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The Civilianization of Harrogate

Why It Was Done

By [redacted] (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36

The rationale for staffing [redacted] stations with civilians is an old and familiar one: Civilian operation is a way of retaining the services of operators and other specialists who learned their trade in uniform but do not choose a full-length military career.

Although the value of the experience possessed by career civilians has never been gainsaid, there have been arguments on the other side of the question: Civilian operation is costlier and it undermines the morale of Service operators who get less pay and have less freedom than civilians performing similar jobs.

Those objections were voiced against a sizable experiment with civilian operators in the middle and late 50's, when the "civops" were assigned to several stations where they shared similar if not identical duties with military men. The program was abandoned, although significant remnants found their way into NSA operational support elements in the Pacific and European theaters.

The idea gained new life in August 1965 when the Department of Defense canvassed all its activities looking for jobs where civilians could take the place of servicemen. The object was to free troops for Viet Nam.

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After [redacted] Harrogate was selected, the Director of Defense Research and Engineering—Secretary McNamara's adviser for [redacted]—speculated that civilian operation of that station could cost as much as [redacted] a year more than the military operation.

But, he said, "the important point . . . is whether the [redacted] operations can be improved by using NSA career civilian personnel. The top . . . experts of NSA are convinced that greater effectiveness can be achieved, and are eager to prove it."

The decision removed the "morale problem" objection of civop days by calling for an all-civilian station. And in the years since abandonment of the civop program a new argument for civilianizing part of the [redacted]

[redacted] service had appeared: Agency chiefs began to see

(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36

—and How

By [redacted] (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36

Out on the windy moors of the West Riding of Yorkshire, England, [redacted] NSA civilians are engaged in a [redacted] work which in U.S. cryptologic history has been traditionally performed by the uniformed services. This second departure from tradition (there was a somewhat short-lived civilian operator program in the late 50's) took place in 1966, and, as might be expected, was not without difficulties. It was accomplished by people who survived many a hardship in order to create something; and as there may well never be another experience like it in our careers, it is worth recording how it was done.

The decision to change the 13th United States Army Security Agency Field Station—familarly known as Harrogate—from a military operation to a civilian one was taken in late 1965 by the Department of Defense after a review of all DoD occupations to identify those which could be filled by civilians instead of military men and women, saving the latter for more purely military work. As an outgrowth of that review, NSA presented to the Secretary of Defense a plan to civilianize the 13th USASAFS; it was approved by him on December 11, 1965.

[redacted]

if the 13th USAFS was acceptable to its hosts when administered from ASA Hq and operated by uniformed men, it should be at least equally acceptable, the theory

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goes, when administered from ASA Hq and manned by civilians.

When these details were worked out in early 1966, they were presented to all prospective employees of the station and their families. Wives and children by the score were brought in to the Agency and briefed.



The first general knowledge of the plan for civilianization came when the announcement of the overseas vacancies at Harrogate was circulated in late December 1965. In March 1966, this writer joined the group headed by Hugh S. Erskine, Sr., then making feverish preparations for the event. These included recruiting, selecting and processing the work force, planning the [redacted] schedules and the means of managing the operation. There was a great deal of this work and a very short deadline.

The initial plans had called for a phased changeover in the station operations spread from July 1 to December 31, 1966, with assumption of control of the station by

Mr. Erskine from Colonel Renfro of ASA on October 1st. However, by early Spring 1966 it was clear that the military pipeline to Harrogate would not provide enough manpower at the station to allow a six-month phaseout of the military starting in July. Therefore the timetable for assumption of civilian control was compressed and August 1 was made the target date. This change in plans was to lead to other complications later on.

There was the inevitable multitude of meetings, interviews with those numerous people who got us ready to go overseas, visits to offices [redacted] concerned with the station's current efforts. Then, after shots, packing, etc., on July 14 the first of four chartered aircraft left Friendship Airport with [redacted] sweltering men, women and children bound for Mildenhall (U.S.) Air Force Base, Suffolk. Also on board was one hair-dryer which had to be strapped into a seat like a fat dwarf because there was no other place for it. Its owner obviously thought she'd need it immediately on arrival and she was correct.

