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AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES BRAY

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KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Charles Bray on October 22, 2004 at the University of Tennessee, in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

THOMAS GAINS: Thomas Gains

PIEHLER: And I should say this follows up an interview that was done earlier this year on April 12, 2004. And we sort of left off; you described that very personal connection you had that went back to your Navy days and how you ended up in the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], which was not, in a sense, something you had planned to do. To sort of preface this, I'm aware that CIA people sort of have this lifetime, I don't know, there's sensitivity on what to say, so I fully understand if in some questions you need to either talk more generally or just say, "I can't talk about that, that's still really sensitive." You'll also have a chance to look at the transcript and edit things out that you might not want on the web. That we fully understand. So, if you leave here and you think, "I shouldn't have said that," we will definitely show you the transcript.

BRAY: Well, that sounds very reasonable.

PIEHLER: Well, I guess ... When did you start with the CIA exactly? What month and year do you remember?

BRAY: Uh, yes. I put in an application, I think it was along in April of 1948 and they had a pretty extensive clearance. Although they were needing people, so they were rushing along. They were probably faster in those days than they are now. But I actually reported for duty in August of '48, 1948.

PIEHLER: And where was the CIA based then? Because now it's out—I've actually been to CIA headquarters once.

BRAY: Right, well, have you ever heard of Foggy Bottom?

PIEHLER: Oh yes.

BRAY: Okay. We had several of those temporary buildings, those World War I buildings.

PIEHLER: Okay.

BRAY: Down there ... in Foggy Bottom. And usually the State Department is sort of referred to as Foggy Bottom.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah.

BRAY: But we were in Foggy Bottom too. And I was in a building right next door to the Christian Heurich Brewery. And it was a long building, two stories, no air conditioning, nor anything like that. And that was ... I was in Q Building. There was Q Building, there was M Building, and then there were several other buildings, including where the Director was. The Director was also there, uh, and that was Admiral Souers, if I recall, that's the first Director. And

... the technical services people were there. We had the people that gave the polygraph. It was in a separate little building, thirteen, it was known as. And there was also the three branches of CIA which was, the Director of Plans, they called him DDP, Director of Plans. DDI, with was the Director of Intelligence, and DDS which was the Directorate of Supplies and Logistics. We had three Directorates and we were all located right there. And there were several buildings—oh, in addition to that, there were probably a few scattered buildings in nearby Rosslyn, which is across the river in Northern Virginia. And basically we did not have that many people. There was a roller rink directly across the street and also a place where they rented out horse riding; they had horses over there. And I would say that within a couple of years, uh, we kept getting people, and we took over the roller rink. So that was prior to that time that we moved down to the reflection pool in those buildings. We moved down by the Lincoln Memorial and there was I, J, K, L Buildings. They're all gone now.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you were in all those temporary World War I [buildings].

BRAY: Yeah, yeah. War Department was there, the Navy Department was down there, and they were still there. But ... well, no I'm sorry, I take that back. They had moved to the Pentagon by that time. That's right.

PIEHLER: So moving to the big campus out in [Virginia]—'cause I've been once when I was college to the main CIA, now the main CIA. That must have been, compared to these World War I buildings, the modern age.

BRAY: Well it was indeed, but I wasn't there, I was in ...

PIEHLER: You were in the field by that point

BRAY: I was in the field, I was in Taiwan, I think, at that time.

PIEHLER: So did you ever work out of the main ...

BRAY: Oh yes, absolutely. I came back from Taiwan and well, I came back temporarily on my way to Miami. And this was in '65 and the building was complete, so yes. But I did not participate in the move at all.

PIEHLER: One thing I want to make sure I ask very early because you write, and you talked at, I think it was the Lions Club ... You mentioned how weird it was, particularly when you were working for the CIA, in the covert branch ... that you couldn't tell people who you worked for, and including your wife.

BRAY: Well, not including my wife. It was ... I couldn't ...

PIEHLER: You couldn't tell her what you were doing, yeah.

BRAY: Right. I couldn't discuss what I was doing, but she absolutely knew that I was working for the CIA. But all the neighbors thought I worked for the Pentagon 'cause that's what I told

'em. And I had a telephone, you know, if I'd give out a phone [number] it rang in the Pentagon and they would; we had cover people over there, and if need be they would get a hold of me. But, it was tough on the wives and also we didn't tell the children anything about all this, nor did we tell the neighbors anything.

PIEHLER: This is interesting because I have a friend of mine whose father worked for a CIA front company, and it was **Page Communications**. And he said he would visit his father and they shared a building with the CIA and he was like a nine year old [at the time]. How did that go with the kids? You know when they had natural questions, like, "Dad, what do you do for work?"

BRAY: Well, actually, the kids growing up ... Laurie was born in '51, so I had been with them for three years when she was born. She's the oldest. And the next child to be born was born actually in Germany in '54 and then we had another one born in ... '57 in Germany. Two born in Germany ... But, they just knew I went off to work and actually, I can't recall that they were necessarily curious about where I worked or never asked me any questions about it, so it wasn't a problem.

PIEHLER: They never came home and said, "Dad ..." you know?

BRAY: No ... No, but I tell ya, it was tough on the wives because, you know, you come home and ... "what's for supper?" (Laughter) But she understood. Not my present wife, but my first wife, we married in '48, the same year I went into the CIA. She was quite understanding, but it was really tough on her.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, because you mentioned giving work [phone] numbers. I mean the awkwardness when you give a work number ... or when you apply for a mortgage or a credit card what would you put down?

BRAY: I put down the Pentagon.

PIEHLER: The Pentagon?

BRAY: Oh, yes. I had to live the cover. That was when I was at headquarters. Overseas, um, let's see, I worked under the Army cover in Germany and that was—everybody, really, in the Army knew I was with the CIA and so did the opposition I'm sure. And in Taiwan I was under Navy cover, light Navy cover. And in Vietnam I was under State cover, light again, everybody knew who we were. (Laughing) And then in Miami I was under commercial cover, [with] the Zenith Corporation, which was a fictitious name pulled out of the air. Course everybody's heard of Zenith, but it was a commercial cover. So that—that one was the toughest because I lived next door to a guy that actually was an automobile racer and across the street was a pilot who flew for one of the big airlines. And, you know, we had lots of friends in the neighborhood and it was tough because they'd say, "What ... What do they do over at Zenith, anyhow?" So that was the worst one I had. The rest of 'em I could sort of float through. But as a consequence of that, as a result of that, we generally socialized amongst ourselves. We did not socialize too much outside, except for neighbors; you can't very well avoid that.

PIEHLER: When you say socialize?

BRAY: Like parties; we'd have parties. We would go to parties that we were invited to maybe, but it would be primarily our own people.

PIEHLER: Other CIA?

BRAY: Other CIA.

PIEHLER: So if it was other CIA you could relax?

BRAY: That's right. You could talk freely with your own if somebody worked in CIA and you knew they did. It was so much easier that way. So we tended to stick together. Now under military cover, they all knew, and in fact I worked with them, a lot of the military people; directly with the military people.

PIEHLER: In your Lions [Club] talk you talked about working with all these sergeants.

BRAY: Oh yes, oh yes. CIA has always depended very heavily on the military ... for various reasons. I mean, just like today. Look at Afghanistan for example. And those CIA guys are working right with the Special Forces, with the GIs and all that. So I'm sure that sort of thing still remains the same way. But, yes, cover was necessary but I don't know how effective it was. It put a strain on the employees (Laughs) but how—I dare say that the KGB [Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti] and the rest of them knew who we all were.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, when did your children know that you worked for the CIA?

BRAY: I think I finally told 'em one time. I think Laurie was sixteen when I told her and the other children that I worked for CIA. And they were most surprised. Even Laurie, as old as sixteen, she had no idea, she said, "I had no idea you were workin' for CIA." As a matter of fact when she got out of high school, and before she went to University of Maryland, I got her a summer job at CIA. Because CIA tended to take on the employees' children for light work and especially [because] they didn't have a big problem clearing them 'cause they figured that we were okay. And I think that's where they went wrong with the one guy that did—that was the son of an old employee ... what's his name?

PIEHLER: Ames?

BRAY: Aldrich Ames, yeah. So, they made a big mistake there because ... they figured, I guess, that since dad was a good, solid type with no problems, they didn't really pay attention like they should. So anyhow, that is a little bit of background about—and also they tended to, um, hire people that we recommended. I said, "I know this fellow, I know he's good. He's been working for the Army or something like that, and so forth. You might want to consider his application." ... Something, say, somebody might have said to me, "You think I can get a job with CIA?" And this happened a couple times with me, and I recommended a couple of people, and they

investigated them carefully, and then did indeed hire them. The CIA isn't composed of only Ivy Leaguers, believe me. We have an awful lot of people working in communications, working in logistics, and they do not have big ratings but they're very necessary for the business. We have from GS [General Schedule Pay Scale], the lowest grade to the highest grade. In fact I've found that, in my experience, some of my best clerical people only had a high school education. Because if they had college, they were always saying, "Well, when am I gonna get my next raise" sort of thing, they were always agitating for better things. So when I was considering a clerical person I tended to look for someone who had finished high school and had something on the ball, but all I ever needed her to do was type and maybe take short-hand or something like that.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, the early CIA you came to ... I have not read a lot on this era but my understanding is the CIA, a lot of historians say a lot of it is the OSS [Office of Strategic Services] crowd, that that's a key ingredient to the early CIA. And in fact you're not from that.

