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ANTHONY MENDEZ
Interview by Jim Hanrahan
26 May 1998

(Start of Tape 1, Side A - 90 minute tape)

JH: So here I am, Knoxville right.

AM: Yes. Pleasant Valley.

JH: Pleasant Valley. And we want to talk about your career. And we can start I guess with your answering an add in the newspaper, is that right?

AM: Yes.

JH: Or may be before that, what were you when you answered that ad.

AM: I was in illustrator at Martin Marietta and I had my own art studio. A friend of mine, actually another artist, saw an ad in the Denver post. I was living in Denver, the ad was one of those blind ads, "Artist to work for the U.S. Navy", or something like that. So he answered it and it turned out that they didn't see that he would fit, but he told me about it and so I sent in my resume and a few art samples. A recruiter from Salt Lake- [redacted] - answered and set up an appointment. We met in a motel room in Denver and of course that's when I found out it was not the navy, it was the CIA. So he put the bottle of bourbon on the table and said, "it is really the CIA", He had his hat on and he was really playing the role of the hard boiled detective or something.

JH: So then you came right into OTS, was that it?

AM: It was called TSD at the time, it was part of the DDP Technical Services Division.

JH: So you started out in the DDP before that unit moved over to S&T.

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AM: Exactly. It was the DDP for a good seven years before it moved. I don't remember exactly what year that was, but it was around 1973 or 1974, when Schlesinger came in. So then we moved to the S&T, but it didn't change much.

JH: What did you start out doing?

AM: I was hired into the part of TSD that was called the Graphics Reproduction Branch, Graphics Arts Reproduction Branch. What that really meant was, this is where the documentation was made. This is where the counterfeiting and forgery were done for clandestine operations. Basically the people that were working there were there from OSS, some of them. Of course they moved on, but when I came in as a young artist and went to work on the board, some of these folks were the ones who trained me. They were doing that job for many years. Basically it's a fundamental trade craft necessary for any intelligence agency worth its salt.

JH: Doing the documentation?

AM: Making false documentation so you can move people around.

JH: And this would cover the world?

AM: Exactly. At that time GARB [Graphic Arts Reproduction Branch] had a large shop [redacted] I started pushing to get overseas immediately and within 20 months I was [redacted] and I was there for four years.

JH: And that would be [redacted] oriented, the documentation there?

AM: That's right.

JH: It would be all different languages?

AM: Oh yes. And the sister branch was called the Authentication Branch. That's

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[Redacted]

JH: Did you travel much there?

AM: Initially no, but then once I sort of got my wings, I was traveling a lot. Then at the end of that four year tour I went [Redacted] where I traveled constantly. I was there for three years.

JH: What did the travel consist of?

AM: Actually going into the region and answering operational need. The first travel I did was [Redacted]

[Redacted]

That was the initial travel, but then there were many other things that we were doing, certainly documentation, probably the highlight of my travel [Redacted]

[Redacted]

JH: [Redacted]

AM: [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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JH: That's interesting. Were there many times when the documentation didn't pass muster?

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AM: In my experience, and ultimately when I got to be more senior and oversaw the world wide action in this regard, there were hundreds of cases that I was concerned with, or where I was personally involved in, and never had a problem. Now that's not to say there never was a problem with documentation in the history of the CIA, because that's not true

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

JH: Getting back [REDACTED] and setting up this new outfit out there in the field, what did you have to work with, where did you get your stuff from, your materials? Did it come from Headquarters?

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AM: You had to have a certain amount of raw materials as you suggest. What we were able to do was to miniaturize the kind of things we had [redacted]

[redacted]

One person or two people would start studying that particular problem, and then you'd boil it down to a certain number of documents that you had to make. If they were too complicated to make in that location, you'd send them back to Headquarters or wherever. But a lot of things we made on site using innovative techniques; it was a case of innovation because of necessity.

JH: You must have had a flair for that sort of thing or talent of some kind. Do you think your artistic ability made a difference in that kind of work?

AM: Oh yes, to be able to do something with your hands was important, also being able to puzzle something through, to sort of untie the Gordian knot. Anything that a man can conceive to control people another man or woman can conceive a way to untie that. And that was a piece of it. But you didn't know what to make until you untied the knot. So if somebody said we want to [redacted] then you start trying to boil that down to, OK, what exactly are you trying to accomplish. How should this team be made up, who are the people, and then devise a cover. It is a very creative process. It is more than just an artistic process. It is more like producing a movie than it is actually counterfeiting something. Sometimes there was nothing you had to do by hand.

JH: Did you start to specialize more narrowly then in the disguise side of things?

AM: I mentioned the graphic or artistic and then the analytical, but obviously the disguise was the other piece. It was kind of like three pieces. And some people were really good at specializing in the analytical part, and others were flexible and capable of doing all three things. Some could do two. In the really tough jobs, you typically reverted to a team because it took more than one person iust because you had to be at two places at once. [redacted]

[redacted] It isn't practical for one person to do a complicated operation like that, but there are many, many smaller tasks where one person can do it.

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JH: Now staying on that case, presumably you had to convince this fellow that you guys were good, that is what you provided him in the way of documentation and the way of disguise would work, and that's probably a crucial element.

AM: Absolutely. Any time you have a problem like that the last thing many people want to consider is the idea of putting an untested source of that sort into the airport where they are out of our control.

So by the time you get down to where you are actually eyeball to eyeball with this person, it really becomes us and this person, sort of getting inside their head and becoming the voice for them in a sense. I remember many cases where we would be the one arguing in the minority, saying yes we believe this person can do it. We would have to call the boss in the middle of the night and the boss would listen to the case officers and listen to us and say, "OK I understand everything everybody has said here," and turn to us and say, "I want that person on the airplane by morning". Because if you didn't make it by morning then you were under siege. It came down to that sense that you had to develop about the person in your ability to do it, to stand the gaff.

JH: I imagine it works differently with different cultures too, that you have to sort of get a feel for the nationality of the guy you are dealing with and practices of that particular culture?

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JH: Well things are getting tougher all the time I imagine. Anyway, coming back
[redacted] you then started working out of Headquarters and you started moving up in
the ranks.

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AM: I became the chief of disguise when I came back and it was the thing that got me out of the field.

JH: Had there been a chief before that?

AM: Oh yes, but I was the guy who trained for ten days and then started innovating in the field things that became the new technology at home. So all of the sudden here comes this fellow from the field, and he is the new chief. It was a time to change a lot of the things that we were doing, a time to augment a lot of the things we were doing. I was there for a few years, and we got a lot of things going, and those things have continued to today. I think it is safe to say that the CIA's disguise capability is second to none. I know some of the people in Hollywood and the medical sculptors and so forth that we worked with would have said not to me or anybody in the agency necessarily, that we are better than either of those other industries, Hollywood, or....

JH:

[Redacted]

AM:

[Redacted]

JH: Well in your own travels did you use disguises at various points? And would the documentation would be different in each case, or did you travel on the same cover?

AM: Oh yes. I used every kind of cover. In the Iranian rescue, I obviously went in using Agency manufactured documents. I got the Canadians to give us six passports for the six people we had to rescue. They weren't going to give me and my partner a Canadian passport. [Redacted] They decided that they didn't want intelligence operatives out there on their passports. It was OK to have six refugees use Canadian passports, but not two intelligence officers.

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JH: We might talk about that since we were alluding to it. These people were not CIA people; they were State people.

AM: That's right.

JH: And there were how many of them?

AM: There were six.

JH: And you had to plan that and stage that and decide what kind of scenario to adopt

AM: Yes, the identities of these people.

JH: So how did you go about doing that.

AM: At the time we had 53 people that were in the embassy as hostages. The fact that there were six in the care of the Canadians because they escaped from the compound as it was being overrun, didn't seem as urgent a matter, initially, as trying to figure out how to rescue the others. We were working that problem very heavily. We had to get a lot of people in country in a hurry to start setting up whatever we needed for the military rescue operations. As the chief of the now Authentication Branch, where the documents were issued and the disguises were made and issued, suddenly a whole plate was set before me of things to do. This one problem with the six was sitting there, and as time went on the Canadians became more concerned about it. So it was hiked up to a level of concern between [Cyrus] Vance, the Secretary of State of the United States, and Flora McDonald, the Foreign Minister of Canada.

[REDACTED] NE Division obviously turned to me and said, "What are we going to do?" So there ensued a series of negotiations between me and the DO, my guys and me and the Canadians and the State department. You end up negotiating a plan, something that everyone can sign up to. What you are really doing is getting everybody's level of confidence up to like the 90 percentile, believing all the while that you can pull this off.

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That's the toughest part of these kinds of situations, particularly one like that where if you fail it not only sticks on you, it sticks on the President of the United States. So the risk of failure politically is tremendous, Whoever is going to make the final decision to launch is going to be the President of the United States as it turned out.

The biggest problem we had there was that we had six people who were not, we could not determine whether the six people were going to be willing to do this at a distance. It became abundantly clear that I was going to go in along with one of my other people on the team and size them up. So we got everybody's ideas together and we put together a plan. You had essentially three options, the one that I invented which was the Hollywood cover, that was far out, and the one that the Canadians favored and the one that the State Department favored.

We put it all in a bundle and in we went. Obviously we had to send passports in so they could be finalized. And since the State Department was favoring US passports, and the Canadians were favoring Canadian passports, both went in. Anytime you are doing something like that you always try and have redundancy built in, so in went a second set. The cover situation was key, also knowing the controls as we understood them, updating our knowledge.