The flight and the five-hour bus trip north to Harrogate were uneventful except for those who had dressed for the heat of Baltimore on departure and not the cool



Aerial view (on a foggy day) of Menwith Hill Station looking south. [redacted]

[redacted] and auxiliary structure. The entrance gate and headquarters building are in the foreground, to right of center. Turning left at the first intersection, the road leads past family quarters around the loop. The built-up area in the center includes the gymnasium, AFEX (post exchange), library, water tower, club, visitors' quarters, theater, and chapel. The cluster

on the right includes the bachelor apartments, dependents' school, warehouses, motor pool, hobby shop, the commissary, service station. The station dispensary, fire station, and additional apartments border the street as it turns toward the [redacted]. The ball fields, tennis courts and skeet range are also visible. At the extreme left foreground are some of the buildings at Turpin's Lair. The alternating light and dark areas of the picture are due to cloud effects.

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of England on arrival. The change amounted to about 35 degrees and was a traumatic one for a lot of us.

The Grand Life

When the busses pulled up to the imposing entrance of the Grand Hotel in Harrogate at four o'clock that Saturday afternoon, all were so numb from cold, lack of sleep, and nearly constant motion for almost sixteen hours that they failed to appreciate their new surroundings. On Sunday the impact of our palatial accommodations hit home. It was like being smashed in the solar plexus by Muhammed Ali when you were expecting a kiss from Raquel Welch. The hotel had not operated as a hotel for some 20 years. During its recent past it had been used solely as a place for a toy trade exhibition once a year, in mid-December. Lighting was virtually nonexistent in the corridors and staircases. We were soon introduced to the smell of English heating gas, which is deliberately made malodorous so that leaks will not go unnoticed. It seeped from a disused fireplace in the lobby and permeated the whole building of some 200 bedrooms. The men and women who started work on Monday were spared some discomfort by their absence from the hotel. Of course, those with families generally caught up on the grief after work.

The careful early planning to ensure a smooth transition from military to civilian operation of the station immediately paid bigger dividends than we ever intended. The initial changeover of operations was to be

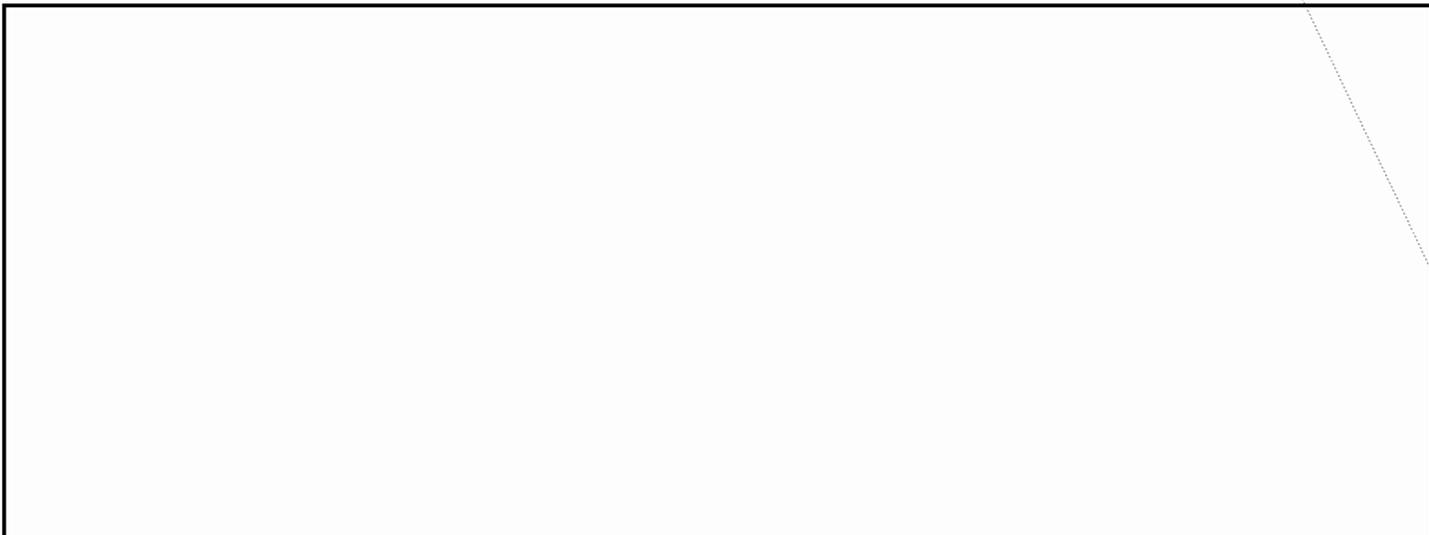
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[redacted] beginning August 1. What we didn't know was that the ASA men performing these functions were scheduled to depart the station on that