BRAY: No.

PIEHLER: I know you come from a very unique and very different experience. I mean that early CIA you were in ...

BRAY: Okay, the original people in the CIA came largely from the OSS, that's very true. And the OSS itself was trained largely by the British, by the MI6 [Secret Intelligence Service] and the MI5 [Security Service/Military Intelligence, Section 5], but particularly the MI6. And these people that were parachuting into Yugoslavia and, say, in the Far East were all OSS, and a lot of those people came back to CIA and took key positions. And they tended to hire people that they knew, of course. But there were a lot of ... this did not last indefinitely, it lasted a few years. But, I know so many people that came from, say, the Mid West in state schools and that sort of thing, and they turned out to be ... sometimes superior operators than the old OSS people. The old OSS tended to be in the upper echelons.

PIEHLER: Well, I wondered [about] the dynamic, particularly in the organizations—because you come from anything but an Ivy League background. And it's just sort of that mesh ... one writer's [work] recently ... I get a sense [has] overplayed the Ivy League; particularly the Yale connection.

BRAY: There, I knew, for example I worked with the—my first boss, I think was a Princeton grad. A very fine fellow; and I became his deputy as years went by. But, initially, when I first started working on, I would say four or five years after I got in there, I started to get more and more complex assignments. And it required a lot of writing and composition and write ups and that sort of thing, and I struggled. I really did. And I felt, well, I don't want to use the word inferior, but I struggled for awhile to stay up, you might say, and to do the job equally as well as they did 'cause most of 'em had a better idea of composition than I did. ... Coming out of high school, and the university training that I had, wasn't oriented in that direction. I was studying accounting; I got a degree in accounting, a Bachelors of Commercial Science, which is only a two year degree. So, all of a sudden, before long, I started doing things. I worked a hundred and ten percent and I think they worked a hundred percent and I found that I had more horse sense

than they did, many times. I had a better feel for things that pleased. In other words, if somebody wanted me to do something I damn well would do it. I didn't grouch ... I showed up for work and I was always there. I didn't take any leave and I was a very hard worker, shall we say. And I found that all of a sudden I realized that they weren't any better than I was. I was doing just fine. And I got my promotions ...

PIEHLER: You had quite a long career, but is it true you were a little intimidated?

BRAY: I was intimidated. I was struggling with that. I was intimidated by the Yale, Princeton, Harvard [crowd], but I sit alongside, well, for example, Shirley Temple's husband, Charlie Black, I worked with him. William Howard Taft, the one that ran for President, his son was sitting next to me in one office. In addition to all the OSS people, neither one of those were OSS. But, there were many that were, and I did feel intimidated. I mean, you can imagine.

PIEHLER: No, it's just—as I say, you don't come from an OSS background and definitely not from an elite school. So I was [wondering about] that very early CIA, before the numbers just diluted ...

BRAY: Yeah, right.

GAINES: You said you were filling out a lot of reports and composition was very important. What sort of jobs were you doing?

BRAY: I was working on intelligence, uh, well, we would have material and we would have to come up—the particular role that I was in at that time ... I had to do a lot of analysis of a mass of material, that sort of thing, and come up with a finished product to be used. And that sort of thing is what I was talking about. Because it came easier for the people who had four year, or more, graduate degrees than, certainly, it did for me. But that was just one part of my career. As I went to the field it was entirely different, you're dealing with people; you're dealing with agents and that sort of thing. I felt very much at home doing that sort of thing. I felt much more comfortable overseas than I did in headquarters.

PIEHLER: Really? Well it sounds like, in headquarters, without going into areas you can't go into detail, it was a more analytical job.

BRAY: Well, not really. The real analytical jobs were by the Director of Intelligence people. And they're the people that prepare the Presidential reports, his daily summaries of what's going on in the world, and that sort of thing. But below that, I mean down in DDP, Director of Plans—if I took a [domestic] trip for example, and did something ... say, inside this country, and was interviewing someone, [I would] come back and write a report telling what transpired. Sort of like an FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] agent might do, and so that's what I meant; being intimidated by not ... using all the proper synonyms that I could've used instead of the basic language.

GAINES: Was there a rivalry between those in the field and those back at headquarters? I know in the Army there's the guys who are out in the field, like the infantry and armor ... they kind of

have a feeling of superiority and the guys back in the rear, you know, they kind of have a feeling of superiority because they supply the Army and keep it moving. Was there that same rivalry?

BRAY: Yeah, to some degree; to some extent. I would say that as years went by there wasn't, but initially there was definitely rivalry between the operators, even including the OSS people, and the people that stayed in headquarters and never went overseas. There was definitely rivalry there. We, in DDP, we had a large training camp that we ... attended on occasion and learned what they called tradecraft, tradecraft training. Whereas, the people in the intelligence part of it, until they started integrating 'em as time went by, but initially, they were strictly, we called 'em feather merchants. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So there's a real split in that early CIA.

BRAY: Oh yeah. We always got along well with the supply people, DDS; we needed them. They're the ones that paid us, they had finance ... anything that you needed in the way of logistics would come from DDS. But DDI was always sort of, well, more elite types. And we really didn't; well there was rivalry there, certainly. Although I shouldn't be unkind to them because they were nice to us, I should say, but nevertheless we always felt a little like, "We're out there in the trenches and you're sitting here with your ties on and having two martini lunches," and that sort of thing. (Laughter)

GAINES: I get the sense that, at first, the CIA doesn't really know its place and it's kind of fighting with the military and the FBI.

BRAY: Very good point; excellent point. And I may have covered this before, but let me just ...

PIEHLER: Not with us.

BRAY: Okay. During World War II, J. Edgar Hoover was responsible for Latin America, and his agents were scattered throughout Latin America and South America. And the Army and Navy were very much against the establishment of OSS because they had their own intelligence people; both Army and Navy. And when OSS was established, Donovan was the first, the one who established it, went through Roosevelt and told him that we needed to have a covert group and convinced him that OSS should be established. Well, the Army didn't like this, and the Navy, and ... after the war when the OSS guys came back and Truman decided to, by executive order, establish CIG, Central Intelligence Group. There was a great hue and cry amongst the admirals and generals against doing this. So, to placate them ... what they wound up doing [was] they went ahead and Truman established by executive order saying, "We don't want another Pearl Harbor." So, in '49 I guess it was—no, '47, in 1947 there was a statute establishing CIA, Central Intelligence Agency, and made it official. CIG was in '46, after the war, and CIA was by statute, so that was passed by Congress. Now to placate the military however—well, first of all, Hoover was just p.o.'ed up to the ceiling because what happened was, all of his agents; most of 'em came to CIA and we wanted them; we needed them. And CIA staffed itself heavily with FBI agents and this made Hoover royally upset and he never really got over it. He truly never got over it.

PIEHLER: And this was well known in the CIA?

BRAY: [Note Added: Well, I might give you a little history of how CIA got started. OSS was deactivated in early 1946, and SSU (Strategic Services Unit) briefly picked up the pieces, mainly from the Far East; but, it had a brief existence. President Truman, insisting on avoiding a future Pearl Harbor, established the CIG (Central Intelligence Group) by Executive Order in the same year and appointed Navy Admiral Sidney Souers as Director. He served for a short time and was replaced by Air Force General Hoyt Vandenberg. Then, in 1947, Congress created CIA by Statute, and Truman named Navy Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter as the first Director. A civilian was named Deputy Director in all these cases. Then, in 1950, a crusty old Army General by the name of Walter Bedell Smith took over as the second Director. General Smith, who had served as Ike's Chief Planner during the D-Day invasion, had the reputation of a man who had the most even temperament of anyone in the building. He was always mad and always looking for someone to give a good reaming out. He, along with his Deputy, Allen Dulles has been given credit for getting CIA off the ground and going. Dulles, of course, had a good standing in the intelligence community for his wartime work with OSS, and when General Smith left in 1953, Dulles became the next Director of CIA.]

PIEHLER: So it was easier to heal the antagonism between the military and the CIA but the FBI, while Hoover was alive ...

BRAY: Never, never happened; in fact, later it got worse. It really got worse. Because at one time, even years later, Hoover forbid his people to even talk to us. But we did anyhow. I mean, in New York, for example, they went around his back and talked to 'em.

PIEHLER: Well, 'cause in New York, the FBI in New York was doing surveillance for the UN.

BRAY: Right, right, you see. It was idiotic, but he was so upset at CIA having taken over so many of his responsibilities. Now there was a National Security Intelligence Directives, NSCIDs they called 'em, and one of those established CIA as being responsible for all foreign intelligence. They were prohibited from doing any domestic intelligence and the FBI was prohibited from doing any foreign intelligence. Now ... just last year, I mean this year, we see what happened because of this. By statute they were not allowed to interchange ideas, in theory. As time went on we did cooperate more, but it never really was open.