This particular case was not so much a disguise case, because these people were missing but not really being pursued. It wasn't really clear how many or who they were, in the general sense. The biggest problem that we had was that there were three or four members of the press that had figured out that they were missing and were looking for them. Principally the Washington DC correspondent for La Presse in Montreal knew. He had figured it out, and he went to the Canadian ambassador, and the Canadian ambassador said, "You will not write that story until we close down our embassy and get those people out. Otherwise you will have compromised our embassy, and we will be hostages." So he did not write the story, he sat on it.

In the meantime there were telephone calls, anonymous calls being made to the Canadian ambassador's residence, asking by name for the people, so we knew time was getting short. Now the sense of urgency was really heightened. Finally I got approval to launch and Europe to join up with the other fellow that was going to go in with me. Again this is that team concept, you've got to have more than one person there to make the full complement. He and I, [redacted] Hollywood notion that I had for cover, were able to go get real Iranian visas in Iranian embassies in Europe. He went to Geneva, I went to Bonn. So that was another bridge crossed.

You always want to get a real one if you can because it is backstopped if you get into a situation where somebody is questioning your veracity. It would be nice to have a file in

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an embassy somewhere that they can confirm, yes, we did issue this visa. [redacted]

[redacted] In any case, we finally got ready to launch, and, sure enough, the President made the final decision to go.

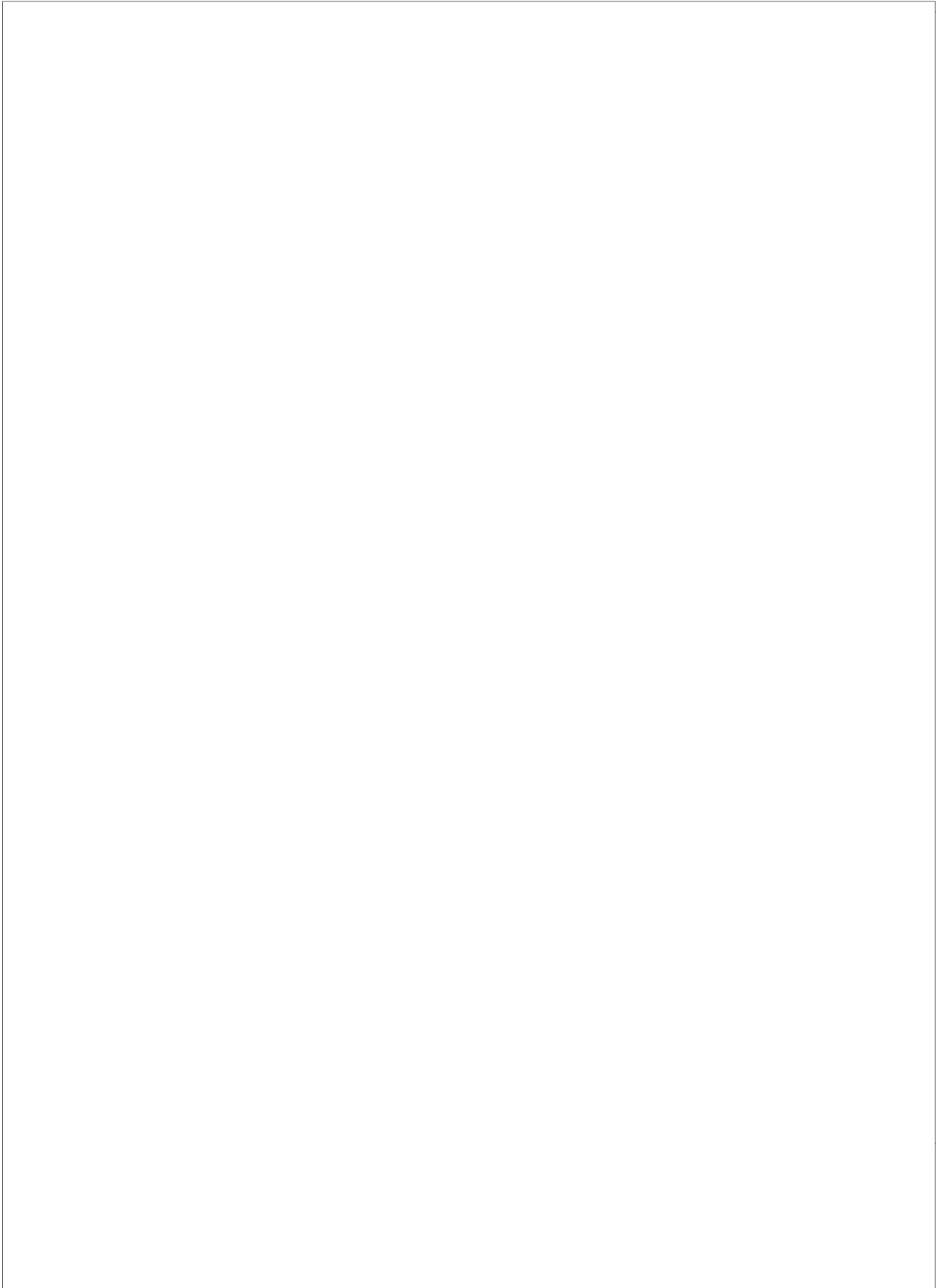
The message I got [redacted] the night I was to get on the airplane was from the Director and it said the President has approved your mission, good luck. So we went in and we sized up the people. We met with the Canadians, obviously, and we undertook to get them out within three days. Everything that we had prepared was there already through the Canadian [redacted] Our cover, our documents were just fine. The situation in Tehran was just fine. And we presented the three cover notions, and the one that they bought was the one that I had devised, and out we came. Nowhere along the line was any of this tested or even divulged until recently. All this while, the public and the Iranians, and most of the Canadians understood that the Canadian ambassador had been able to do this himself. It was the CIA that decided to put it into the public domain last fall. So it has become sort of a famous case.

JH: Changed your life, I presume?

AM: Yes, absolutely.