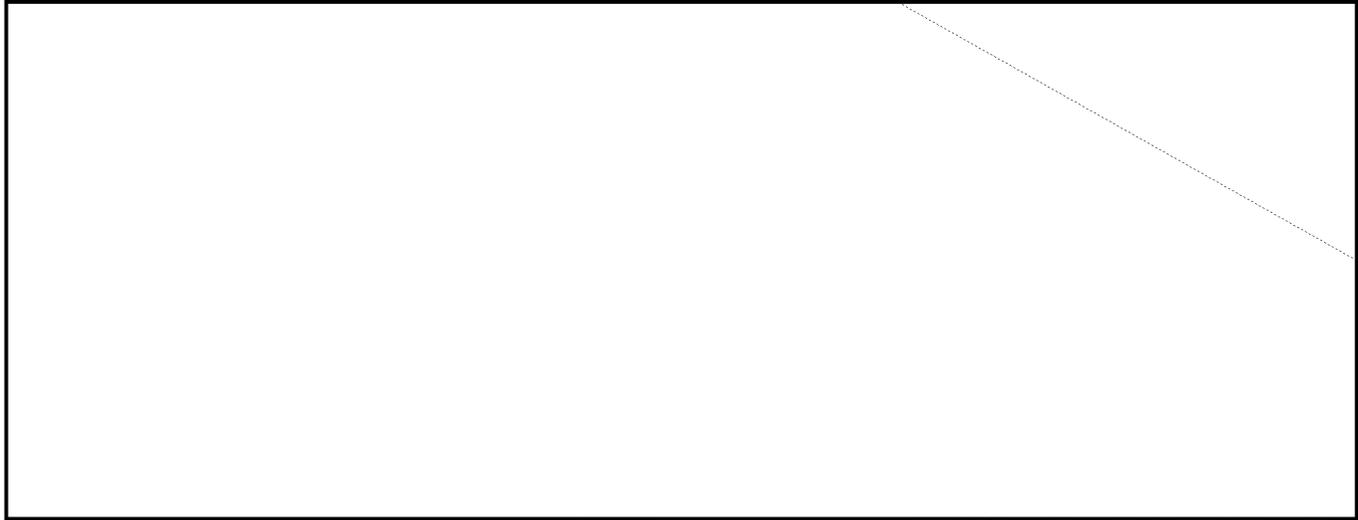
date and they were required to spend several July days clearing the station. The first flight had brought about [redacted] employees and their families. Approximately [redacted] of these were assigned [redacted]. The remaining [redacted] people plus members of other [redacted] teams were scheduled on the second flight, which was arriving on July 21. (The second flight is another story in itself.) As it turned out, the [redacted] people from flight one and [redacted] others who had come earlier in July had approximately seven working days of overlap with the military. The majority of the [redacted] crew went to work with but 8 to 16 hours of [redacted] time with the ASA operators. Fortunately all our operators were well experienced from earlier military and civilian service and they were eager to show their skill. Scarcely a [redacted] we believed, and the mission was taken over without serious difficulty.