PIEHLER: But the one thing that's very interesting in framing 9/11, because ...

BRAY: This is all Congress' doing really.

PIEHLER: It's interesting because it's not something that Hoover wanted. You're describing a culture where, really, as a bureaucratic fighter he was so upset to lose this that he wasn't sort of saying, "Well we need to talk to the CIA." He was happy to have the separation, in fact he wanted it. So there is contact, but it's not something blessed by the higher-ups.

BRAY: That's right. ... In fact, in my speech to the Lions about the Berlin Tunnel, the head of that was Bill Harvey, William Harvey, and he was one of Hoover's best agents. He truly was ...

he was very much involved in the 1946 investigations of all that came out of that when we found that so much of our government was penetrated by the Russians and they wound up executing the Eisenbergs ...

PIEHLER: Rosenbergs.

BRAY: Rosenbergs, rather. He was working on that for Hoover. I don't know whether I told you this before or not, but one rule that Hoover had was that all FBI agents should always be no further away than four hours, I think it was. He had a certain number of hours that if he wanted to get a hold of you, he had to get a hold of you. If the FBI wanted to contact you, you had to be contactable. Well ...

PIEHLER: And this is an era before cell phones, or fax machines, or email. I mean now, this would not be a big deal.

BRAY: No thumpers, none of this.

PIEHLER: There were no pagers.

BRAY: No pagers. First thing we had, I think, was something we'd put it in our pocket and it would thump you on the leg and then you'd call the office. That was the first thing I remember. But anyhow, Harvey made the mistake one time of—well, it's sort of a complicated story but let's just say for the sake of brevity that he was not contactable over a period of like eight hours. And it made Hoover so mad ... that this happened. It just wasn't done. He took him off of some of these cases and said, "I'm sending you to Indianapolis ... I'm transferring you to Indianapolis." Nothing was going on in Indianapolis; it was Siberia. So about this time, it just so happened that a friend of Harvey's, Ron McMillan, who was in CIA and also an ex-FBI agent who'd been working in South America, had been talking to Bill and he said, "Why don't you come over here, we've got a good outfit going." So to make a long story short, Bill came to CIA and Hoover never forgave us for that, for stealing his people. But he wanted to make an example out of Bill because he was not reachable and he probably would've brought him back from Indianapolis.

PIEHLER: This was sort of the punishment.

BRAY: Punishment for—that's the sort of person that ...

PIEHLER: But once he left the CIA ... he was persona non grata.

BRAY: That's right, exactly.

PIEHLER: It's interesting ...

BRAY: Up until that time ... Bill Harvey had all kinds of nice efficiency reports and all of a sudden his final report was lousy. His recommendation—his referral to CIA was, well, you know they wrote him up poorly.

PIEHLER: Oh he got a bad ...

BRAY: He got a bad conduct report [or] reference. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: It's interesting because a lot of what you're saying—we now know a lot more about Hoover, but when this is all happening in the 50s and 60s, Hoover had a very good public [image] overall.

BRAY: Oh yeah, he did.

PIEHLER: Yeah, it strikes me [that] you were hearing a lot of dirt that was not—I mean, what else would these former FBI people tell about the FBI? Because I never heard about the reachable rule, which to me ...

BRAY: Well, apparently Harvey had been to a gathering, I'll just briefly say what happened. He had been to a gathering of other agents somewhere and they'd had a party and he, whether he got drunk, or whether he did or did not, I don't know. But on the way home he went through Rock Creek Park and the water—there's some shallow water that you drive through in Rock Creek Park, which runs right down through Washington. The water was up and he claimed he got stuck in the middle of one of these pools of water; and it's logical. And he couldn't get out, it was one o'clock in the morning, somethin' like that, and he went to sleep. He thought, "Okay, I'll rest a while, maybe the water will go down and I can get out." Well he didn't show up and ... he slept right on through eight o'clock the next morning and didn't show up for work. And so the office, FBI, called his wife [and] she didn't know where he was, but he was still asleep, (Laughs) so that's the background. That's what happened. He wasn't reachable at home and that's the story behind that. That actually happened. And Harvey ... swore to the last, "I got stuck, couldn't get out, there was nothing I could do, nobody else was around. So I decided to rest a little bit and hope the water went down. (Laughter) I'm sure he had a few drinks!

PIEHLER: But did you hear any other stories about how the FBI ... ?

BRAY: Well, it was very extraordinary, I must say they—well, first of all the dress. They had a dress code that wouldn't quit. Everybody had to wear white shirts, ties, dark clothes, a hat. Every FBI agent had to wear a hat, that sort of thing. Their desk had to be [organized], their pencils had to be lined up, their paper clips couldn't be ... scattered around. If they found a cigarette butt in the ashtray you got a bad mark. In fact one of the ... ex-FBI agents told me one time that he was called off a stake-out because somebody had found a cigarette butt in his ashtray. He didn't even smoke! And they called him back ...

PIEHLER: They literally called him?

BRAY: They literally called him off of a stake-out. And I know the guy's name and I believe him. He said he came in the office, this is at night, and they pointed to the cigarette butt in the ashtray. He said, "I didn't do it, I don't smoke!" Somebody had butted a cigarette in his ashtray. Well, I guess he explained that away but that shows the mentality of how Hoover operates.

PIEHLER: How does the CIA compare?

BRAY: Well, not like ... no, we had a lot more latitude. I mean it was—I thoroughly enjoyed my time.

PIEHLER: So you didn't have a dress code?

BRAY: No. But we did, I mean as a matter of course, we all wore ... ties in those days. And I bought dozens of Arrow shirts; white shirts, always white shirts.

PIEHLER: But it wasn't—I mean, I've talked to an FBI agent who was part of that culture and he thought that was fine. But that's been written a lot about, the FBI's penchant for ...

BRAY: Well, it was sort of like boot camp. You know, you go to Parris Island and ... if a sergeant tells you to get down and do twenty, you go down and do twenty, you know, and he yells in your face. It was Hoover's way of keeping things—and he ran a very, very tight ship. And of course they got—it was a wonderful thing to have on your resume. If you worked for the FBI and you applied for a job, at say IBM or someplace like that, and you had a resume that included ten years at the FBI, boy you were grabbed up. I mean because they had a tremendous reputation. And of course in the early days of T.V., remember?

PIEHLER: Yeah ...

BRAY: Remember? "This is your FBI" I can hear it. And you couldn't do anything wrong. "We captured every German agent that ever hit the soil!" I mean, how do you know? (Laughs)

PIEHLER: That's partly why I asked because you had all these FBI agents who are just telling you how wacky the FBI was and then you have these competing images. Yeah, I remember ...

BRAY: It had tremendous effect on—I mean if you told somebody you worked for the FBI automatically you were the *crème de la crème*. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So, part of it, the culture of the early ... CIA, it's not just the OSS people, it also sounds like a significant contingent of FBI.

BRAY: Right. And Bill Harvey couldn't stand the OSSers. I mean they ... He was from Indiana and he was a lawyer, he practiced law out there a little bit. And that was one way to get into the FBI, if you had an accounting degree or a law degree, and I went for the accounting degree. I wanted to get into the FBI.

PIEHLER: So you too wanted ...

BRAY: Yes, I don't know where I—I think I said that in my speech.

GAINES: You did.

BRAY: And so it turned out that my CIA job came through first. And so I went with the CIA.

PIEHLER: ... We left off with the great story of how you had the CIA connection, but you had put in an application for the [FBI]?

BRAY: Yeah, I had.

PIEHLER: It's sort of a great what if, but when you started learning about the FBI environment, how do you think you would have fared in that culture?

BRAY: Well, I had been in the CCC. I spent two years in the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps, and I—actually, you start out at thirty dollars a month and then if you do well, you go to assistant leader [and] you get ... thirty-six [dollars]. You get to be a leader, you get forty-five bucks. So I got to be a leader pretty fast; within six months I was a leader and I was in charge of a barracks of about forty or fifty people. And so because, well let's face it, I had more education than most of 'em. And ... I was not a heavy weight. I weighed about a hundred forty, a hundred forty-five pounds, and I wasn't ... I couldn't have handled the big guys. But, anyhow, I was able to handle 'em. And that meant I had some training before I ever reached [CIA]. And then I went to the Navy and when I went into boot camp they put me in charge of a company under a chief. Have I covered this at all?

PIEHLER: Yeah, you ...

BRAY: So I felt comfortable when I went into CIA from that standpoint.

PIEHLER: In other words if you had ended up in the FBI, you probably would've adapted to this. I ... mean I think ... for me looking at it from a distance, you read some of this stuff and you just think, "this is just ..." I'd known about the dress code, and the decorum of the desk, and all that, but I never knew about the eight hour ...

BRAY: I don't know how many hours it was, but it was certainly no more than eight. It was probably less than eight.

PIEHLER: Yeah, four to eight hours, but ...