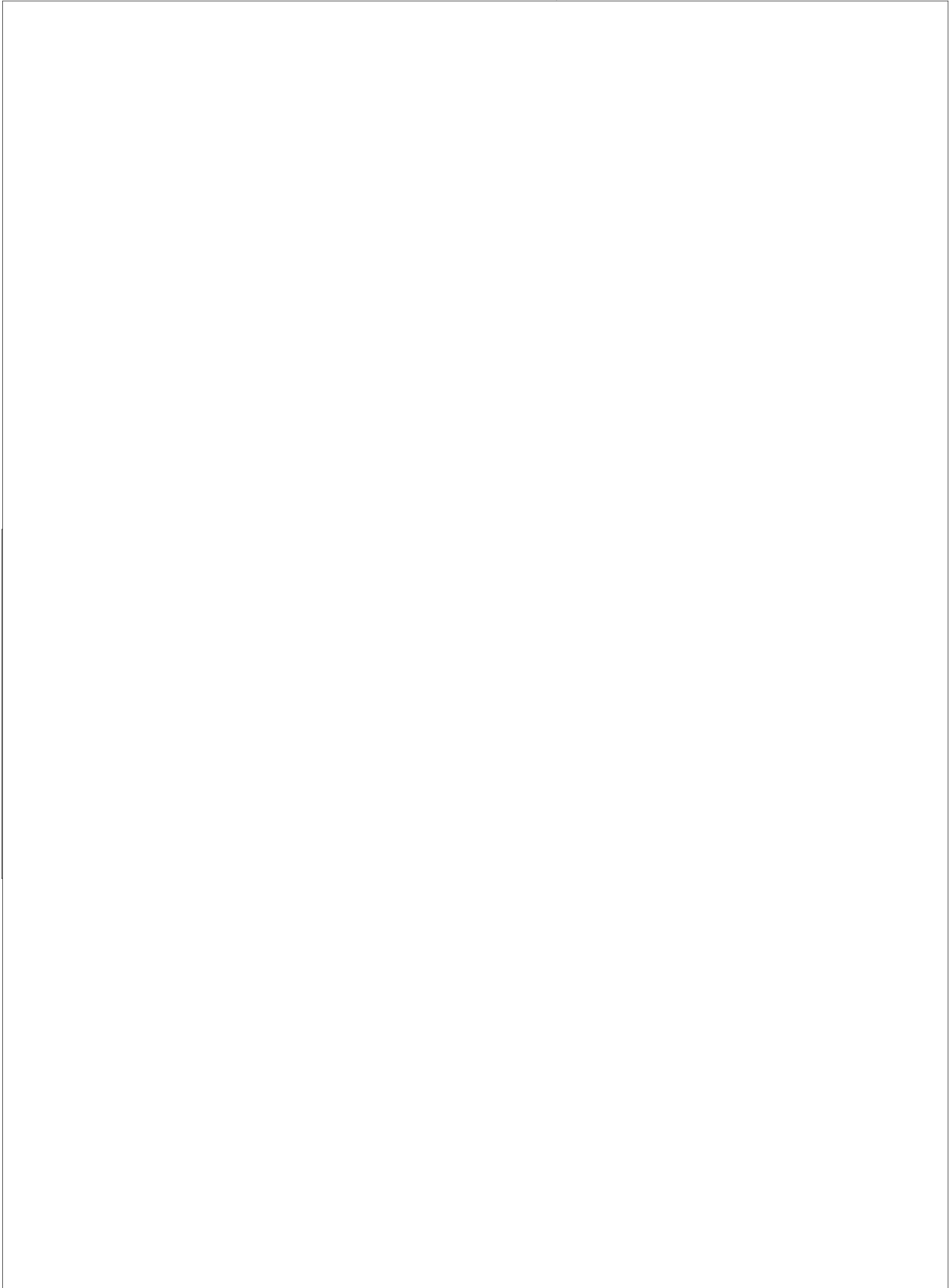
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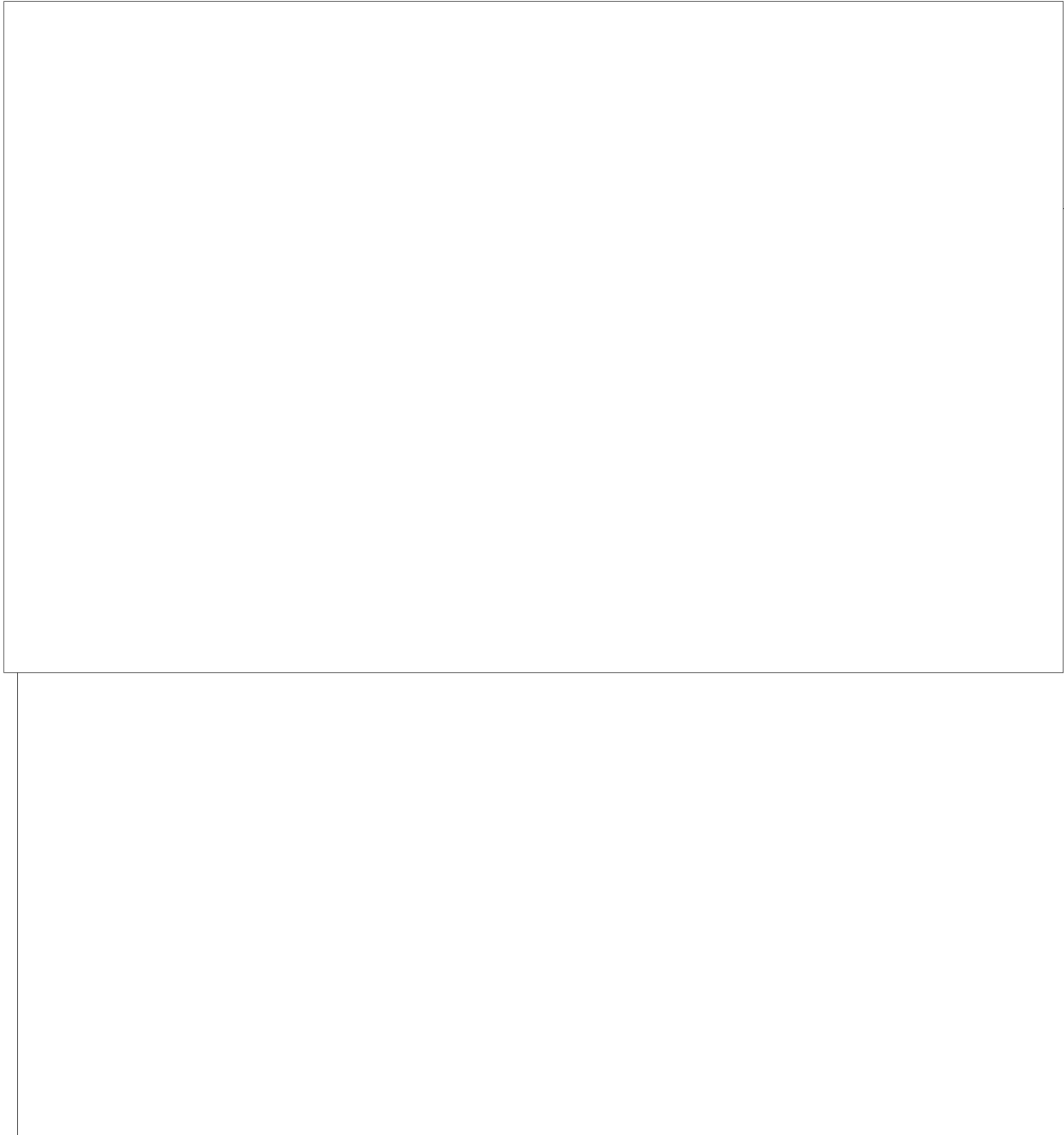
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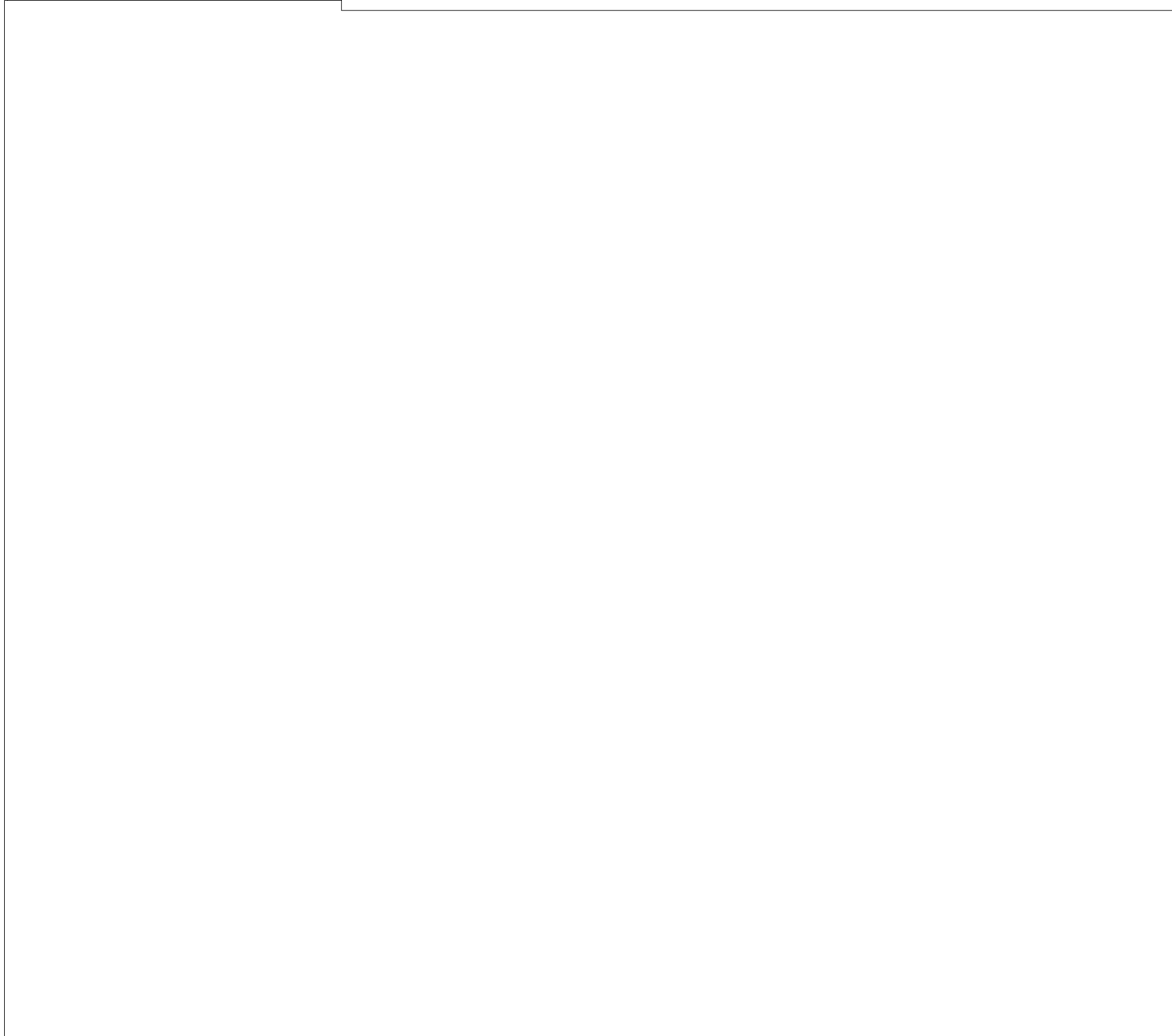
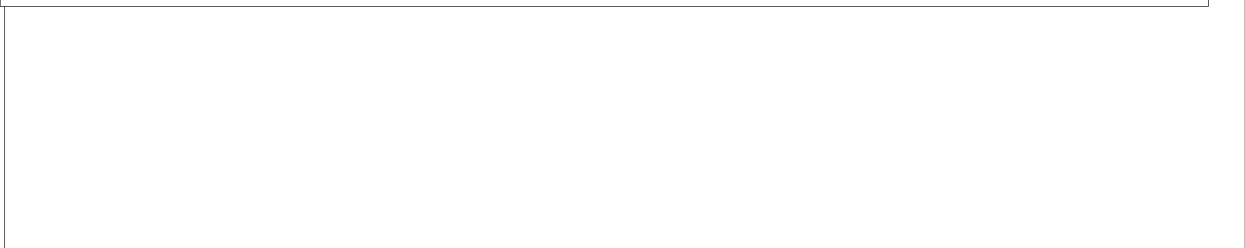
JH: More than the six that you had in mind for the other operation.

AM: Right, as a follow on to the six.

JH: Of course then there would be a problem getting out. Well we won't go into that right now.

