Buffham Well, first I'll start with General Allen. I was his deputy for three years, and he was a very brilliant man too. He's a Ph.D. in Nuclear Physics, and after he left NSA, he eventually became Chief of Staff of the Air Force and then the Director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratories.

Williams I didn't know that history. I'm sorry.

Buffham So, those are pretty impressive achievements.

Williams Yes, they are. Yes they are.

Buffham When he left NSA, he became head of the Air Force Systems Command, and then he became the Vice Chief of the Air Force and then became the Chief of the Air Force. But he was...came to NSA out of the NRO background. He would have been very much involved in all the satellite activities, and that, of course, is where he got into intelligence, and then when Dr. Schlesinger was the Director of CIA, he brought General Allen over to be one of his special assistants. Then when Schlesinger became Secretary of Defense, he was instrumental in having Allen be the Director of NSA. But he was a very intelligent guy and very well organized. I remember when I...first being Deputy Director, we had a long session, and he wrote down all the responsibilities he could think of--of the Director--and then he said, I'll take these as my primary responsibilities, and you take these as your primary responsibilities, which was a very neat way of dividing up the pie. Well, he obviously wanted to play the major role in terms of relationships with the military services like that, but he thought the Deputy Director should play the major role with respect, let's say, to second and third party affairs, right? So, he would look to me to take care of that end of things and so on.

Williams What about internal management of the agency? Was that left to the Deputy Directors "for something" or...who had primary oversight in your partnership for the internal happenings?

Buffham Well, I'd say that was a shared responsibility. We did that together. (TR Note: a telephone rings here and Buffham answers it. Recorder shut off momentarily)

Williams Okay. So...

Buffham As far as the internal management, we both participated in that. Of course, the Director, he's the Director. He has the ultimate decision. And a lot of things people don't think it's important enough to bring up to the Director, but I'll bring it to the Deputy Director. Of course...I don't know if it still exists, but there was also an important mechanism set up when Doctor Tordella was Deputy Director for the handling of the R&D projects there was a monthly meeting, and all the R&D projects were reviewed, and the Deputy Director was responsible for giving approval, or disapproving, these projects. That would be...that certainly was man-

agement, you know, very strong (1B). That was one area where the Director left it up pretty much to the Deputy Director, and I don't know whether they still they continue that procedure or not.

Williams

I don't know either.

Buffham

But because everything structurally has changed, they may have a different way of handling that. But Allen was one of our very finest Directors, I think. And then I was deputy to Inman for a year. A lot of that year was a learning process for him, because, as you know, NSA is a pretty large, vast complex structure, and Inman, although he spent his entire career in intelligence and had had a tour in Naval Intelligence at Fort Meade, still didn't know a lot of what was going on at Fort Meade. So, we spent a lot of time getting used to the people, the problems etcetera of NSA. But Inman was a very strong person, and he wanted to run the agency, and I felt personally that I was kind of a problem in the sense that I had been there forever and knew everybody and knew every...the Deputy Director knows everything, obviously. And he wanted to run the ship, so I thought, personally, I'd been there four years; Mike sort of believed that if you're going to make a contribution to something, you make it in the first three or four years, and after that you're not really going to be making that much of a contribution. You're going to be just going along with the flow. So that was the reason I said, Why don't I go off to London for a couple of years and let you really run things the way you want to run them. So that was a good solution for both of us. We're both on excellent terms. I've always been a good friend of his, and he's been an excellent friend of mine. We correspond. The Inmans have been here with us. We've had many invitations to go to Austin to visit with them, but it just hasn't worked out for us, but I always...he's a very brilliant guy, very very smart, very very hard-working, very very dedicated. But I think he would probably want a somewhat weaker Deputy Director than it was possible for me to be for the circumstances. Not to say that the people that succeeded me as deputy--like Bob Drake and Ann Caracristi--were in any sense weak people, because they are not. They're both terrific people, but a little bit different, maybe, than...you know. And probably I was too...I'd been Chief of Collection, and Chief of A, and Chief of B, and I'd always been the chief of all...you know, for the last 20 years or so of my career in NSA. I'd always been the chief of something, so I like to run things, or I did like to run things. I'm very relaxed now. I'm enjoying it very much and always have. So I think it worked out well. And Inman, as I say...both these guys were terrific guys. I think highly of both.

Williams

Mr. Buffham, you were...(cut off)

Buffham

I think they both probably did excellent jobs.

Williams

Who was...some would say that as Deputy Director...(TR Note: tele-

phone rings here again. Recorder shut off while Buffham answers the phone.) Okay, here we go. Um, you said that there were some African Americans that came to see you to talk about their concerns when you were Deputy Director. Who were they...(TR Note: telephone rings once again! Recorder shut off again.) You said that there were some African Americans that came to see you about their concerns. Who were they, and what were their concerns?

Buffham It was Carroll.

Williams Carroll Robinson? Okay.

Buffham Yeah. Well, he came up really to sort of establish communication and to hope that I would be interested and concerned about the Black Americans working in NSA and really...but they just wanted to make sure they got a fair shake, and they hoped that I would do everything I could to ensure that. And that was Carroll and maybe one or two other guys from the R&D Organization, as I recall.

Williams And as the result of that, did you do anything in particular, or did you watch over it? I mean, how did you respond?

Buffham Well, I responded particularly with respect to the promotion panels, because the...I don't know if it does any more, but the Deputy Director used to have to approve all the promotions to, I think it was, GS-12, -13, -14, those levels.

Williams I don't think those levels. I think it's now maybe -14, -15 (1-2B).

Buffham Well, the Director got to see all the -15's and, of course, all the super grades, but the Director...Deputy Director did those. But as I recall, there were three grades that I...that all came to me for review, so I got the recommendations from all of the promotion panels and the personnel people and the recommendations to me, and then we'd look at the list. Frequently, of a fairly substantial list there would not be any Black people being promoted, or maybe just one or two, and so we'd have to have a review of that. Several times I asked the boards to reconvene and make sure that they had considered all of the candidates. And I probably shouldn't have done this, but a couple of times I said, Well, unless we have a couple of African Americans on the list, there's not going to be a list. So then they'd generally go back (B% for a list). That's probably not something I should have done, but I just felt I should do it anyway. So, in that sense, I was trying to be responsible.

Williams Well, I appreciate that.

Buffham But we're not supposed to deal with folders and things like that.

Williams No, we aren't, but it's hard to believe that when you're looking over a large population that you can't find...that there are none out there that

meet your qualifications.

Buffham

That's exactly what I'm telling (1G). And then, of course, where they'd say there are some, but they're not as high a priority as these, you know, (B% because they will) make two or three more. I (B% hope it) worked out. I think it did.

Williams

Well, we're better than we were. I can't think of anything else that we could explore. I really can't. I really appreciate your time, and I took a lot of your time, so this has been a very great interview, and I really appreciate it, and thank you.

Buffham

Well, good. It worked out well.

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