BRAY: Somewhere in there. But I think I would've done fine. And I knew how to handle weapons. I grew up with a gun, with a rifle of my own at the age of twelve, I think, and I knew something about guns and that sort of thing.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: I want to ask a very broad question about the early CIA days. And because you not among the analysts; you're in the very practical ... partly because of the divisions you talk about in the CIA, [I want to ask about] intelligence. What it is exactly. Some of the intelligence is clearly signals intelligence, and then some of it is clearly operative. You know, you talk to

someone, you get papers, and then some of it is just literally reading the newspaper ... not just reading, but you can figure out a lot by just reading the newspaper and other sources. Being in ... not the analytical side of it; how does that sort of fit in, in getting the right—It's very obvious ... the one thing you are free to talk about a little bit [is] the operation in East Berlin where you tap into the Soviet [main landline communications cables] ... but in terms of just other operations or how the CIA works because ... one of the important end products is the Presidential briefing and other reports.

BRAY: Okay, as a matter of fact my whole career was in signal intelligence, related to signal intelligence. We called it communications intelligence, or COMINT, C-O-M-I-N-T. And lot of people, if they hear the word "ULTRA" that denotes signal intelligence to a lot of people. So anyhow, from the time that I first joined until my last day, at twenty-five years, I was in various stages, various phases of that; a lot of it overseas, or most of it overseas. Well, for example, we'll just take Germany, when I went to Germany my main job to start with was to work with the Army Security Agency, ASA, and the National Security Agency, NSA, in Germany to support agents, or to provide, or to acquire information relating to agents that we were running into the Eastern Block. Into Albania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and hopefully the Soviet Union but that's tough. I didn't get involved much in that. But then I would get this information, or work with them to get information, which would help the operatives, our case officers, who were running these agents. And once they got inside, frequently, we could monitor whether they were captured or whether they were being looked for because ASA and NSA were able to break a lot of those ciphers and those codes. They were very, very sharp, very good, [and] very helpful. So I worked very closely with that aspect of it.

BRAY: Also, I had another job where I worked with about fifty Germans who were in the, uh Germany Army, all working on signal intelligence. So ... my boss, Allan Conway, had recruited about two or three guys and they collected, oh, about fifty people, Germany officers and enlisted men who had been working against us in World War II. And ... then they set up a station near Nuremberg to—and I was in Frankfurt. We were in Frankfurt, but this station was set up in Nuremberg and they were working, basically against the Czechs and the Poles, basically those two. And I was responsible. I was the case officer that handled them. Handled, I paid 'em, gave them targeting, [and] told them what I would like for them to do. In other words gave them intelligence requirements in such a way that it would not give us, give any secrets away. I'd just say, "Well, you know, why don't we concentrate on this for a while," and so forth. And at that time we were reading a lot of that traffic that they were intercepting. And also, in order to get timely delivery, I arranged ... to get them to meet one of the ASA guys who was stationed near Nuremberg. I was up in Frankfurt, hours away. And so daily they would take material down and give it to this guy, then it got back in the chain of processing, and ASA would process it. The people that I worked with had a decryption department, but ... they had no equipment to, like we—I don't know, we had ... that was the days before computers, but we did have machine systems. We had a Rem Rand [Remington Rand] Card System, I know. IBM had a card, had a machine system, a high speed data sorter. You'd put things on cards, and it sorts it according to ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, these very primitive ...

BRAY: Very primitive, well in those days it was ...

PIEHLER: Well, in your day it was state of the art. I've actually seen a computer in the early '80s that had a sort of card mechanism, sorter.

GAINES: The punch card system? Yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah, they're hard to find now

BRAY: Yeah, this was back in, this was in the mid-50s you're talkin' about. But anyhow, I had the responsibility for supply, [and] we paid 'em. They were on the payroll. I'd take a satchel of money, in green, and go down and pay 'em once a month. Get on a "Rhine Blitz." Of course, sometimes I'd go down by car, but usually I'd go down by train, and spend the night, and talk to the chief ... And then that was in addition to supporting the Berlin Tunnel operation. So I had plenty to do, all related to signal intelligence.

PIEHLER: Germany, I think, is the oldest and largely known. It's interesting reading your account of it. You often refer to it as a business because some of what you describe in your job in Frankfurt, in a weird way, is running a business. Literally, you have this team that you have to pay, and they're not doing cloak and dagger stuff. They're doing ...

BRAY: They're listening. They've got their earphones on, and they're copying something, and then they have people that—they have something called traffic analysis, which means it's not decryptions, it's analyzing where the transmitters are located. We had direction finders. They had three direction finder sites, as I recall. And they can zero in on where these signals were coming from and they learned by the analysis of call signs and that sort of thing whether it was a regiment, whether it was a division headquarters. And very quickly you could develop something called traffic analysis, and when it moved you could see the movement of it through direction finding, and they were able to do that. They did some of the decryption but we didn't depend on them for that. But, um, they were very experienced and they also copied voice, and of course being German ... also a lot of 'em could translate it into English. Of course, ASA had their own translators, but they copied voice as well ... it was basically Morse; Morse code and voice. And as time went on, not there, but in Taiwan a lot of teletype [was used] and that sort of thing.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, starting with Germany, did you read any of this that they were coming up with? Was that part of your job?

BRAY: I did not speak German. I did go ... I went to Germany sort, not a spur of the moment, but fairly quickly. I'll tell you what happened. ... I was integrated into AFSA [Armed Forces Security Agency], it was called then, which was the predecessor of NSA, and they were located in Arlington Hall out on Lee Highway in Northern Virginia. And I was integrated into that to search their files for things we needed. I was getting daily requests from headquarters to come up [with] mainly information on people. And they had files on three by five cards going back before World War II even, so I was working that and I had a little unit. I had three girls working for me, I think, and we all worked [and] would be feeding that in. Anyhow, to make this brief, I decided that I wanted to go overseas, so ... on one of my trips back to headquarters which was back in

the L building at that time. I said, "I would like to ... I've done this, now I'd like to go overseas," and so they said, "Okay, well look around." So I did look around ... and went and visited several offices, and I found they needed an agent in Turkey. And so I sort of said, "Okay, let's go, let's do it." So I went back and told the people at my headquarters that I'd found a job, they needed somebody to fill a slot in Turkey. And they said, "Well it just so happens that we have a job for you. We want you to go to Germany." I said, "Fine. Let's do it." And of course I hated to leave because I liked what I was doing, I enjoyed the people, I knew all the people, and I didn't really want to go to Turkey, but I wanted to get going. This was in '53 I guess. Anyhow, in February of '54 I wound up in Frankfurt without my family. I left them behind, and my wife was pregnant, and Laurie was three years old. But the idea was, I was to go over and find a place for us to live and I subsequently did that. I found a temporary place, brought Laurie and June, my wife, over, and Laurie's sister Bonnie was born in April after I went over in ... February. ... Anyhow, it was about three months. It was tough on her. Especially because with a new baby, and a three year old, and I was—the office had me tied just like that. (Gestures) I was working virtually seven days a week, because when you go overseas it's different from headquarters. You have one man and one job. ... I didn't have but one leave all the time I was there, which was almost four years. I was on call like Hoover's people. I had to be reachable. And so it was tough on—and that's why I emphasize, CIA is tough on families. And it causes a lot of divorces. It really does.

PIEHLER: Because four years and hardly a weekend off is not ...

BRAY: The only time I had off was, I think, after the Tunnel blew and it wasn't necessary that I be there. We took off and went to Spain for a couple of weeks and that's the only time I had off the whole time I was there.

PIEHLER: It's very sort of ...

BRAY: And that was night time, a lot of night time stuff, too because, uh, well to—I don't want to drag this, really drag it out, but let me just say one thing. The tunnel was so secure, so compartmented, that we did not even want the people in the communications department to even know what we were saying. So we super enciphered all the messages. It would come into the signal center enciphered, they couldn't read it. So in order for us to know what was in there, they had to call, usually call me at night. I had a couple of people who could do it, but I would get called at night to come down and see what the message said. And if it had a high precedence, in other words, if it was operational immediate, or immediate, or urgent; we had various different classifications of precedence. If it's routine, they'd wait 'til morning. If it was priority they'd probably wait. Usually we'd say, "Priority—no night action." Okay, they wouldn't call me. But if it was operational immediate or urgent or something like that, they'd call me in the middle of the night and so many times I was down there at night [with all the shutters pulled down].

PIEHLER: So you'd come up and pick up ...

BRAY: I'd pick up the stuff in the signal center from the communications people, take it down to my office, and I had a machine, and I'd break it out. I could read it and know. And if it was necessary, I would call the Chief of Station. There were only about four or five people in the whole German station that knew about this operation. [We spoke earlier about how former, more

elite OSS personnel were involved in CIA clandestine operations. It is interesting to note that to my knowledge, the only X-OSSer's cut in on the tunnel operation were the Director, Allen Dulles, and Dick Helms, Chief of Special Operations. It was an operation largely planned and run by X-FBI agents, along with NSA experts, and with tremendous assistance from elements of the US military. We provided the planning and guidance, but our military people did the heavy lifting. Contrary to our rather awkward relationship with the FBI, we always enjoyed a close relationship with all U.S military forces, both at home and abroad. I know that without their help, the tunnel would not have been possible, and I suspect that this same degree of cooperation still exists today.]