The men assigned [redacted] arrived in Harrogate on the three succeeding charter flights and by late August more than half of our eventual work force was on hand. The rest arrived individually or in [redacted] and [redacted] over the next ten months. It was two years before all billets were filled. Even then the filling was accomplished only by a masterpiece of programming: empty billets were taken from our table of organization so that we were suddenly up to T/O strength. The action was part of an economy move intended to reduce the balance-of-payments deficit in overseas operations.

As families and single people arrived in Harrogate they were assigned rooms in the Grand. Some were fortunate enough to be relocated after only a short stay to government quarters in Menwith Hill, the local name for our station, as these were vacated by the departing military. However, only 85 or so apartments were



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available on the station, so the majority were obliged to stay at the Grand for several weeks. Some remained for five months, until they either located housing on the economy or were given apartments in buildings leased by the Defense Department. The latter were in various suburbs of Leeds and a few were actually in Harrogate. The months between August 1966 and May 1967 were trying ones for many families.

Our lease on the Grand Hotel expired in mid-December 1966, because the hotel was committed to the toy exhibition. Local builders and real-estate people kept falling behind schedule or otherwise failing to provide the needed housing, and in December the remaining unhoused families and new arrivals were located in another hotel, which turned out to be even less desirable. Bad as the Grand and Beechwood Court Hotels were, they were the only temporary lodgings available to us in Harrogate. We simply could not arrange for long leases of the better houses and flats, and the cost to the people trying to make their own temporary arrangements for such accommodations would have been prohibitive.

Housed at Last

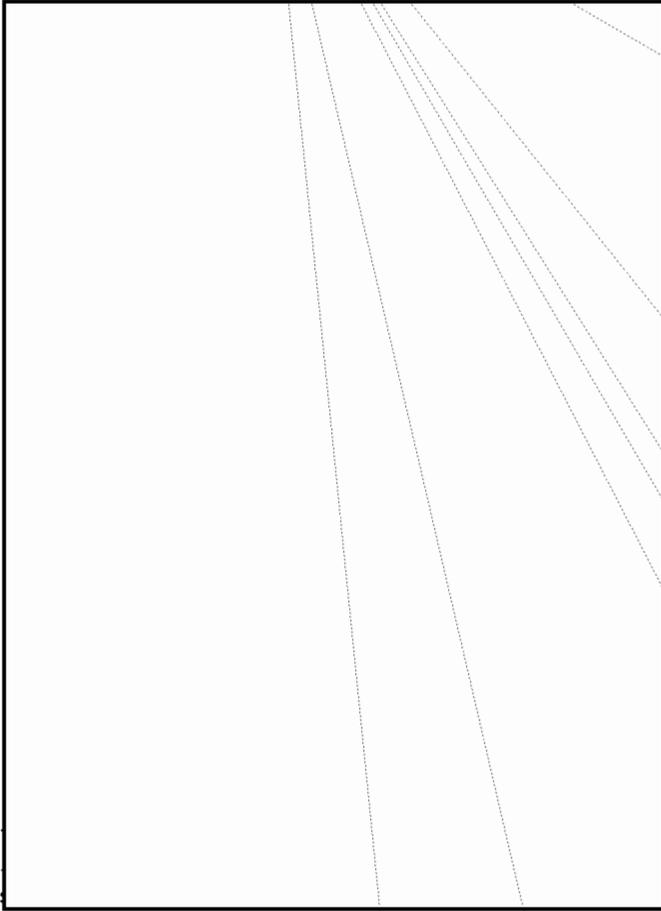
Gradually the housing problem was solved. Too gradually for those most affected, but fortunately the grimmest memories have faded and the few humorous incidents of life at the Grand are remembered fondly. No one from those days will forget o (b) (3)-P.L. 86-36 going through the halls turning off the lights to save a few bob on the electric bill and one of us following him at 20 paces turning them back on. Or the Sunday dinner when (b) (3)-P.L. 86-36 illy stopped at one table, decided on another and thereby missed—by a few seconds—being served 20 square feet of ceiling plaster

