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Reporter Recalls Brushes With CIA

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CPYRGHT

This is a piece about travel, the Central Intelligence Agency, the University of Kansas, 30 feet of forms; the U-2 spy plane, and a young newspaperman.

With the commotion last week about the CIA contributing funds to several student and trust funds, some may think that the CIA has "operatives" or recruiters coming out of the walls of every college campus.

It isn't that way at all.

(By a Member of The Star's Staff)

ALL the CIA man working out of the small office on the second floor of Strong hall at the University of Kansas, Mr. Brown.

It was January, 1964, I was working at The Star 40 hours a week and commuting to K. U. to get a degree. Any degree, it really didn't matter at that point.

Indian Saw It

A friend of mine, part Pottawatomie Indian, told me about the notice on the bulletin board. The announcement said the CIA was recruiting. You couldn't miss it.

I wandered in the office and there was Mr. Brown. He was a big, shaggy-looking man. He looked like a Western Kansas rancher.

"How are you," he said, sticking out his hand in the best big corporation recruiting manner. "Here to see about the CIA, eh?"

"Well, I wondered. . . ." I started.

"Fine. fine," he said.

Eyes Light Up

He asked me what I did. I said I was reporter. His eyes lighted up.

"Very good, very good," he said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Oh, we have a lot of newsmen, or better, former newsmen, working for the agency," he said.

"You do?" I replied.

"Oh, yes. You know, we have to transmit the information we get. We have to have people who can write reports."

Mr. Brown went on. Usually I'm pretty good at remembering what people say. But I wasn't about to take notes. The gist of Mr. Brown's conversation, however, was that all these people come out (out of where is something I didn't ask but I assumed out of unfriendly countries) and ex-newspaper reporters faithfully report for the Central Intelli-



gence Agency, Washington 25, D. C.

Poses a Question

I do recall asking what happened if the man "coming out" didn't speak English.

"We hire interpreters," Mr. Brown said.

We went on and talked about salary. That wasn't too satisfactory a subject. Then there was some talk about bases overseas. There were five. Mr. Brown said. No, he couldn't say where. I would learn that when I joined the agency.

The conversation lasted about 20 minutes and Mr. Brown gave me some forms. I had to sign one, saying I'd never reveal what had taken place. That's why there's no name on this piece. Mr. Brown didn't say it, but I gathered I could be punished in some manner.

I left with other forms, Jerry, the part Pottawatomie Indian, was outside. He grinned at me.

"I figured I'd come up and talk to him, too," Jerry said. "But I doubt if they'll have anything for me. My people were once kind of on the other side."

Returns a Grin

I grinned, too.

"This isn't the CIA man," I said. "This is an ethics class."

Well, it was winter, and maybe it was travel out of the cold I wanted instead of the CIA. And then there were the forms, bound like booklets, but totaling 30 feet in length. It took me three days to fill them out. And that was all that ever happened.

But I kept remembering back to 1956 and a job as a milling machine operator at Hartford, Conn., and every-

body knew that the special parts we were milling for a J-75 turbo jet would be used in a plane to over-fly Russia. That was four years before Gary Francis Powers was shot down. He worked for the CIA.

Anyway, who wanted to work for the government and fill out reports? Not I. Mr. Brown was a fine man, courteous, not at all secretive, and he hadn't sullied my academic freedom. I'd walked into the second floor office of my own accord.

Were Locked Away

So two and one half years went by and the forms remained locked away.

I'd see Jerry, the Pottawatomie, every so often and we'd kid each other about the CIA man. Jerry still says they didn't want him because the CIA wasn't spying on Pottawatomie Indians that year.

"Someday, you'll see," he said. "They'll want me when my people go to war with the white man again."

Then last summer, one of the editors brought a tall, emaciated young man back to my desk. He said he wanted a story run in the paper.

"A story," I said. "What kind of story?"

"Cover story," the young man said.

"Cover story," I repeated.

Worry About Mob

"Yes," he said. "You see, I'm a CIA agent and I want it to look like I was shot to death out in Olathe so the mobsters who are following me will pull off the chase."

"CIA," I said, "I thought the CIA only worked overseas."

"I'm with the domestic branch," he said. "No, we don't carry credentials."

"Oh," I said.

The young man went on. There had been several attempts on his life, he had been shot at more than once, and he needed a cover story. He was less than coherent. I told him we would see what we could do. We didn't do anything. He wasn't a CIA man, domestic or foreign.

And just the other day I saw that applications by college students have swamped the agency. I thought of Mr. Brown, a big, shaggy-looking man with an open face and ready smile who looked like a Western Kansas rancher. And I thought of the young man with the nonexistent domestic branch.

The forms I got are still not going to send them in.