PIEHLER: Well, we should probably—we've asked you about it [earlier] ... Essentially you dug a tunnel—what was your role in that?

BRAY: My role in that was support of that, from Frankfurt. I would go up to Berlin once in a while, but I never ... [A large part of my workday was taken up handling very heavy cable traffic in and out of our 4 secure communications facilities, i.e. those located at Washington headquarters, a processing unit in London, our office in Frankfurt and Berlin Base. In theory, Berlin Base was subordinate to the Station in Frankfurt, although the Chief of Station rarely became involved in any matters relating to the tunnel. He relied on Alan Conway, Chief of our office, to speak for him.]

PIEHLER: You didn't actually go in the tunnel?

BRAY: I didn't ever actually go in there. I almost was made the case officer for it. Because the guy that was the case officer, in other words [he] lived at the site, lived at the tunnel in the so-called ELINT [Electronic Signal Intelligence] site, or the building that everybody thought was a warehouse. But actually we had antennas on the roof making it look like it was an intercept site. And those were all over Berlin, so nobody paid that much attention to it. What was really going on was, 'course, we were underground.

PIEHLER: ... Well ... in a sense it does fit the image of a spy movie 'cause you're actually digging underneath into East Berlin. (Laughter) Now this is East Berlin before the wall, but still you are going into East Berlin. And you have to build basically a structure to hide the dirt ... What I thought was so fascinating, in an era when air conditioning was still not that common, you air conditioned this tunnel not to give it away, which must have been a fortune.

BRAY: It really was. It was a nervous time, I'll tell ya. [The principle reason for installing air conditioning was to cool the tap chamber for fear that wintertime melting snow in odd places would arouse the suspicion of the East German patrols nearby.]

PIEHLER: Now, was that part of your job, to get the air conditioning?

BRAY: Well ... [we handled the small stuff, but bulky items such as air conditioners would have come via Bremerhaven in crates, marked "office supplies."] There were two trains that the Russians would allow in to Berlin from the American zone, the U.S. zone; one from Bremerhaven and one from Frankfurt. And you could only travel these freight trains, trains that

carried freight as well as passengers. They could only travel through the eastern sector at night, and so that's how we got back and forth to Berlin—was in a night time train. And that's how we got supplies to Berlin, was through those trains. And that was after the [Berlin] airlift, we had an airlift, remember? And that went on for about a year, I guess. Well, then after that we were able to get in, but we got in by train. So, but anyhow, I started to tell you one thing; I don't know whether I mentioned this before or not. The case officer in charge of the tunnel, running this whole operation and ... hardly ever leaving it, [was] always there, had a heart attack and they needed somebody to replace him. Well, Bill Harvey—I knew Bill Harvey very well because he's the guy that hired me originally back in 1948. So, he was in overall charge of it. He was, you might say, he was the daddy of the thing. He was instrumental in it being done and convinced people that it could be done and spent a lot of money doing it. But anyhow, he came to my boss and said, "I'd like for Charlie to come up and take over this job." Well, he said, "Have him come up and bring his wife and I'd like to have him for lunch." And this was unusual because he was a very busy man. 'Course he had agents ... it was like you know, the Wild West at that time because he was very busy. But anyhow, I took June up, and we did indeed go out to his house, just the two of us, and met his wife. And what I didn't realize was they were trying to find out what June was all about, whether or not it was a good idea for me to be gone and leave her in Frankfurt and to get some feel. They were, what do you call it, not casing her, but they were—analyzing her. And me! And of course I knew Bill very well, and I knew his wife too 'cause she had been in Frankfurt. They basically wanted to see what my wife was like because it would mean me being there [and] leaving her in Frankfurt with the kids over an extended period of time. To make a long story short, my boss, Allan Conway thought that it would be a bad idea because my wife had had some postpartum psychosis and spent some time in the hospital with the second child. I mean after the child came home she had to go back. She really was ... I'll put it [this way], it was very rough on her. So Allan said, "Bill, we just can't do this. I can't do this. I can't let you have [the job], I can't do it." So otherwise I would have wound up there ...

PIEHLER: As the case officer?

BRAY: As the case officer. As it turned out I never saw the inside of it. They did get somebody who had no children. They got a guy from Vienna and his wife, he was a little older, and so they got a replacement. So, anyhow, I never saw the inside of the tunnel.

PIEHLER: But you were sort of—you supplied ...

BRAY: Yeah, we did a lot of that.

PIEHLER: What was the most difficult request to fulfill?

BRAY: Well, one of the most difficult was enough dynamite to—Bill wanted to plant dynamite throughout the tunnel so that he could blow it up if they ever discovered it. And that was one thing. And how to get it there! Allan Conway himself put it in his satchel and got on an airplane and took it there. He was a real mustang I might add. He was an ex-Army major.

PIEHLER: So he just carried it on?

BRAY: He just sort of, “Ah, I’ll take it up.” That ... was a toughie. But we did actually lose, or misplace, a freight car with a whole bunch of materials. It got lost, we didn’t misplace it. It got lost.

PIEHLER: It just got lost?

BRAY: It got lost between Bremerhaven and Berlin and it took a great effort to find it. It was a whole box car full of material that consisted of the steel liner plate that went into the tunnel. So there were a lot of things that happened, but I guess losing that box car was probably the worst thing; and how to acquire and get the dynamite to Berlin. But, uh, as it turned out, when they discovered the tunnel Harvey said, “I want to blow the tunnel,” and Eisenhower, it went all the way to Eisenhower, and he said, “Bill, I’m not going to let you do that. Don’t do that. If we kill somebody, we got real problems. It would be a real international incident.” So ... when it did go, when it was compromised, it was some very interesting times for several days. but eventually it blew over.

PIEHLER: One of the things you wrote in your Lions [Club] speech, you sort of said that Berlin was a really wild place. And you compared it to Casablanca and ... the Wild West I think you said.

BRAY: You gotta realize that the KGB was doing the same thing. Bill Harvey was chief of the base up there. He was chief of Berlin base and they probably had, I would roughly say, two hundred and fifty or three hundred people in that base. And they were running across, back and forth across the border, they were doing all sorts of things. And the KGB was doing the same thing, in fact the KGB played a lot rougher than we did. They actually kidnapped people and got them across the border, and we lost people. And we never knew what happened to them.

PIEHLER: Literally?

BRAY: Literally! About that time we, somewhere along there, I know that there was a Bulgarian—I think it was a Bulgarian émigré, high up—that was actually killed with a gun shaped like a parasol or umbrella. And ... it was undetectable; the poison that they used was undetectable.

PIEHLER: So when you say it was sort of rough, in other words, the KGB was not necessarily going after CIA agents, they were going after émigrés ...

BRAY: No, no. And that was sort of an unwritten law that we didn’t bother each other.

PIEHLER: So that really did exist?

BRAY: That did exist. I mean it wasn’t stated on any piece of paper.

PIEHLER: But there was that sort of sense that we’re not gonna make other agents ...

BRAY: Right, that’s right. I do recall—well, I’d better skip that.

PIEHLER: (Laughing) That's the first time you've said that ...

BRAY: Let's put it this way, it didn't apply to an Army colonel who was not in the KGB.
(Laughing) But I won't say any more about that.

GAINES: So, after you go to Berlin, did you go back to Washington or did you go straight from Berlin to ...?

BRAY: Oh no, no. I went back to Washington in '57 and worked on—still in the same business, but I worked on various projects supporting similar agents in the field. I was a headquarters type, in other words. And that lasted until '62. From '57, well late '57 until ... June of '62 I was in headquarters and my job was to support people like [those] who were supporting me in Berlin.

PIEHLER: What does that mean? What kind of ...

BRAY: Actually, largely I was dealing with NSA requirements ...

PIEHLER: So in other words, NSA would say, "This is what we need," and you would channel that?

BRAY: That's right, that sort of thing. And then ... we also had to keep—take for example, let's take Taiwan because I went to Taiwan and I know what I was doing there in Taiwan. Every year we had to write a project renewal and in that project renewal we had to very carefully spell out a budget and we had to come up with dollar figures of how much we would need to support this operation for the next year. And that went into several pages. We had to supply equipment. We had to supply things like generators, well that's equipment, but I'm just [giving you examples], radios, radio intercepts, top of the line radios, top of the line recorders, top of the line generators from 5kw to 100kw for the big stations—I mean that's a big generator—[and] antennas. Everything that would be needed, in addition to money, we paid, in Taiwan. We were buying our way; we paid the Chinese to do this.

...

[We are now getting into an area of this debriefing which I think is too sensitive to discuss in detail. If I did so, I would feel obliged to clear my answers with the appropriate office in CIA Headquarters concerning what I have written. Suffice to say, my family and I spent three years in Taiwan, from June 1962 until June 1965. Basically, my job was one of serving as a Case Officer, working primarily with a Chinese Nationalist Lt. Gen. who was in charge of several thousand military personnel who were engaged in Signal Intelligence activities. Such activities ran the gamut from the intercept of raw traffic to the decryption of Chinese Mainland communications. While one could say that our relationship was quite expensive in U.S dollars, it was extremely cost worthy to the U.S. Government as a whole.]