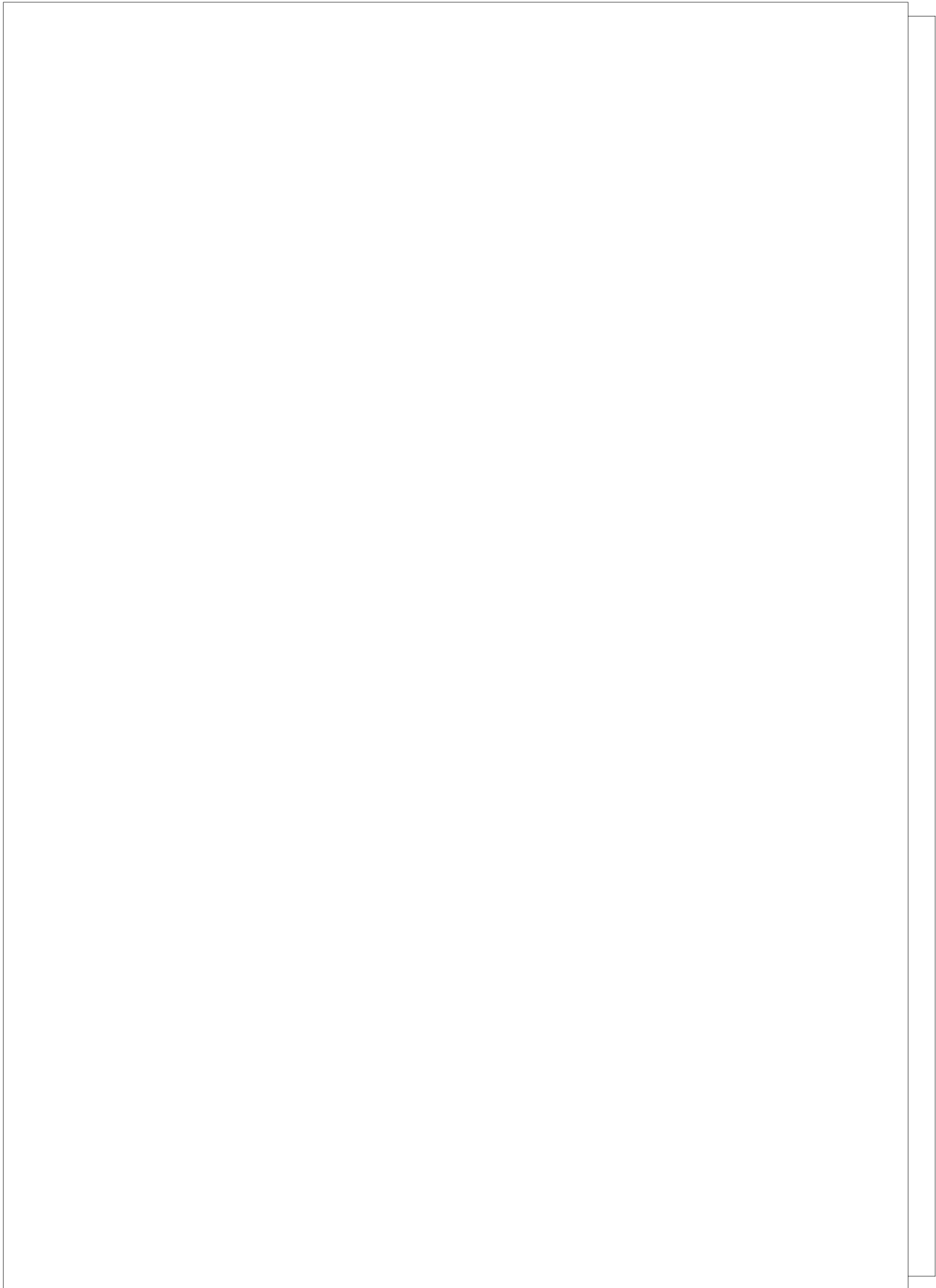
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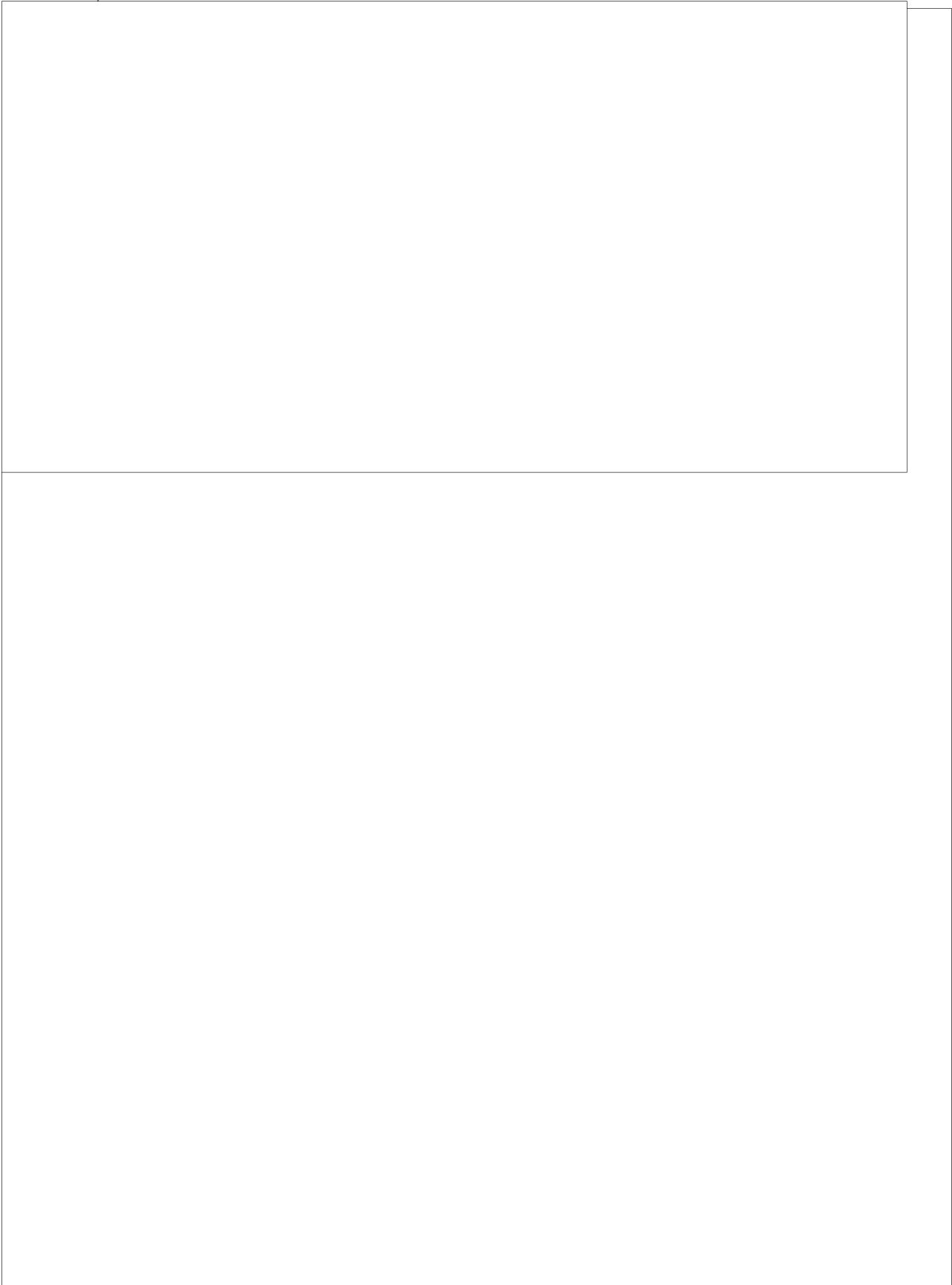
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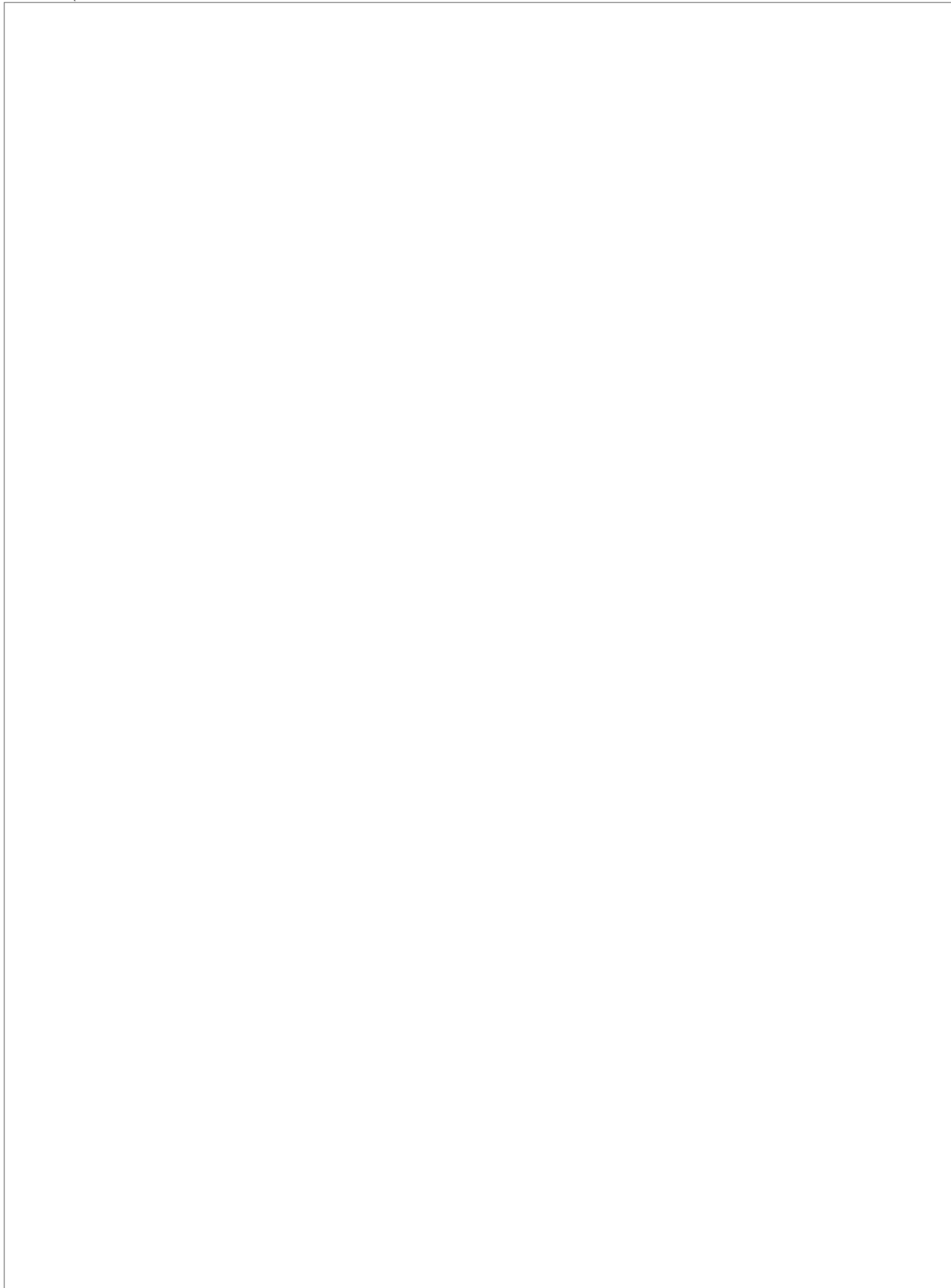
JH: You have to have the extra ability to think of something new.