smack on the table. (The dining room was evacuated after that.) The consternation of visiting natives who stopped in at the hotel bar for a pint and found only Yanks drinking tax-free potables that couldn't be sold to the locals. The hours spent freeing unsuspecting newcomers from the eccentric elevator. And the times the refrigerator installed for babies' formulas was too full of six-packs to hold milk. There were plenty of nice things about Harrogate, too: a really good steak dinner for about \$2.25, shop clerks who called you "Luv," the 200-acre park called the Stray, gardens and gorgeous flowers, good local-talent theater at the Opera House where the seats were priced from 60 cents to \$1.80, and the small independent food shops for meats and vegetables at which two pounds of real lamb chops cost about \$1.30 and would be enough for five or six people.

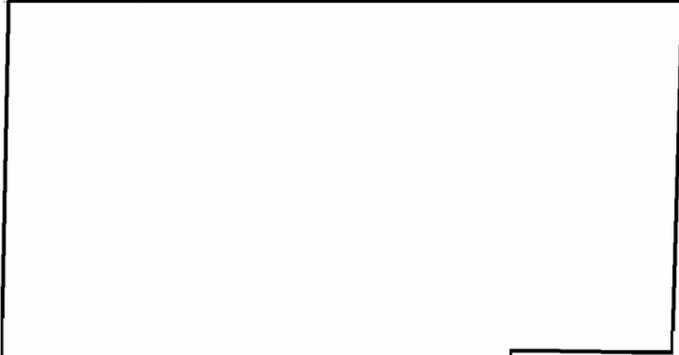
The Station AFEX (Air Force Exchange), naturally enough, we found well stocked for young single men. If one needed uniform brass, stripes, beer, or khaki clothes, he was in. But ladies' stockings, cosmetics, infants' clothes, shirts in sizes other than 14½/32, or slacks other than in waist size 28-30 were available only at an Air Force base 175 miles south toward London. Of course the commissary was also out of step because of the long lead-time required for orders to

(b) (3)-P.L. 86-36 as graduated from Hamilton College in 1949, when it was still respectable to prepare to join the Establishment. He joined NSA in early 1954 as an (b) (3)-P.L. 86-36 Before his Harrogate tour he worked in (b) (3)-P.L. 86-36 staffs. A graduate of CY-100 (Class Three) and currently assigned to D33, he looks on (b) (3)-P.L. 86-36 erience as one of the most invigorating available to NSAers.

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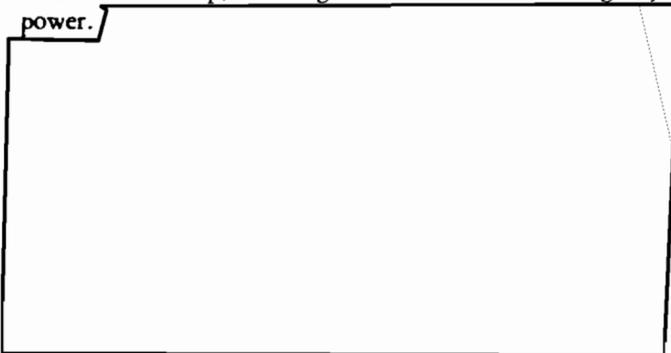
Lighting was provided by recessed 300-watt spotlights spaced about five feet apart. If you stood between lamps you couldn't read [redacted]. The interior walls were finished in a warm gray stucco that absorbed light like a blotter. When one entered the building it took two or three minutes before he could see the length of the first 80-foot corridor.



One Friday night our surgical team assembled for the operation. Equipment already in place was sealed (in Kraft wrapping paper) to keep dust out and at about nine o'clock sledgehammers started flying. Some 30 volunteers, including Mr. Erskine, the Station Chief, Ray Bowman, Chief of Technical Operation (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36 the Operations Officer, and nearly every senior member of the station staff as well as operators, [redacted] and maintenance men, made up the crew. The havoc wreaked by Ray Bowman and one 16-pound sledge became an NSA legend in one night.

stock it. Thanksgiving of 1966 saw only about a dozen or so turkeys available; ham was big that year at Menwith Hill.

