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Codes From Washington

Fritz Newsom, who is director of the data processing division of Ottumwa's Technical and Vocational School, shed some light the other day on how some of the famous code names are selected.

In the computer field, it seems, you are nobody unless you speak in numbers with terms such as binary, binary coded decimal, octal, or unless you abbreviate everything. There is COBOL, which is "common business oriented language," and ALGOL—algorithmic oriented language — as examples.

Over in Washington the Central Intelligence Agency has set up a high-powered, very secretive computer complex used to store and retrieve information from a library of over 40 million documents in a fraction of a second. For this the CIA has come up with the word, WALNUT.

Newsom, knowing of this six-

letter code word and being intrigued by it, had opportunity to inquire three weeks ago when a representative of CIA spent several days here interviewing 12 data processing school students for possible employment. He asked Charles Chonowiki, the representative, about WALNUT.

And he received this very scientific explanation:

"When the CIA decided to use the power of computers in our intelligence activities, we drew up the very strict and complex requirements that must be met. We called into Washington every major computer manufacturer and presented to them this complex data. After these people had heard our specifications which involved two days of solid briefing, one fellow wiped his brow and said, 'Wow, this is a tough nut to crack.' So what else could we call it but WALNUT?"