



(U) Life Before NSA?

FROM: SIGINT Communications
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(U//FOUO) Last year, in honor of Labor Day, we asked NSAers to tell us about the unusual jobs they held in a "former life" before coming to work here. We had such a good response, we are doing it again this year! Please send details of your former "odd job" to [REDACTED] nsa and [REDACTED]@nsa. Here's the article published on September 3, 2004:

(U) Misspent Youth? Jobs NSAers Held in a "Former Life"...

- Plant Taxonomist, USDA Plant Germplasm Quarantine Lab, and
- Lab Research Aide, Creutzfeldt-Jakob (Mad Cow Disease) Research Lab, National Institutes of Health

-- [REDACTED]

- A service station attendant in Yellowstone National Park.

-- [REDACTED]

- In the early 1990's I worked part time as a Jump Instructor for a company called Adrenaline Adventures. We did bungee jumping out of hot air balloons!

-- [REDACTED]

- A Fingerprint Technician at the FBI.

-- [REDACTED]

- I once worked as a "buttoner" in a Ship-and-Shore (women's clothing brand name) blouse factory for a summer (high school age). For 7 hours a day, using a buttoning hook (like the kind that women used in the early 1900s to button their shoes), going through bundles of 20-30 blouses, I buttoned the front plackets of blouses (and the cuffs, if they had buttons)...

-- Anonymous

- When I was 19 years old, I was hired by the State's civil engineering firm for a 3-month job to be a Highway Stripping Inspector of the Florida Turnpike being built. I had the tough job of driving behind a contractor truck spraying lines of paint on the highway for hundreds of miles to ensure that they were spraying straight, spraying solid lines when required, and that the lines sparkled enough to be able to see them at night. For a 19 year old kid, having an air conditioned company car, and an expense account for meals and rooms was like being in heaven.

-- [REDACTED]

- Retail hardware department manager.

-- [REDACTED]

- Prior to coming to the Agency 23 years ago, I spent 7 years driving an 18 wheeler (semi) coast to coast and border to border. As you can imagine, this experience had absolutely nothing to do with the fact I was hired to copy Morse code as a Collections Operations Technician and took a 66% pay cut!

-- [REDACTED]

- Busboy at the "World's Largest Shore Dinner Hall," overlooking Narragansett Bay. (A "shore dinner" consists of chowder, clam cakes, steamed clams, corn on the cob, lobster, indian pudding, watermelon, etc.)

-- SID *today* Editor

- While I was in high school, one of my part-time jobs was as an egg-setter at a chick hatchery. This consisted of loading and unloading many trays of 9 dozen eggs each into 100 degree incubators.

-- [REDACTED]

- A tomato mite counter. (This was a college summer job. Students working for the university's Entomology Department counted the mites with an electron microscope in order to see which insecticides were the most effective. They also counted insects on eucalyptus bark.)

-- [REDACTED]

- Job Title: Paper Sorter

In a previous life I used to be a paper sorter. It was fun (minus the paper cuts)! I got to climb in and out of great big boxes (being so short...) and sorted paper into different "grades." I even learned how to operate a fork lift. Later, when I began working for contractors and the government (remember when they used to ask about the machines you could operate) I always included fork lifts under "business machines." I got a kick out of interviewers' faces.

-- Anonymous

Prior to my employment at NSA, I did all of the following:

- a) achieved certification in dressmaking and fashion design as a couturier and custom clothier;
- b) held a real estate license;
- c) taught ice dancing and figure skating;
- d) was an Account Administrator/Research Assistant/ and Assistant Counselor at the Maryland-based investment counsel and mutual funds corporation, T. Rowe Price;
- e) was Executive Secretary to the Chairman of the Board, Executive Vice President, and Senior VPs at the main office of the Savings Bank of Baltimore.

-- [REDACTED]

- Right after high school I got a job at the local PBS-affiliated TV station, WVIA-TV. I worked in the mailroom, swept the floors, and made deliveries in the station's car. But my main job was being the puppeteer on a kids' show called "Magic Window." Five days a week the grandmotherly hostess would open the magic window to see who would show up. There I was, sitting beneath the window and sticking up my arms while wearing hand puppets, and yes, I also provided their voices. I later became a camera-man at the

station when we were shorthanded. The director of another show asked if I knew how to operate the camera. I said yes, and he went back to the control room. As soon as he left the studio, I went to another camera-man and asked him to "show me how to work this thing." .

-- Anonymous

- Job Title: Pulpwood Harvester

Job Requirements: Fell small damaged, sick, or burned trees on public forest lands in Minnesota in the WINTER. Limb trunks and cut into 6-ft. lengths and stack. The trees to be cut for pulpwood were marked by State and Federal Forest Service personnel.

Special Considerations: Work clothing suitable to MINUS 40 Fahrenheit, chainsaw, and an axe. The "right" to cut the trees within a designated section was acquired by bid. Once the wood was stacked, it was measured for the total "board feet" and you were paid by the paper mill that had contracted for the timber. Since this was an agricultural product, the price fluctuated and you never knew how much you would be paid until the day the stacks were measured. You hoped to make enough to at least recover your bid and pay for the chainsaw gas and transportation costs to-and-from the site. Often the only way in was by snowmobile and deep snow made the work that much more difficult. It was physically demanding and the "job of last resort" in a depressed rural economy with a high unemployment rate. There was no overtime, paid vacations, or medical benefits.

Conclusion: A "bad day" at NSA is better than a "good day" cutting pulpwood!

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