Meanwhile at Menwith Hall Station great changes were taking place in the operations building. We had inherited a standard ASA-designed building. When it was first built it contained eight [redacted] rooms and two others were added later. Each of these measured 50 by 20 feet. In addition there were office spaces, a small communications center, an incinerator, a maintenance workshop, and a generator room for emergency power.



Back on the Air

By early Saturday afternoon, 130 feet of reinforced concrete and cinderblock walls had been knocked down, 3000 square feet of ceiling removed, the rubble hauled away, the floors scrubbed, and the mission taken back with all equipment running [redacted]. The job took about two hours longer than our actual working time: the truck drivers who hauled the wreckage away could not sacrifice their tea breaks. The cost to the U.S.—overtime wages to two drivers for about 10 hours of work.

In the succeeding weeks fluorescent lights and a new ceiling were installed throughout the building, paint and acoustic tiles were applied to the walls, floor tiles were replaced, and a combination training and conference room was created from the old maintenance workshop,

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which was relocated. A screen room for instrument repair and calibration was built, [redacted] space was organized, new equipment was installed and space-saving equipment configurations were devised so that the additional mission assignments could be handled by the limited work force.

The comm center was also overhauled and new equipment installed in preparation for the forthcoming load of communications created by [redacted]. The comm center crew also installed a complete intercom system linking most positions to one of two central mission-control positions and an internal secure telephone system servicing the entire building. The additional equipment made it necessary to overhaul the power supply and distribution system; tests proved the emergency power generators to be unreliable and they too were thoroughly overhauled. By the end of the station's first year as [redacted] the operations building was virtually rebuilt and probably would have been unrecognized by the previous tenant.

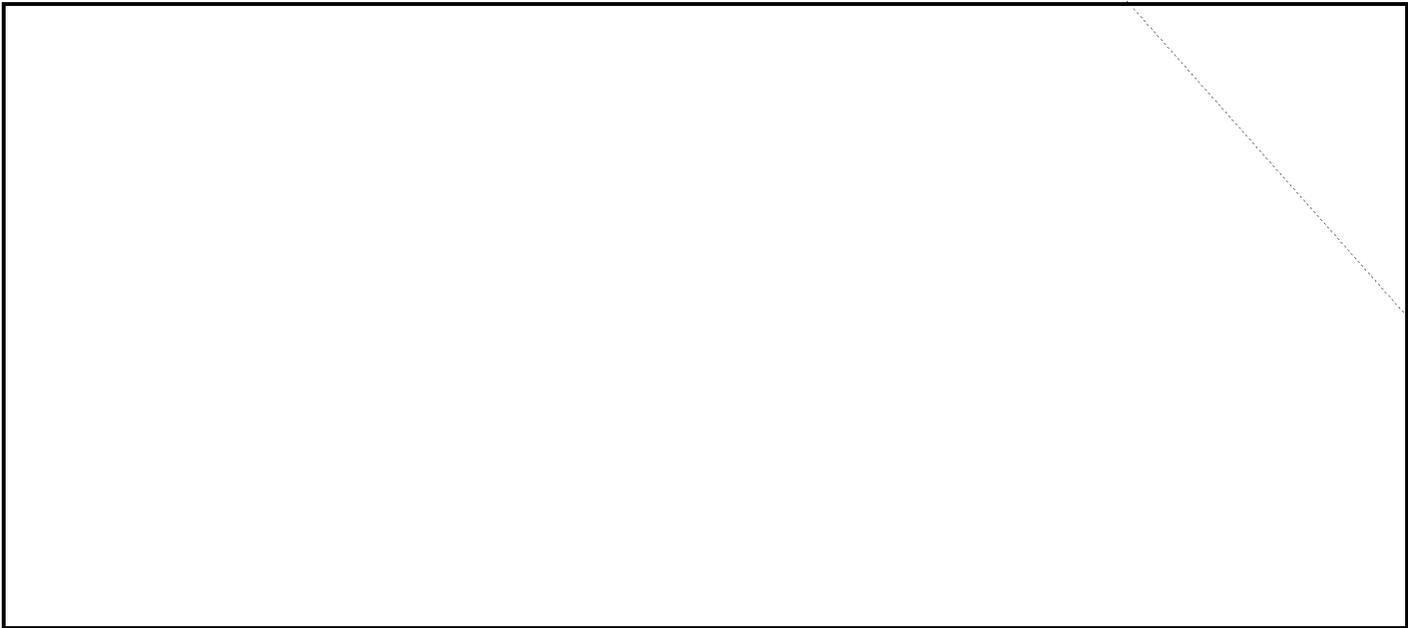
Grandiose plans were made for a central vacuum system to ease and improve cleaning of the ops building. (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36 some helpers drilled three-inch holes in the floor of nearly every room and corridor and installed pipes under the floor to carry off the dirt. Between that work and installation of the power and vacuum unit, several months passed while the holes in the floor stared up at us. Finally some enterprising sport made a series of small pennants with numbers on them and stuck one in each hole. We had our own practice putting green—with obstacles. The crowning blow was delivered, however, when the vacuum was all ready to be put into operation and we found there wasn't enough electric