...

BRAY: We got an awful lot of un-translated stuff, but that was mainly for what I call traffic analysis, which has the call signs so you can follow a military unit, and DF results, and that sort

of thing. So anyhow, three years of that and then they decided that—we were still in Miami, running agents against Castro and they decided to ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Charles Bray on October 22, 2004 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

GAINES: Thomas Gaines.

PIEHLER: And please continue, I'm sorry the tape had run out when it did.

BRAY: Right, okey-doke. Well, okay, so anyhow in 1965 we came back to this country and I spent a week in headquarters, just TDY [Temporary Duty], and then I got some leave and went on down to Miami in June of '65, I guess it was. Down there I was assigned to the station and we were under commercial cover.

PIEHLER: And this was in ...

BRAY: This was '65. And at that time we were still running agents into Cuba and one of my jobs was to support this. I worked with Cubans that had fled Cuba, but who had knowledge of communications intelligence. And I worked with them and we had an intercept site and they were monitoring the Cuban traffic.

PIEHLER: Again, much like in Germany and much like in Taiwan.

BRAY: Much like that, right. That was one of my jobs, to do that and to support the operations going into Cuba, which at that time had fallen off a lot. Back at the time of the [Cuban] Missile Crisis, in '62 ... we were very heavily involved with agents in Cuba. And as a matter of fact, Bill Harvey, from Berlin, had been chosen to run that part of the operation and he had a lot of agents in Cuba. As a matter of fact, one of his agents was the one that spotted the long missile. He was an architect and he was sittin' in his office and he saw this long missile go by and gave a beautiful description of it, and described it in such detail that the people here said, "that is a ..." whatever it was. They identified it. They could say, "Well, the Soviets have got that missile in Cuba and we didn't know this." So they said, "We gotta send a U-2 [Lockheed U-2 Reconnaissance Aircraft] over there and look into this." I'm paraphrasing, but anyhow the end result was, as you know, they spotted what was going on and the Cuban Missile Crisis developed. But we had suspected this, [or rather] they had, I wasn't there. But it was Bill Harvey again, the guy from the Midwest, the "doer," not the OSS type, the guy that you hope to have on your side when you really want something done. But anyhow, when I arrived in '65 ... of course we'd had the Missile Crisis and Kennedy had agreed not to invade, and agreed to take our missiles out of Turkey, and all this, but we were still sending agents in and actually losing most of 'em. Really, it was sad.

PIEHLER: Would you get to know these agents that you sent in?

BRAY: [On rare occasions], I talked to 'em before they went and ... participated in briefings to tell them what things; just this and that. And ... I had taken enough Spanish to get along and, you know, not fluent by any means but enough to understand what was going on.

PIEHLER: By the time you were on Cuba, we'd had the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Bay of Pigs. My sense of it, 'cause a lot of this is now public knowledge, the assassination attempts. Would it be fair to say that you could take Cuba as it's sort of on a real ... [downward slope] I mean you've already alluded to that.

BRAY: Right, it was fading out. It really was fading out. But, they still, from headquarters, the—let's see, I guess—well, Kennedy was assassinated in November of '63 and Bobby was assassinated ...

PIEHLER: In '68.

BRAY: In '68. Well, Bobby was really the one that was so dead-set, I mean dead-for, doing something about Cuba. As a matter of fact he got into a real fight with Bill Harvey. He came down to Miami at one time and he was saying, "Why aren't you guys doing more?"

PIEHLER: This is in ... ?

BRAY: This was after '62. Yeah, this was after. Well, I'm not sure ...

PIEHLER: This was not when you were there?

BRAY: This was not when I was there, no, no. I wasn't there then. I didn't arrive until '65. But I do know that Harvey and Bobby did not get along well at all. As a matter of fact, Bobby was responsible for Harvey being, you might say, "sent to Siberia" as chief of station, Rome. Nothing [was] going on [there]. He pulled a Hoover on him. But, anyhow, getting back to my time there; one thing I did was what I just said, was to support the operations, which were fading out. But also I was preparing a daily intelligence report for our station. And we had a pretty good size station then, we must've had ... I'll betcha two hundred people down there. It was a big station.

PIEHLER: That's still—that's a big ...

BRAY: It was still a big station, right. And we had more than one site as a matter of fact. I mean we had Zenith and we had other things going on besides what was going on at Zenith. So, one of my jobs was to prepare an intelligence summary of the past twenty-four hours. It was just sort of a thing that the chief of station wanted done and since they didn't have anybody else to do it, he assigned me the job. And I had three people, I guess, yeah I had three people. So ... I had one person that got there very early, like five o'clock in the morning, and I would arrive at like, seven, and then we would put all the stuff together and by nine o'clock or so I'd have this briefing sheet to tell the chief of station and the branch chiefs, the rest of the hierarchy in the station, what had transpired the past twenty-four hours. And we were in touch, we had teletype communication with the NSA and in Washington, and we had information coming from headquarters. So I, in effect, was sort of like the DDI people, the intelligence group ...

PIEHLER: In that particular job.

BRAY: In that particular job. But this was very rough; [not a finished product such as headquarters might produce]. I mean, it was rough but nevertheless, it covered the past twenty-four hours.

PIEHLER: So this is the first time you literally sort through it, not just as a conduit, but to make some sense of it.

BRAY: Right. In that case I had that job in addition to other things. And also to give requirements to the agents that were going in and basically, uh, and of course, during the day we would be working on tomorrow's briefing as well. And this person that came in early would take all the new stuff and sort of put that together, and then I would come in and put the final touch on it and prepare it for the chief of station. And that was pretty taxing. We also used to brief certain people that came through and I was one of the briefers for what we were doing. And so ... and again, I used to get up a lot at night and go in for those priority or op-immediates, because the only reason I'd go in would be to see if it was worth calling the chief of station. 'Cause it wasn't super enciphered. It was unlike what it was in Berlin. I didn't go in and decrypt anything, or decipher anything with a machine. I'd just go in and read it and see—usually what it would involve would be something that had been picked up about one of our agents being caught. And in that case the chief of station and the person directly responsible wanted to know all about this and was there some still down there in the mangroves trying to find a way home, which happened. We had swift boats and various boats that would go in and hover. Well, they'd take the boat to a certain point, and then go in by rubber rafts with silent motors and—so many of them got caught. It was bad news.

PIEHLER: I think there is an awful lot of criticism made of the CIA, “Why don't you have more human intelligence?”

BRAY: Well, we certainly tried.

PIEHLER: I mean it's a ...

BRAY: It's not an easy business. I mean, more and more as we got the U-2, and then ... we lost the U-2 of course, and then about the same time though, we got the satellite, and that took over from the U-2. And so the photographic information was so useful that they started to rely more and more on it. Also as time went by—well, Senator Church and his hearings hurt us dearly. He was responsible for about two thousand of our people being canned. Actually ... hopefully they were old enough to go into semi-retirement, but a lot of them weren't, and I saw this happen and it was sad. Because CIA, if you work for CIA, they don't have to have a reason for firing you, or dismissing you or letting you go. They don't have to justify it and you have no recourse, and I think that still is in effect.

PIEHLER: Now you also wrote when you were talking to the Lions group they could demand a polygraph anytime.

BRAY: Oh, absolutely, and also they could dismiss you at anytime. You had no recourse. I suspect it's still the same way, if you get fired from the GAO [Government Accountability Office], or someplace like that you can go ...

PIEHLER: Oh there's a whole appeals ...

BRAY: A whole appeals thing. Not with CIA. And I know many cases where this happened, and there's no appeal. But anyhow, I spent three years down there and, um, let's see, '65, '66, '67, and I came back to headquarters, I guess in '68, yeah. Came back to headquarters in '68 and was assigned to a group, to a branch that was involved in [some experimental testing which was pretty exotic, but I'd better not get into that.]

...

PIEHLER: In other words you got a promotion ... let's phrase it in a way that it might stay in the transcript. You got a promotion where you go to another level of signals intelligence.

BRAY: Right. In fact, if you want to back it off we can do that. I don't know where you—clearly in thinking about it, it's probably not a good idea.

PIEHLER: We'll definitely take it off the transcript.

...

PIEHLER: This is the South Vietnamese ...

BRAY: This is the South Vietnamese, and one of the finest gentlemen that I have ever known, and he was straight as an arrow. There were a lot of people with their hands out, but not this one. And he was very, very dedicated. I got to know him and his family very well. He had about, oh I'd say about three thousand people working for him and we were supporting him, not to the extent that we were the Chinese, but we were supporting him. And we had several places out of the country as well, and I won't go into detail there, but we were not limited to sites on Vietnam.

PIEHLER: I know some work has been done on some of the operations in Laos. I mean ... some of this has been put—but just in case you don't have to ...