AM: Or fresh eyes. And that was really what that chapter that I wrote in my book was all about. The fact that there were [redacted] rules and then you had to go out and invent new ones. We had to have fresh eyes. A lot of officers who were trained to go there were given parameters that they considered to be the gospel. They truly believed that you couldn't do this, couldn't do that, or the other thing. And we would go out and immediately prove them wrong and come back and have a nice creative discussion.

As the years went on, and we were training them back here and we invented our own macro stage and trained our own team, we would typically start off with a very vigorous head knocking session at the beginning of the evening, because what we were doing was presenting a post graduate theory that went crosswise with the undergraduate program they had just come out of. We would start changing some of the doctrine right there. Then we would go out and prove it after we'd have this discussion.

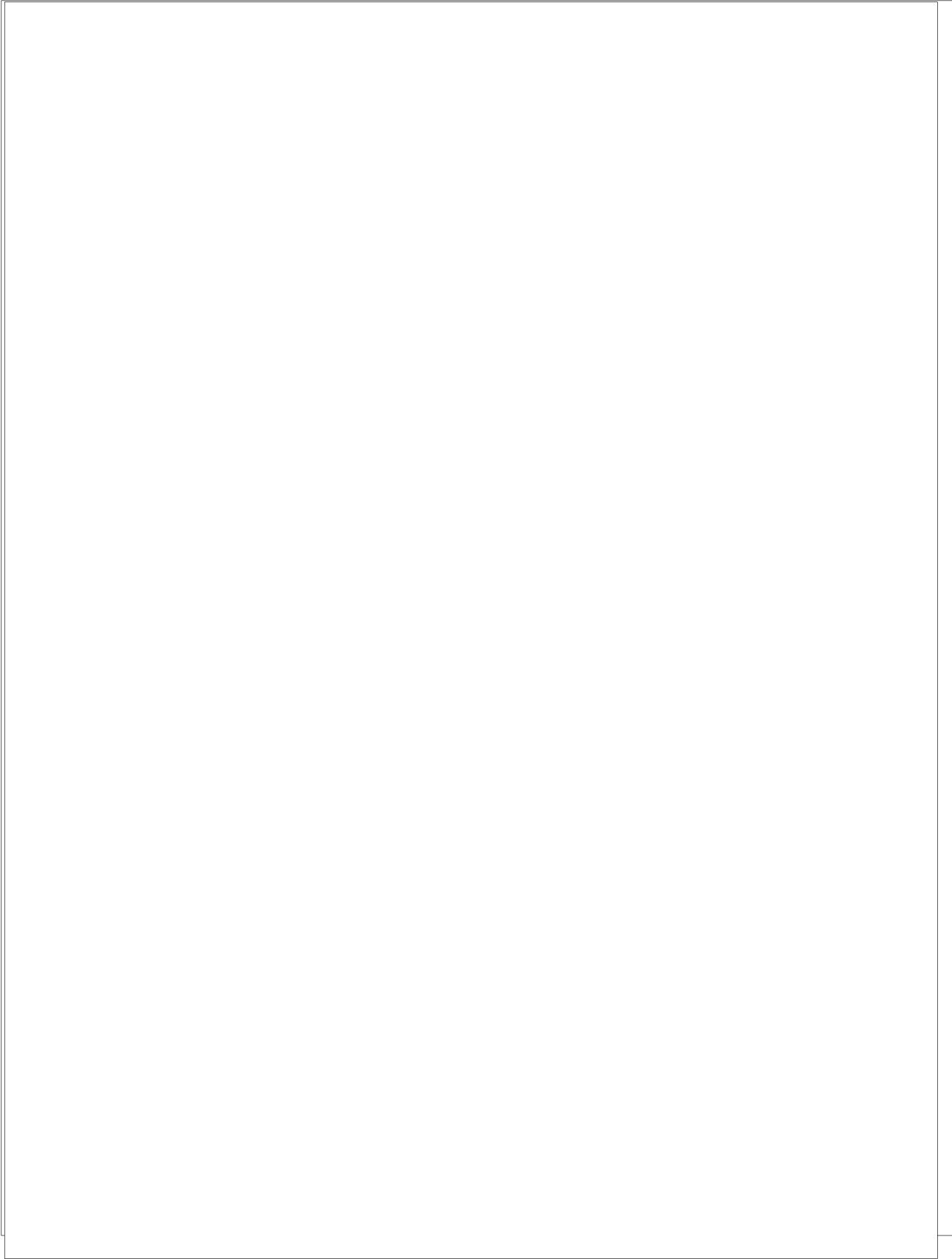
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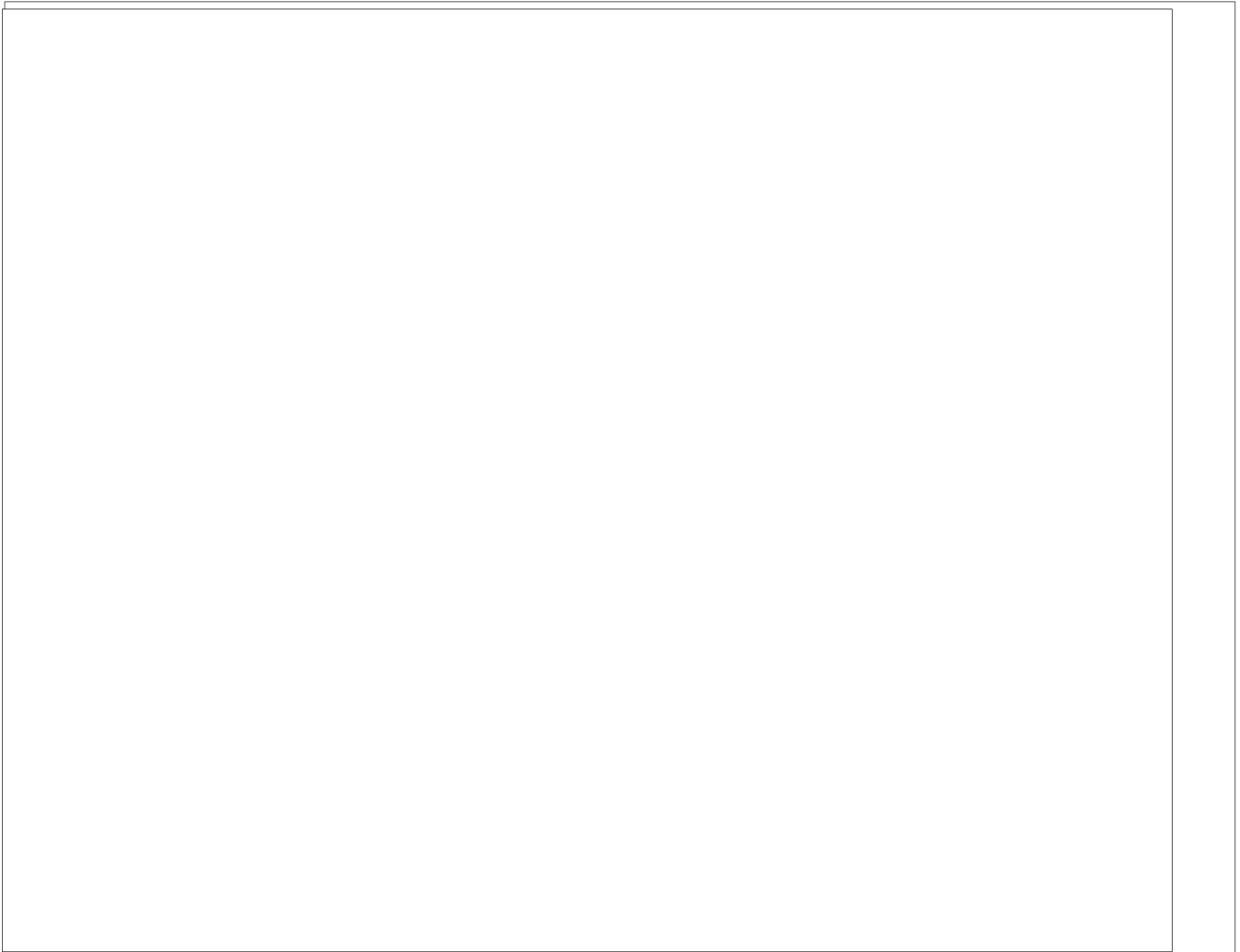
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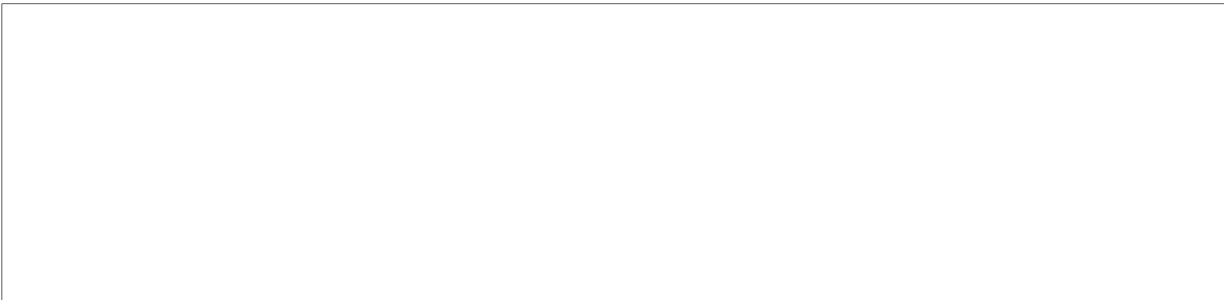