86-36 power available to operate the system's motor. They are still waiting for the necessary additional power.

This recital is not intended to sound impressive but rather to recall and record some of what was done. It is appropriate now to say something about those who did the everyday (and night) work and on whose heads and backs credit for so many of the improvements rests. Our original work force was a multitalented group. A prime example was (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36 who came to work because her husband was on shift work and she wanted to share his hours (it is fair to suspect she was curious about the work too). Jean was a registered nurse; now she became a competent [redacted] operator and, before she resigned to start raising a family, she wound up running the [redacted]. We never did require her nursing skill, but it was available. We also had ex-electricians, ex-plumbers, ex-welders; you name the skill and we had it. From these came an unending stream of ideas of how to do various jobs more easily or efficiently.

One thing we didn't have was a GSA force. You can guess who cleaned the floors. Once a week the ops building floors were thoroughly scrubbed and waxed by operators working overtime. This cleaning did not include the [redacted] they were cleaned by the operators during night hours when mission activity was light—no overtime for that work.

There was another unusual feature of our operations force. On day shift, virtually every man except those in the maintenance crews wore a necktie and jacket or coat, regardless of the position he worked. They not only worked like professionals, they looked like professionals. Another point worth remembering is that a large part



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of the work was done by volunteer labor. And it should be noted that not all the effort was expended in the operations building. Changes to improve and simplify operations in the warehouses and other support activities were made as well, but that is someone else's story. So too, the efforts of the wives who made homes of strange and—to them—peculiar houses, learned the British way of shopping and living, and made the whole thing possible—these cannot be related here but must be recognized.

Whatever the future of Harrogate, its recent past is not going to be forgotten by those who shared and are proud of it.

(b) (3)-P.L. 86-36 (m p. 8)

that, because of technological advances, we needed to be directly involved in [redacted] operations ourselves if we were to furnish the managerial and technical leadership of the Service [redacted] activities that is expected of us.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Their supervisors average 13 years in the business. Engineering and equipment technicians average 13 and 6 years respectively. Nine years is the average for the [redacted]. Is all this experience bearing fruit? And is it costing too much?

To answer the second question first: It now appears that the Pentagon estimate ([redacted] more a year for civilian operation) was too high. For one thing, although civilian operators cost more man for man, NSA has found it possible to operate the station with [redacted] fewer than a like military operation would call for—a reduction made possible by position equipment innovations, the absence of military (i.e. non-operational) duties, and the experience and consequent skill levels of the [redacted]. Thus, though our operation may be costly, it is costing less than DoD was willing to pay.

