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# They Didn't Laugh When I Invited CBS to Film the CIA

**THE OUTLOOK INTERVIEW: HERB HETU, PR MAN TO THE POWERFUL,**

**Q:** When you left the CIA your desk memo pads had a picture of a man with a funny nose and glasses and fake moustache and trenchcoat. Did you use that pad while you were at the agency?

**A:** A little bit, not for anything official. My son had those made for me for Christmas.

**Q:** How did they go over there? In general, the agency's not known for having a big sense of humor. Is that a bad rap?

**A:** Oh, yes. They all laugh at themselves. It's like a family; it's okay for members of the family to laugh at each other but an outsider comes in, that's not done.

**Q:** How did you envision that job, for the first time creating a public affairs office?

**A:** The first day I went to the CIA I was scared to death. I'd never been there in my life! The only image I had of the CIA was the same impression everybody else on the street has. I didn't know what to expect. The people were wonderful, but going in there perceived as the guy who was going to let the press in, open the windows . . . oh *boy*, a lot of hostility.

**Q:** Were you a social outcast because of your job description?

**A:** No. Of course, Stan [CIA Director Stansfield Turner] brought me in at a fairly high level. There's a military feel to the CIA. If you're brought in at a certain level it's almost like being a general. They may not like you but you wear the star.

**Q:** You were the first person to let a network TV crew in? CBS?

**A:** Dan Rather. [When] I suggested at the morning meeting that we let CBS come in — "60 Minutes," no less, with cameras — and film the agency and do interviews, I think three of the assistant directors almost dropped dead. You could hear a pin drop in the room.

But we got an agreement from "60 Minutes" that they would let us review the raw film for security but

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not for content. We couldn't touch anything if it wasn't classified. And the only thing that could be classi-

fied would be people's faces or badges, things like that.

**Q:** But it's hard to shoot a roomful of people at desks without seeing some faces?

**A:** The only faces we were worried about were people undercover.

**Q:** As opposed to other people who work for the CIA, particularly in covert functions, you didn't have to hide the fact that you worked there from your neighbors?

**A:** Oh no. My cover was diaphanous. I was the most overt of all the overt people.

**Q:** What was a typical day like for you?

**A:** My friends asked me that question when I first went there and I'd say, well, the first thing I do is go out and look under my car, because I didn't think I was too popular out there. Then send my dog out to start it!

No, I went to work early and used to review the morning intelligence reports. I was never shut out to the best of my knowledge, and I don't mean that in a snide way.

**Q:** Did you ever say something that you shouldn't have to a reporter?

**A:** Probably, but the only times I did, when I *knew* I did, and I don't mean that I breached security, but there were several occasions where I worked with reporters who called and volunteered to read a story to me. They said they were writing a story about the agency and wanted to read it to me to see if there was anything with which we would disagree. An old reportorial ploy — call the guy and read the story and hope he'll fill in the blanks. I knew that.

On two or three occasions they had names of people in the story that really didn't add anything and would have blown somebody's cover. I volunteered the fact that those people really were ours and it didn't add to the story and asked [the reporters] to take their names out, and they did.

**Q:** Is that the biggest nightmare of the public affairs director of the CIA? That you will leak something that you shouldn't?

**A:** The most unique frustrations I had at the CIA were that I couldn't talk about a lot of the successes. To a public relations man not to be able to talk about your company's successes — I don't mean "company," I'm being facetious — is heart-breaking. Drove me mad. The converse of that was to see stories I knew to be untrue. I couldn't correct the story [because] the reasons that the story was untrue were classified or I would break somebody's cover.

The CIA is fair game for anybody that wants to accuse you of virtually anything. Trying to disprove a negative is almost impossible. A guy caught in a bank robbery said that he was robbing the bank to get money to line a cave with lead because the CIA was bombarding his head with electronic emissions, using his head as a receiver!

**Q:** When there are leaks to the press from within a government agency, is the finger of blame usually pointed at the public affairs office?

**A:** Almost always. You're the one who's consorting with the enemy, so to speak. It's part of the game. A lot of people out there thought that even *talking* with the newsmen was ridiculous, made no sense. They wouldn't get the story right. They'd write all the negative things. [Some] didn't think my job was necessary in any case, and doing things aggress-

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