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AM: So I would sort of break up the meeting where people are sitting around worrying a problem like they did for the six in Iran and I'd come in and say, "Listen, I'm just going to show you what we are going to do", and then I would do this, the slight of hand trick. It cut through that mood of "do we really want to do this" and it works. I used it over and over again as an example, and it worked.



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I became the chief of career counseling and training and education, if you will. I had the training branch and I had the recruiting and evaluation responsibilities for OTS. Of course, I hated the idea that I was going to be moved out of operations and put into a staff position, although I learned a lot as one does in staff. In fact, I went out and found another job and it was a [Intelligence] Community job, but it wasn't a CIA job. So I ended up with an audience with McMahon, who was the DDCI at the time, and got his take on it. He said, "Yes, you can go over to SE division and do that thing, or you can go out there to the Community job and do that thing for [redacted] but I want you to go back there and do that staff job." So I said, "Yes sir", there was no other court I could take it to. I said, "Yes, sir." I went back and did it, and, as I say, I learned a lot. I think I added value.

JH: Well, you certainly must have been able to train them well with your experience.

AM: Yes, overseeing the training thing and modernizing that [training]. It required some of the same skills.

JH: Well, you also did a great job in recruiting at one point.

AM: Yes. That was part of it. All of a sudden, Peter Marino was given the green light by Evan Hineman to go out and bring a lot of people in, in a short time. So he turned to me and said, we want [redacted] people in the tent in three months, or something. It was ridiculous, but that was the kind of challenge I loved. So I went over and saw [redacted] [redacted] who was the division chief concerned with personnel, and I went over to see Kotapish in Security. And I got the people detailed to me--I asked Marino for \$20,000--and the next thing you know, we had a whole bunch of people in the tent. We just streamlined that whole process.

JH: But you had to go out and get them.

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AM: Yes, exactly. What I did was to train a whole bunch of folks.

JH: What sort of people were you looking for? How do you spot what you need?

AM: A good OTS officer. Well, we had people from OTR design the interview for us based on specifications that we had to distill. Everyone had their own idea of what kind of person they wanted but we distilled the requirement down. It was kind of the old business of what is it you really are trying to do here. Then we designed an interview situation where we could divine those skills in people. Some people said we need to go get PHd chemists because we are developing state of the art chemistry. But what, in fact, you want is somebody who has a technical discipline. But you also want somebody who can also survive in the field at the same time. If you've got somebody over here that meets all the academic criteria but they hate to go camping because they are afraid they are going to get dust in their eye, you sure as heck don't want to put them out in the desert somewhere

Fundamentally, if you are going to be able to design the system, you better be able to deploy it, and you better be able to understand the little guy in the field. And the only way to do that is to walk in his moccasins for a while. So a good OTS officer, and this may convey to other parts of the Agency as well, is somebody who had not only some technical qualification but also somebody who is interested in foreign travel, has an adventuresome spirit, is handy. There are a lot of chemists who are not handy, they couldn't find their way through changing the plug on a lamp. What it really comes down to is if you get a really good handy person you can probably teach them the chemistry that you really need. So there are certain things that you can learn. And there are certain other things that you can't learn, you can't teach. You either come with it or you don't, so you had better be able to size that person up. This we did. We had two columns. One is, here's the fundamental elements of a good officer that you can't teach, and here's the other things that you can. So let's test for these and train for those.

JH: And that worked out reasonably well, I take it?

AM: Yes, I think it did, once you thought of it that way.....

JH: We were talking about recruiting and what kind of people you need and how you went about getting them. And as you say, once you make a breakthrough you wonder why you hadn't made it before. It was so obvious what to do. I was going to ask about the operational climate getting tougher in terms of, well I would think computers would be a problem to deal with in getting into and out of a country.

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AM: Yes, that's right. When I finished up my staff assignment, I was able to go back and take over the division having to do with the authentication and graphics, which was obviously home to me.



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JH: In terms of the Iranian operation, if the Iranians had a reasonably good system, they would have material indicating that these six people came into the country that you were taking out of the country.

AM: Worse than that. If they had used the counterfoil the way it was designed, if they had attempted to recombine the white copy with the yellow copy that we had forged—presumably the white copy is in their file. And if they had recombined those two before people left the airport to get on the airplane, then they would realize that the white copy wasn't there.

JH: But they didn't do it on the spot?

AM: But they don't do that.

JH: And you knew this?

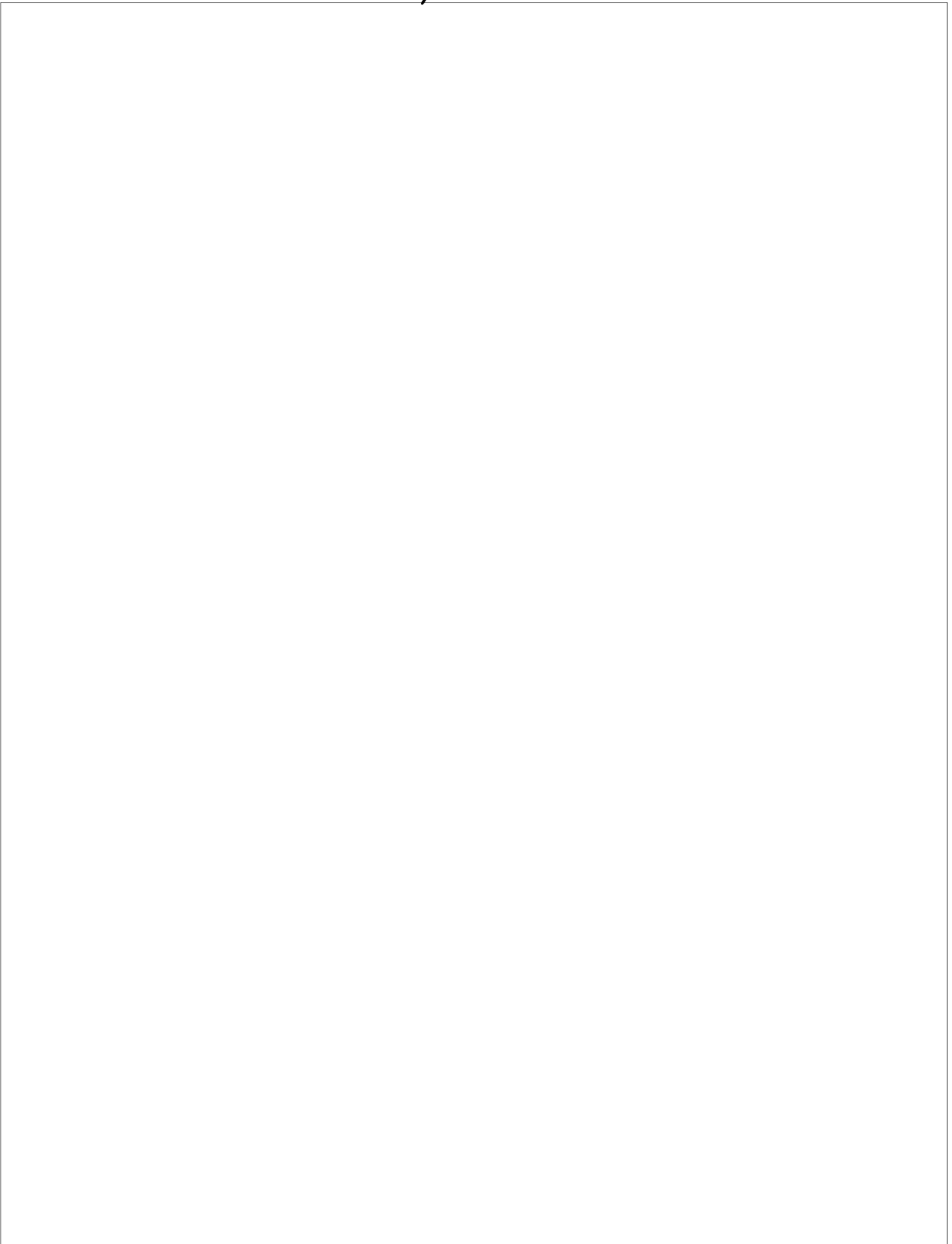
AM: And we knew this. And it is even more fundamental than that. They had no need to do that because that's not what they were trying to do. They weren't trying to catch the escapee. Typically a border control system like that is designed by immigration for a reason, and that reason is to find out who was it that overstayed their time. That is an investigative process that's got a certain life, and it starts, has a beginning, middle, and an end. It is not going to be done in real time because that is not the issue. The issue is to find somebody out there that's still in country and that shouldn't be there. An undesirable who has jumped their visa, so to speak. If you looked at that from the US immigrations point of view, there are [REDACTED] who have jumped their visa in Los Angeles alone. That's not even to think about the [REDACTED] who have jumped their visas.