The first question—how well civilianization is working out—is a hard one to answer impartially; we are not a disinterested party. The important point of course is whether the NSA career civilians improve the technical effectiveness of [redacted] operations. Specific innovations



Part of the July 4th crowd watching a British drill team and pipe band. The headquarters building is in the near background; beyond it,

the Nidderdale River Valley, and further beyond—six miles away—the far side of the Nidderdale.

made by the Harrogate civilian operation range from reconfiguration and improvements in [redacted] systems to preparatory studies for a comprehensive operational techniques test and evaluation (OTT&E) program directed toward finding the "better way" to deal with the field [redacted] mission. Savings have resulted from Harrogate-developed techniques, and will multiply when the techniques are adopted by SCA field stations. Here are some leading examples of these innovations:



(b) (3) - P.L. 86-36 ends his working hours in K dealing with the support of NSA field activities. He came to the Agency in 1962 from the 82nd Airborne Division, where he made many a jump with a field radio hanging from his parachute harness. Having served as a "civop" with the collection support group (COSAG) mobile activities at [redacted] (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36 from 1963 to 1965, he knows civilian field operations at first hand. For the past four years (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36s also served as a loan officer for the Tower Federal Credit Union.



"Hut, II, III, IV!"

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Geographical Footnote

[redacted] station designator for the 13th USASAFS. When it was established in 1956, the 13th United States Army Security Agency Field Station was called [redacted] community. Locally in Yorkshire it is called Menwith Hill Camp because it is located on Menwith Hill on Blubberhouses Moor. By whatever name, the station is eight miles west of Harrogate, famous as a spa in Victorian times, and fifteen miles north of Leeds, the northernmost of the industrial midland cities of England. The [redacted] is actually the geographic balance point of Great Britain, being equidistant from the Irish and North Seas and midway between Land's End, Cornwall, and John O'Groats, Scotland.

Yorkshire is the largest county or shire of England. It is so large that in Anglo-Saxon times it was divided into three administrative districts called Thirdings or Thridings. Time eroded the pronunciation and spelling to Riding.

The road from Harrogate to the station gate passes a farmhouse about three hundred yards from the station entrance. It is marked on local maps as "Turpin's Lair" and is reputed to have been the hideout of England's renowned highwayman, Dick Turpin. His ghost is still supposed to haunt the farm and be evident to folks living in station quarters just across the road from the farmhouse. What more can a body ask when posted in England than to have a resident ghost?

[redacted]

—Harrogate has been able to provide "shirt-sleeve" assistance in equipment maintenance to other U.S. stations in Europe on their more [redacted] [redacted] engineers have published 10 technical information bulletins dealing with maintenance and equipment improvement. The station has also automated its equipment inventory and with it, its record of maintenance work—a novel development. The maintenance branch has developed several procedures for testing equipment while in operation, thus identifying weaknesses before they lead to breakdowns.

Thus Harrogate provides the live environment in which our engineers and specialists in the fields of [redacted] [redacted] data systems, and systems engineering and maintenance can develop their innovative abilities. [redacted] is proving to be the technically advanced, directly controlled operational test facility that we require. The [redacted] conditions, pressures of a 24-hour mission, and conditions of complete inter-relationship between the various [redacted] [redacted] elements are not available to us in any other form. We have in [redacted] a site where experimentation can be carried out and solutions reached that cannot be matched by laboratory solutions. Harrogate is a site for

major experimentation on community problems. With our assumption of its administrative, logistical and operational control, we established a live model with which we can now follow, with a better understanding, all aspects of the functioning of a major field station.

We have at Harrogate an extension of ourselves. Almost every major element has in a small way a part of itself at Harrogate: Production, logistics, personnel management, security, communications, and finance are all represented. The aspirations for Harrogate are ones we have had for a long time without the opportunity to realize them: providing technical leadership to U.S. [redacted] it's not just a job, it's an obligation.

To the Merry Men of Menwith Hill, without whom these articles could not have been written, go the thanks of authors [redacted] (b) (3) - P.L. 86-36 [redacted] There were so many diverse actions during the first few months of civilianization that a program of interviews and research beyond the scope of these articles would have been required to assemble a comprehensive account of the enterprise. To those unmentioned and uncredited in these pages, our apologies.

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Non - Responsive