BRAY: But we were definitely outside the country and it was under conditions where they were in compounds and they never got out. They were incommunicado. Now the reason I got to know him so well—well I'd talk to him two and three and four times a week—but I really got to know him [because] he had Sundays off. His people basically, except for watches, you know, for routine stuff they were monitoring twenty-four hours a day—Sunday was sort of a day off for the headquarters types, his headquarters. That was the only day he could get away and he and I would take an airplane, a single-engine aircraft, and an Air America pilot, and I think we hit every province Sunday after Sunday in all of Vietnam. Every Sunday; it was almost every

Sunday [that] I could get off. That was just another day as far as I was concerned. Sometimes we would take an NSA person with us or maybe an ASA person but frequently just the two of us. And we would go to talk to his generals in these various provinces and military regions. There were three military regions, MR 1, 2, and 3. Guess that's all there were ... no there were five. There were five military regions from the south all the way up north ... Vietnam is a long—I don't know how long it is, but it must be what, five hundred miles long? But we went from tip to tip, repeatedly, because he wanted to find out what the generals needed from him, and he had people stationed in all these places.

PIEHLER: He was very dedicated, 'cause he ...

BRAY: He was extremely. He was a very unusual Vietnamese, very unusual.

PIEHLER: You're making these trips sound very routine, but it is a war zone, I mean ...

BRAY: Well, we were flying over a lot of enemy territory, that's for sure, but we were high enough until they got the TOW [Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire command data link, guided missile]. They got the TOW missile, which was a wire-guided missile and we started having to fly higher. We were flying at maybe five thousand feet or so, but we went up to ten [thousand], you know, as time went by. But he was a very dedicated man and I just am so devoted to him, to this day because, let me tell you why, I mean what happened. I left in '72 and I thought when I left that things were going fairly well under the so-called Nixon's Vietnamization program. At that point in time we had turned over practically everything to the South Vietnamese. The Navy was the first thing to leave. Our U.S. Navy was the first to leave. They gradually turned over ship after boat after boat after ship. And they were small, like destroyer escorts and smaller craft, but ... they were sea-going vessels. And the Navy had turned theirs over [and] probably by the end of '71 the Navy was gone. And then in '72 ASA was turning theirs over. They would have a Vietnamese sitting here with 'em until they felt as though they could handle it and ... the ASA people were coming back home. And by the time I left in October of '72 there was virtually no U.S. Military people left, except for a few aircraft. And few of those; there were no operational aircraft supporting the troops and they were doing it themselves, and were doing a pretty good job. They had a real invasion; I forget exactly when it was.

PIEHLER: It was earlier that year.

BRAY: Yeah, and they took 'em. That's right.

PIEHLER: Particularly, I remember at that time the Battle of An Loc.

BRAY: That's right, that's right. They fought 'em off. And I thought that we really were ...

PIEHLER: You thought it was gonna work.

BRAY: I thought it was gonna work, I really did. I don't know ... I was ready to come home because the children were going into school, in college. Laurie was in Maryland at that time

going to school. It was a bad time because of all the stuff that was going on back here at that time and I didn't appreciate at all the things that I was hearing in some of the people that were objecting. We used to get the Washington Post, about a week late, and I was reading things in there that just didn't make [sense]. They were exaggerating what was going on, I thought. It was sort of a sad time because things were not quite the way it seemed to a lot of people back here in the colleges, and people going off to Canada and all that sort of thing. It was very, very—it hurt us, believe me. I'm not just making this up, it was a sad thing to read about ... the lack of support.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

BRAY: Okay, so anyhow, I left in October of '72 and I was replaced by another guy and then he stayed on until ... Of course in 1975, I guess it was, you know what happened. They came across ... The Viet Cong had pretty much been wiped out. The Viet Cong was decimated in the Tet Offensive, basically. That's when they came out, in '68, and they were literally whipped and decimated. But the main force [North Vietnamese Army] started coming in more and more. The main force Vietnamese came across, down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and through that way, and then across. And then in '75 they literally came across the border, took over Hue, and then moved on into the Highlands and Ban Me Thuot, Gang Toi, well not Gang Toi, but the various ones, you know. Once the gate was broken down there was no stopping them and the South Vietnamese, they had no air support except their own, and we were not supplying them with the where-with-all to fight them and they just were crushed, very quickly. Well, all of a sudden all hell broke loose in Saigon. And Nhon, my friend, the person I was telling you that had made brigadier general at that point; he shows up at the embassy gate, (Coughs) they have a high fence there. I'm losing my voice.

PIEHLER: Do you need a glass of water?

BRAY: Yeah, I may. Do you have maybe a cough drop or any kind of hard candy?

PIEHLER: The only thing I have; I have a lollipop. (Laughs)

BRAY: Hey, that's all right. That's okay.

PIEHLER: Let me get you glass of water.

BRAY: This doesn't normally happen., but you know, I've been yackin' a long time.

(Pause)

BRAY: Did you come from Tennessee?

GAINES: Uh, I live in Knoxville. Originally, I'm from Texas.

BRAY: Is that right? Well, I'll be doggone. When did you come here?

GAINES: Um, third grade.

BRAY: Oh, really?

GAINES: So I'm pretty much from here, but my father was in the military; in the Army.

BRAY: Yeah. Was he really? Oh, you're an Army brat.

GAINES: Mm hmm.

BRAY: Well, I spent a little bit of time in Idalou, Texas in the fall of 1939 pickin' cotton. I went down to Idalou, which is right north of Lubbock and spent oh, six weeks or so. And I've been to Dallas a few times and I always consider myself—well, you know Oklahoma and Texas are close, except when they get on the football field. (Laughter)

GAINES: Yeah, I lived in Texas and then we moved to Germany for awhile.

BRAY: Did you really? Where'd you go in Germany?

GAINES: Langenzenn, outside of Nuremberg. And then to Maryland, near Silver Spring.

BRAY: What ... did your dad do in Silver Spring?

GAINES: He's a physician, so ...

BRAY: Was he really?

GAINES: Yeah, he was at Fitzsimons [Fitzsimons Army Medical Center].

PIEHLER: Some of this ...

GAINES: That's right, now you have my life [story].

PIEHLER: Yeah ...

BRAY: I didn't realize he was an Army brat. So anyhow, so my friend, whose name is Nhon, N-H-O-N. That's actually his first name because it's Pham Huu Nhon, the last name is really what you call him by. His last name is Pham, but it's first, Pham Huu Nhon. So Nhon shows up at the embassy, the big barricade there, and it so happened that the chief of station, I guess it was Tom Polgar at that time, saw him. No it wasn't either—so anyhow the chief of station, whoever it was, saw him and said, "Nhon, Nhon, Nhon, Nhon get over here!" So Nhon had his family, his daughter, and one of his boys. One of his boys was in the states going to dental school, or going to college, and he eventually became a dentist. He had one of his boys who was in high school, and his girl who was about in middle school, and his wife; the four of 'em. They somehow got over that wall with all these screamin' people trying to get in through there. Well, I guess probably what happened was they opened the gate enough for them to squeeze in, that's the way it was. So anyhow, he made it in. 'Course, Nhon, they knew that if the Vietnamese caught Nhon

he was a goner. He was well known as the head of his organization, which I'm sure they knew about. So they squeezed in and got off on one of the last choppers.

PIEHLER: So he and his family made ...

BRAY: He and his family made it; and they made it to the boats. And he spent time in Saipan and eventually wound up in D.C. And since he speaks French, Chinese, including Mandarin, English, Vietnamese, and a dialect in Chinese, Mandarin plus a dialect, he was able to get a job through NSA. And NSA knew him. I mean he worked with them ... they were eager to have him. So he made his way to Washington and I didn't know about it. I didn't know this at all ... until one day somebody told me Nhon was in town. So I immediately got a hold of him and he was living in a very, very sad, sad place with, you know, ninety percent were black and not getting out of the—hardly venturing out of the house and so forth. And so I managed to get him an FHA [Federal Housing Administration] loan, I was in real estate. I'd already retired at that point.

PIEHLER: When did you retire?

BRAY: I retired actually in '73.

PIEHLER: So you retired before all the Church and the Rockefeller [Committees] ...

BRAY: Yeah, I retired. I retired in June of '73.

PIEHLER: So Vietnam was really your last ...

BRAY: Vietnam was my last one and I came back. Well, I came back to headquarters in late '72 and got, I guess they gave us a thirty day leave, and then they gave me another job; a branch chief job. And I was to work closely with NSA and ... I had a bunch of people under me. And I had an attack of pericarditis, and I had one of these before and got over it, and recovered, and talked my way into another overseas assignment 'cause I didn't want to stay in headquarters. I talked my way in Vietnam. Of course it happened in January [1970] and I didn't leave until December and by that time I had the doctor certify me as okay. Well, I had another attack and so ... I said, "Well, I guess I'm finished with overseas duty and I just think this might be a good time for me to retire." I was only fifty-two. And I qualified for retirement. If you had x-number of years overseas and you were age fifty you could retire; and if you had twenty-five years of service. And so I did retire and I went into real estate and worked seventeen years in real estate. (Chuckles)

PIEHLER: Well, and also Washington just exploded, I mean Washington, even of the 1960s was much more of a small town.

