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(U)Cryptologic Almanac 50th Anniversary Series

(U)Ralph J. Canine

(U) There is a story that one Sunday, General Canine was wandering about Arlington Hall in mufti and attempted to enter one of the offices. As was the rule in those days, there was a desk just inside the door with a person seated there as a security guard. In this case, the lady performing this duty did not recognize Canine and refused to allow him to enter. When he asked her if she knew who he was, she replied, "I don't care who you are; I don't know you, and you're not coming in here!" Canine promoted her the next day.

(U) Ralph J. Canine was born in 1895 (the only director from the nineteenth century) in Flora, Indiana, one of two children of the local superintendent of schools. When he left home, he was intent on becoming a doctor and had completed pre-med studies at Northwestern University when he entered World War I as an Army second lieutenant. He knew immediately that the Army would be his life, and he never had a second thought about a medical career. He served in various combat posts in France and elected to stay in the Army after the armistice was signed in 1918. The interwar period (1919-1941) was his education, when he traveled from one Army post to another, filling just about any job that was vacant. When World War II broke out, Canine was well fitted for responsibility. He became the chief of staff for the XII Corps, which served in George Patton's Third Army during its historic race across France in 1944. After the war he was rewarded with command of the First Infantry Division, one of the most prestigious of Army jobs.

(U) When, as a major general, Canine was appointed first director of NSA in 1952, he found the Army, Navy, and Air Force cryptologic organizations moving in different directions and often operating at cross purposes. Canine is known today as the Great Unifier -- the man who, almost single-handedly, forced the services to accept the beginning of centralized control of cryptologic operation. His term at NSA, from 1952 to 1956, became the crucible for this centralization. When he left the Army and NSA as a lieutenant general, he had become a figure of mythic stature.

(U) This bluff, profane, no-nonsense Army general was just what the new organization needed. He ruthlessly worked to squash dissent among the services and to force them into a centralized system, and he fought for computer and communications resources to make the new organization effective. To make sure that everyone realized that a new man was in charge, he rearranged all the desks at Arlington Hall Station -- by color. But if he appeared autocratic to his opponents, to the NSA workforce he was a hero. He increased hiring,

created an elevated civilian grade structure with better promotion opportunities, sent NSAers to senior service schools, initiated the college tuition payment program, worked for congressional passage of new hiring and security authorities, and forged ahead with the plan to move NSA out of borrowed quarters at Arlington Hall and Naval Security Station, and into its own new building at Fort Meade.

(U) Canine never occupied the director's office at Fort Meade, but everyone knew who was responsible for it, and when a new building (Headquarters building) was opened in 1963, Canine did the dedication. He died unexpectedly of a pulmonary embolism in 1969.

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