So the sheer numbers indicate that you are not going to be out there doing this in real time because that is not the issue. You have to understand what the agenda of the immigration service is in the first place. Is it possible for them to do it in real time? You're damn right it is if they have a need to do it. [REDACTED]

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JH: Yes.

AM: Hhhmmmm, that's a good question. There were a lot of things in OTS that have proliferated in the public domain. I'm not so sure I can answer that question right now, I'll have to think about it, but that is an excellent question.

JH: I kind of imagine that there are a few things. Let me know if you think of any.

AM: Yes, I will. There are certainly people who are friends and neighbors who helped us who have benefited because of the things we were able to do, and that was to rescue them. Have we invented something that's helped the public at large, certainly. I'm sure we have, I don't know what it is right now.

JH: That's alright. What about the dummy company that you had out in Hollywood and you actually received scripts, and you actually got one from Steven Spielberg? Was it any good?

AM: I don't remember. I'd have to ask one of the guys. The point is that the word got out in a hurry and people believed.

JH: You mentioned Evan Hineman and actually John McMahon. When you talked with John McMahon, presumably he was still wearing his DO hat, his wanting to keep you in OTS, or maybe not. But it brought up the question of does it make any difference where this office is? Should it not ever have left the DO?

AM: That was a question from the time it happened. In fact, the IG at the time I met when I was overseas, and as soon as I came back as chief of Disguise Branch, he called me. [redacted] was he the IG? I believe it was [redacted] who was the IG at the time that Colby did that [transferred OTS from the DO to the DS&T]. I should say he [Colby] inherited that decision, because Schlesinger did that. Colby took over and Colby asked the IG to put out his feelers. So [redacted] called me and said how do you feel about it? At the time, I said I didn't see any difference. Now, over time, as I became more senior and I could see the cultural conflict, I came to believe that what happened to OTS was not good, because of the different fundamental philosophy in how to measure worth in managers.

There was an idea in the S&T, and this was under Ev Hineman and Jim Hirsch, that unless the manager, or potential manager, had gone to the school for program managers

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that Hirsch set up or had somebody set up that he believed in, that you weren't qualified. This was part of the mentality in the S&T that OTS didn't have engineers who measured up to the engineers in OD&E or what have you. The thing that made OTS great, and we're talking on a continuum, the spikes of greatness, were not the same things that made OD&E great. They are two great outfits and they have worthy achievements. But there is a difference. The characters that made up OTS in my time, in my 25 years, did really great things. And a lot of times those characters were not trained as program managers. In fact, they weren't even practical in a programmatic sense. They were tremendously effective, and it still pertains today, I'm sure.

They were tremendously effective in the OTS experiment because they were such far out characters that they could come up with a solution in the middle of the night and out on the edge of the world. And a lot of times these guys didn't have high school educations, they just were tremendously effective in that particular area, and that's kind of the theme that is out there in the wind right now about CIA. CIA has become too homogenous. There are too many lawyers. There are too many rules, and there are not enough rule breakers. And there are too many people. As we used to say about OD&E, left handed violin players need not apply because if everyone isn't going in unison it doesn't work.

I don't know from which area you came, but there was this thing about designing satellites where if you had 50 guys and they were all GS-15's responsible for the configuration control of that particular bird, and they weren't all in unison, you had chaos. Alternatively, the battery guys in OTS were the best in the world. There is no battery science. This is sheer witchcraft. There were three or four of those guys you wouldn't introduce to your sister, but they were tremendously effective in the battery world. If you want to talk about people who have benefited mankind, the batteries out of OTS are the batteries that are out there in the world now. They've basically driven the whole industry. There was a problem on a space walk, as I recall, involving a lithium battery in the helmet of an astronaut. And the question in NASA was, is it going to be safe for us to do this particular spacewalk. The guy they called to solve it was in OTS and he went to Houston. And he licked the problem and he announced it a worthy journey.

JH: Because he had prior experience?

AM: Because he was known in the community. It is such a small community of battery engineers in the world that they all know each other by first name. That particular cell was the concern. And the NASA battery guy said there is only one guy that knows the answer to that question, and he is in CIA. And he was on the plane immediately down there to consult.

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JH: Well, alright, I think there is definitely a DO culture which is separate from the DI. Sometimes you can transcend it a little, but it is definitely different. I was wondering about that because in this training course that I spoke of earlier these fellows were GS-15's and they were suppose to go up and be supergrades. We had about 4 or 5 from each directorate. The OTS guy acted and palled around with the DO people, to the exclusion of all these other guys. I mean, he was one of them. He had been out there in the field, breaking into these places, as opposed to the stay at homes in their other different fields. I thought it was interesting. So that's where I got the idea that maybe this outfit belongs to the DO. It also affects the leadership, because you're going to get leaders who are not coming up through the ranks necessarily, as the management grows, as you mentioned earlier.

AM: So anyway, coming back to the question, I believe that over time OTS has been eroded by that need on the part of S&T to make everybody have the good housekeeping stamp of approval as program manager. And the idea that now the lines between offices in the S&T are easily breached, I don't think that is right. I think that in an intelligence agency, and I'm sure it is absolutely true in the DI, you need that little old lady in tennis shoes that you can trot out to talk about that particular topic and you don't want to mess with her by sending her to program management school.

JH: There are too many schools of management to go to these days, I think. Well, before I forget it, I wanted to ask you if you had any real narrow escapes in your day? Things that were real dicey situations. You yourself, as opposed to your people you were bringing out.

AM: Well, I think the way [redacted] that was more dicey than [redacted] getting the six. Because there was no diceyness in that operation with the six other than the fact that, if we had been caught, I probably wouldn't have been thrown in the compound with the others, the six would have been. [redacted]

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JH: What about your retirement? How did you happen to decide to retire?

AM: Well, it was a combination of things. I would say that OTS was entering a period of the tough times at the time I had the opportunity to retire, in that it had some managers that ended up being demoted shortly thereafter. There were people that were ill advised heads of OTS. You may know who I am talking about. That was one thing. The other thing is I was just turning 50 at the time that Congress opened a window for people in CIARDS for 30 days, where one could take the entire cash lump sum and not have it affect your annuity. So that was \$70,000. I was turning 50 mid way in that 30-day window, so that meant I had 15 days to go and I opted to do it. And the only reason to do it, after I analyzed it, was in case you wanted to start another career. At age 50 you can think about that. I had always had my primary career identity as an artist, and I always wanted to pursue painting as a full time thing.

Before I went to work for the Agency I was an illustrator and I had this art studio where I was a painter. But I had never really done it full time. I had already had the infrastructure right in here because my son and I have been exhibiting for 12 years already. So I had the studio, I had the exhibit space, I had the clientele. It was a no brainer to answer the call for starting a new career. It was very easy. And finally my wife, my current wife, and I were people who had met and worked together for many years, and, suddenly, we found ourselves overnight in a romantic situation. So I had already said to her, "One of us is going to have to leave here because you are in the chain of command. And I'm two steps up, and you are directly below me, and we have a conflict of interest." In fact, we were living together, so I was already ready to transfer. So again, that was impetus. A year later after we got married after I retired, we had her first child, so she was able to retire at age 47. So it was as smooth as silk an egress. One of the things that Tim Weiner of the New York Times tried to get me to say was that my retirement was because the Cold War was over and the morale was bad. We were still celebrating the end of the Cold War when I left. My morale was great.

JH: Weiner is no friend of the Agency, really, I don't think. I have had dealings with him.

AM: He certainly carries a lot of his own agendas around.

JH: When you did retire, you got the Intelligence Medal of Merit. And I happened to run across the citation and it really is a tremendous write up. "To each position, Mr. Mendez brought a distinctive style, a flair for the imaginative, a solid work ethic, uncommon initiative and personal courage. Performance appraisal reports written over

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his career of 25 years are replete with references to these attributes. And the finest legacy of his career is the rich and robust disguise capability that OTS has today.” So that’s pretty good stuff. Do you do any consulting with your former colleagues?