BRAY: So anyhow, that's how I got to know my friend Nhon [was in America] and we still correspond.

PIEHLER: So you're still ...

BRAY: Yeah, and two of his boys are now dentists, or have been for several years. His daughter graduated, got her B.A., and he and his wife continue to work. All the kids worked and paid off this FHA loan. They had enough—he needed very little money to get a FHA loan and it was a very small house, but it was a single family house. Well it was in Wheaton area.

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, the Wheaton area ...

BRAY: Along Veirs Mill Road. ... One of those houses along Veirs Mill Road. And so I had a real good friend in the savings and loan business and I said, “I know these people. They’ll pay, I mean they’ll work. Every one of them will work. You don’t have to worry about anything.” He got the loan through. And because when they left [Vietnam], they left with the clothes on their back, really. And he had worked and he had a job, everybody had a job. And as long as you had a job, and especially Orientals, I never knew an Oriental who’d default on a loan. I mean Chinese—I worked in real estate seventeen years and I worked with a lot of Orientals, a lot of Koreans. I never had a one of ‘em default on a loan. And the bankers know this. The bankers are generous with Orientals because they know that it means everything to them. And they may not have [muh]; they may be using orange crates to eat off of, but their kids are gonna go to school and get a college education and they’re gonna go to the best high schools they can find. First question they ask you, what school are my kids going to? So anyhow, that’s the end of my career with CIA.

PIEHLER: I know Thomas has to go soon, but I wanted to ask, and we’ve kept you quite a long time. I’ve so enjoyed listening to you I might want to do a follow up just to go back and ...

BRAY: I think my voice is overdone.

PIEHLER: Well, there’s one question ... let me ask it even though I might ask it later in an interview, but one thing that struck me in your CIA career ... and this is sort of my synthesis of it, while your career was working as an intermediary, between CIA, the headquarters and these people in the field; first the Germans, then the Nationalist Chinese, then the Vietnamese ...

BRAY: And the Cubans

PIEHLER: And the Cubans. All are very different, I mean, you’re all against the communist, but very different groups.

BRAY: All the same subject, yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but very different nationalities and—one of the things I got listening to you describe this, in a lot of ways, the current CIA, current intelligence, and this is something you don’t know anything about so you can speculate. But it strikes me ,and we won’t know this for decades now, but what’s probably very crucial that’s going on is, is the CIA enlisting people in our current wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in general; are we enlisting the right people [who] we’re sending bags of money to, whoever they may be. That’s a very crucial thing ...

BRAY: I think we lost a lot of years. And I probably shouldn't say this, but I have often—the jury's always been out in my mind as far as ... our most recent Director's concerned. I never did really think—I just didn't know, but I had reservations because he came from a Senate committee. He's a politician. He was, to my mind, he was not a career ... he was not one of us.

PIEHLER: This is the one who just resigned? Yeah.

BRAY: And I—it's not the first time I've said this.

PIEHLER: He joined the CIA after you left it?

BRAY: Oh, oh yeah. He was appointed by Clinton in ... that's about four or five Directors.

PIEHLER: Yeah, there'd been a number of ...

BRAY: Gates, I thought Gates was good. But after Gates he had the guy, I think was in the Pentagon. I think he was a real loser. And then the one that just resigned.

PIEHLER: Yeah, all the names. The only CIA agent I can now think of is Stansfield Turner.

BRAY: Oh, Stansfield Turner was another loser. He was a definite loser. He was an admiral, but he was not well-respected at all. Neither was another general. We had some military people that people didn't respect. The best ones we had though, I think, were Dulles and Dick Helms and this general that I can't think of ...

PIEHLER: I know. I'm embarrassed that I didn't write all the CIA ...

GAINES: One of the first generals?

BRAY: The third ...

GAINES: Van de Gard or something like that?

BRAY: Oh, he was Air Force. No, he was okay. Vandengriff, I think was the name. But this one was—he was ...

PIEHLER: I know, and I can hear him sort of being ...

BRAY: He was rough. He was always kick—as they say, “Old General So-and-So's always kickin' ass, ain't he?” (Laughs) But, he was a good one. That's the best one. But the others that I just mentioned, I think really were ... I think Helms was probably our best—and Dulles. Dulles was the old OSS, but he was good. And Helms was OSS, too. He was OSS. And then the guy that ... ran the Phoenix program in Vietnam, who drowned in the Chesapeake. The name escapes me right now. [He is] the one that a lot of CIA people got upset at because he quote, “sold the family jewels.” He's the one—and that was while I was still there, really—he was the one that had all of us write down anything that we could think of that CIA did illegally. Anything that we

could think of, and he gave all this to Church. He gave the family jewels to Church. And, well anyhow, I can't think of his name. [Note: This Director was William E. Colby, who was well-liked by most.]

PIEHLER: Yeah, that's one reason to do the follow up because I did not write my list of CIA agents and ...

BRAY: I wish I could think of that general's name because he was a good one.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I would just love to do a [follow up interview]. Are you gonna come down to anymore games this year?

BRAY: Well, when Ernie said he didn't know whether he could get any tickets, [but] he'd try. So he called me one day and he said, "Hey, I got season tickets. You can pick your game." So I went down, and we looked up the list ... I said, "I've I've always wanted see Alabama play." So I said, "I'd like to see Tennessee play Alabama." So I got first pick of his tickets ... I'm sure he's already made arrangements to give the tickets away.

PIEHLER: Well, it's funny but the woman you met out in the hall, she has a lot of the tickets.

BRAY: Is that right? (Laughter)

PIEHLER: She, I think has bought a lot of his tickets.

BRAY: This is the only one I have a lock on.

PIEHLER: As I said, I'd love to do a follow up ... it won't be as long but I definitely should bone up on my different CIA Directors. Well, one of the things you convey is that the CIA Director has a lot of—it's a bureaucracy where the director really matters. Is that a fair characterization?

BRAY: Oh, absolutely. As I tried to get across in my speech there, to the Lions [Club], CIA doesn't go around just namby-pamby picking targets. People think that CIA is like Church said, a rogue elephant. That's not true at all. The National Security Council and the President set the tone for what they want out of CIA, and it's up to CIA to figure out ways to get it done. But ever since, for many, many years now we've had all these various committees that have to pass on—originally, it was run pretty loosely because you had Senator Vandenberg and the Senator from Georgia, [Senator] Russell. They were on the committee but they'd say, "Well, if you guys say it's okay, then it's okay," sort of thing. And that's how we got the tunnel through, and things like that; the U-2. It was a lot more fun in those days than it was after the committees, the Church Committee and Pike Committee got involved and just turned us into, you know, bad guys. And really, it was unfortunate.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

ADDENDUM:

During my proof-reading of the transcripts, I realized I had neglected to cover a couple of very significant provisions of the Congressional Act which established CIA. Both of these related to the collection and use of Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). Heretofore, this had always been under the strict control of the US Military. The Army had its own cryptographic effort, and the Navy had an altogether separate program. It was something which was very tightly held by each endeavor, and one might assume that there was actual competition to see who could outdo the other. There is evidence to indicate that prior to WWII they took time about, more or less on a monthly basis, to pass "hot" items of information to appropriate National leaders. such as the President and Secretary of State. Just what happened as things heated up prior to Pearl Harbor is not clear to me, although I presume that the previous separation of effort was discontinued by the time the attack took place; maybe not. In any event, the Armed Forces Security Agency (AFSA), which was renamed the National Security Agency (NSA) in 1952, was in charge of all SIGINT matters as of 1947; and, its subordinate units consisted of Army, Navy and Air Force units scattered around the world. With the advent of CIA, a couple of major changes were made. First, the "end product" (decrypts, etc) which were produced by the cryptographic services were made available to CIA, and the latter was charged with the responsibility of analysis and dissemination to appropriate recipients, such as the President and others on a need to know basis. The finished product was known as "Code Word Material," and was labeled as such. Special Clearances were required for individuals who had access to it. Another major change involved the U.S. relationship with foreign governments. Under the terms of the 1947 Act, the CIA was given the authority to establish SIGINT-related programs with foreign governments with the exception of Great Britain and its United Kingdom. Such outside relationships were known as "Third Party" arrangements and would prove to be most useful, especially from the standpoint of cost savings to the U.S. The office in CIA which was chosen to handle this new program was known as "Staff D", later designated "Division D", and it was the office where I hung my hat for my entire career with the Agency. Bill Harvey headed up this unit initially. However, his training was in law, not in cryptography. so CIA was able to recruit several high level AFSA personnel to come on board. Most notable of these was Frank Rowlett, who was largely responsible for breaking Japanese cipher systems before and during WWII. He came on as Chief, Staff D, remaining as such for many years. He not only was truly an expert in his field but worked very professionally with other top leaders in the Agency as a whole.

It is unfortunate that we did not cover the above during our two interviews, as I am certain that Dr. Piehler would have pursued my comments in more detail. That said, I think I have covered the basic issues, and they can serve fairly well as a matter of record. At least, it will help the reader better understand what I was doing when I spent the three years in Taiwan and two in Vietnam. That is: I was engaged in activity pursuant to SIGINT "Third Party" arrangements.