AM: I was consulting up until the time I was chosen as a Trailblazer, that basically was helping one of the contractors to find his way around the Agency. I wasn’t doing consulting directly with people in OTS, but sort of around the barn. I was consulting to benefit the Agency as well as this contractor. So I had my tickets still punched there. Now, since I have gotten all this publicity, everybody has drawn back because they are not really sure what kind of animal I am.

JH: That’s what we alluded to earlier, things have changed. The Tehran caper came out. The media has been in hot pursuit. So where are you now? We talked a little bit about the fact that you are writing a book and hope to get it through the Publications Review Board.

AM: Yes. I wrote it and you read it. I wrote it in a way that is not unclassified, as I said to John Hedley, semi-classified. I’d rather tell the story for completeness as something that can be used by the historical staff or “Studies in Intelligence”, or whatever, and maybe right in my old home division for good reading material for people so they don’t reinvent the wheel. Kind of like what you are doing. It is interesting the fact that this is so counter culture, that my behavior is so counter culture. It is counter to the discipline that I had all those years. It is the Agency’s lead I am following, but that is not to say that there isn’t a bit of a cultural conflict going on in the Agency because of this openness that some people are trying to promote. So I get rumbles back from my old colleagues, through intermediaries, wondering how it is that I can be out there beating my tub, and Security isn’t rolling me up, etc. Now, those people who know me counter that concern by saying, you have to understand that he is following the Agency’s lead. The point is, whether or not I am following the Agency’s lead or not, it is still counter culture. I believe it is time for the Agency to do some celebrating. I think that was the spirit of the 50th anniversary celebration, the spirit of the CIA 50 Trailblazer Program, or whatever. So when they called me and said would you be willing to talk to the press and I said, “Yes,” I meant that I wanted to try and be a spokesman. And, obviously, I had Tim Weiner in my face immediately. And each time I’ve gone through a hurdle like that, the Agency has kind of gone, “Whew!”

JH: Who started it off, was it the Public Affairs people?

AM: Well Public Affairs didn’t invent the corporate decision. They’re trying to carry it out, and they are getting a lot of knocks because of it. I don’t know who in the

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corporation decided, whether it was Tenet, or the politburo, or whatever they called it. That was a corporate decision that we were going to celebrate and we are going to celebrate 50 people. And, of course, all 50 people didn't agree to talk to the press. They left that strictly voluntary. I said yes, and others said yes, but my story leapt off the page to people like Weiner. So now I am working with "60 Minutes," and, as soon as you enter that tent, then you can have a world of problems. But the producers are willing to cooperate with my ideas and my timing, and so forth. I'm going to bring them in at some point to sit down with the DO and Public Affairs, and we are going to negotiate. I'm not trying to manage the press. All I am saying is, it is a new set of skills that I am learning here, to deal with the media and try to get the good stories out.

The CIA came to me at the Trailblazer ceremony, brought me upstairs to Public Affairs, and Counterintelligence is sitting there, and OTS is sitting there. And they are saying we want to put the story of the rescue of the Canadian six out. I am saying, "Well, what are the equities?" We ticked them off, and I was able to point out that the only equities that we have to be concerned with was our personal security. I said that I had to be able to explain to my wife the reason why we want to do this. Because if we piss the Iranians off and they come up my driveway, then I've got a problem. You guys aren't going to be there. I said nobody in this room can make that decision, you are going to have to kick it upstairs. They called me in two days, and said that we wanted to do this.

The guy that broke the story was David Martin from CBS. I thought he did a great job, and I had the Public Affairs people sitting in my studio with me when I went through the interview. Since then, I have called them every time someone wanted to do a story. I said Readers Digest now wants to do the story. They said, "The same rules. Go with God, you've done well so far." And Canadian broadcasting did it. So anyway, I think time will tell whether this is a good idea or not, but it seems right to me. It seemed timely, and it seems like something that the people in the CIA need and the public as well.

JH: [redacted] father was in my shop. He was a colleague of mine. I went to his funeral. [redacted] and David and his sister did a terrific job. It was very impressive. Anyway, his book [redacted] is pretty good, actually. It was one of the early good books.

AM: Yes, I read that early on.

JH: This whole question of openness, I think, got its big impetus from Bob Gates and under him, I think, from the History staff, as far as opening up 11 covert actions. I personally am not so sure that was a good idea because it has caused a lot of problems. The ironic thing is that Iran is what caused it initially. It had to do with the Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS] volume on Iran, and our refusing to admit anything

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[redacted] A small little paragraph somewhere or other would have done the trick, but that didn't happen. That caused a lot of problems with the historians, and they made a lot of noise. And over time we have been releasing more material on covert actions than we had before. I've been involved in it, so that's why I know about it. Because I do the FRUS.

We also have a big problem with the JFK assassination board. But there is special legislation saying we, in effect, have to do it. And there have been a lot of fights, particularly on cover. It depends, you get the cultures going again, it depends on where you come from. I felt very easy about releasing the DI analytic stuff. The old Soviet estimates, I did work on that too. But I don't like to let any of that other stuff out unless it's old or unless there is a purpose. That's where you sort of come out; it will always be a push and pull. But there are people very much in favor of your philosophy as well as people who still live in the dark ages, I guess you could say. Are you dealing with any of the marquee players yet in "60 Minutes"?

AM: I'll be working with Ed Bradley. I'm working with his producers right now, and have been since the beginning of last September.

JH: I think of the group, he's probably the one that I would choose if I had a choice. Mike Wallace. I wouldn't go near him.

AM: I talked to Bob Gates about that when it came up. He's got the same attitude. He did a "60 Minutes" piece that was never aired, but it was on openness and he said that being with "60 Minutes" is dicey.

JH: Well, they came in to the Agency a long time ago. They came in to do something on the Ops Center. A friend of mine was deputy chief there and they had all kinds of problems with them. I don't know if they got a 30 second segment out of it or not, but there is a lot of time and energy spent for those things. Do you have any schedule as to when they are going to air your show?

AM: Well, I have a deal with William Morrow on the book and there was such a heavy competition from the news magazines and still continues to be for my story. Each time it comes out I get more calls. I've got one of these situations with "60 Minutes" where I am continuing to abide by my agreement with them to give them an exclusive on it as a profile piece. So I haven't gone to these other newsmagazines, competitors. So I have kind of a quid pro quo going. My point is that if you can have the program aired in concert with the book release, you've got benefits to be derived by both parties. That's kind of where we are. The Morrow contract says I've got to have the finished manuscript in by the 31st of January. I've already created 85% of it. I've got a collaborator who will

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smooth it out and reorganize it. So we will be way ahead of the curve. I suspect the answer to your question is March of 1999. That's where we are headed.

They and I, "60 Minutes and I", are going to go probably to Berlin and Moscow, and, again, that will be coordinated with the Agency so that we don't step on any toes. But the idea is that I will walk and talk with Ed Bradley at Brandenburg Gate and talk about the Cold War. Then do something in Moscow, maybe ride the subway or something, and talk about the way it was when the iron fist was there. Now you've got the Mafia. I think they are also going to come into the Agency and do the Cold War exhibit or something like that. They've been to my art show here. They have interviewed people at the art show. Recently, I was honored by the state of Maryland, and they sent a crew there to tape that. But they do something like 25 hours of tape just to get it down to 15 minutes. They are in the top ten shows in television because, for decades, they have kept a quality house.

JH: Maybe you could talk a little about your artwork. Do you concentrate on any particular subject material.

AM: Well, I think it is mostly what you would call natural subject matter. Maybe flowers or animals or people, but usually in natural settings. And some of it is purely landscapes. Some of it is purely clouds, but things that we can relate to, recognize, but has some emotional component to it. I guess it is kind of like my attitude about my CIA career. It was all God's work, as far as I was concerned, and my painting is about good news stuff, too. Stuff that maybe has a certain melancholy to it, but it's mostly feel good.

JH: Well I didn't really ask you if that, on the whole, you had a good career from your point of view?

AM: Absolutely. Yes, I would say I am proud of every piece of it, yes. I would highly recommend an Agency career to others, which I have. I had occasion to, at this thing at the State House where resolutions were made in both houses and then by the Governor of Maryland about the rescue operation, and I was treated like a head of state. I had an honor guard and everything. They asked me who I would like to speak to, and I said, "Why don't we get a group of students?" So they brought in the best and the brightest from the high schools, and I talked to them about a career in public service, not just the CIA, the reasons why you would want to do it. I got good feedback from the students and the teachers. Of course I was also including the teachers.

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JH: I read about that in the press before I was told that I was going to be interviewing. I wasn't saving all that stuff because I knew Dick [Kovar] was supposed to do it, but he had to back out. Well, what else would you like to say for the record?

AM: I don't know. I think we've covered it pretty well. It was a good set of questions. I think I answered most of them.

JH: OK. You sure did. And your son was absolutely superb. I had five of them, and none of them would ever have been as quiet as he was.

AM: That's what happens when you have old people for parents. You learn to sit quietly. He's been all over the world.

JH: Has he really? Why don't we just turn this off. Is there any place that you haven't been come to think of it?

AM: 



JH: This is a minor point. When you go to China, do you have to alter the physical part of it? I mean, your own walk, for example; do you have to alter that? This would be, of course, if you are trying to pose as a Chinese. You would have to take on physical characteristics or physical mannerisms, I should say. And you can train people to do that?

AM: That's right. That's part of the training.

JH: Well I wanted to thank you again. I appreciate this opportunity to do it. I know it is going to be very helpful.

AM: Good. Glad you came.

JH: OK.

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