

Glass In My Typewriter

By Perdita Schaffner

A current best-seller, "Ultra Secret," tells of a sensational code-breaking operation at Bletchley Park. World War Two's most closely guarded secret after the atom bomb, say the blurb. I was there, but in a different section, so I knew nothing of the Enigma machine.

None of us knew what the rest of us were doing, nor, indeed, exactly what we ourselves were doing. We labored long shifts, in sections within other sections, poring over secrets within secrets, on a vast compound which was supposed to be invisible.

Anyway, now it can be told. I was at Bletchley, a most dispiriting town 50 miles from London. It was, predominantly, an important railway junction. There were a couple of factories too; and brick-works; and a leather processing plant which gave off sour smells.

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For a while, I lodged with a railway signalman's family. A small cottage,

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three children under three, and a non-stop blaring wireless. Then I moved to a D. H. Lawrence type of farmhouse. My landlady was lonely, paranoid, and a compulsive talker.

A year later, my department was shifted to London. The work was no more editing, but the living was easier.

My subsequent transfer to Counter Intelligence was, on the face of it, a logical step. From one Top Secret office to another, just down the street; from cracking codes to catching spies. But I had to bridge the Atlantic first—in spirit. I'm always bridging the Atlantic, in one way and another.

The OSS

Among the Americans in England at that time, there were inevitably—weight of numbers, law of averages—some we knew in person. Norman Holmes Pearson, routinely of Yale, now of the OSS, offered me a job.

It was a small, family-size unit at first, occupying only two rooms at British Headquarters. Yanks and Brits, service personnel and civilians, all worked together in close liaison, going about their business with brisk steps and good cheer. Kim Philby was in and out; a real charmer. The only person who looked like a Graham Greene character was, in fact, Graham Greene himself.

My new American colleagues were very mobile, always off to Casablanca and places. But there were more arrivals every day. Soon we were spilling over into the building next door.

PFC Angleton

I was assigned to the Italian desk, working for an Army Major, an equable, considerate man. He went to Naples. His successor, PFC James J. Angleton, came in; a centrifugal force.

He turned up late one winter after-

NOTICE OF ENACTMENT TO TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON ORDINANCE No. 3 ORDINANCE PROHIBITING THE DEPOSIT OF DIRT, FILTH, WASTE OR RUBBISH IN TOWN HIGHWAYS, ETC.

After a public hearing held pursuant to the requirements of law on April 18, 1975, and at a meeting of the Town Board of the Town of East Hampton, N.Y., held on May 7, 1975, amendments to the Town of East Hampton Ordinance No. 3, Ordinance Prohibiting the Deposit of Dirt, Filth, Waste or Rubbish in Town Highways, Etc. were duly adopted, to wit:

The Title of Ordinance No. 3, which presently reads Ordinance Prohibiting the Deposit of Dirt, Filth, Waste or Rubbish in Town Highways, Etc. shall be changed to read as follows:

"Ordinance Prohibiting the Deposit of Dirt, Filth, Waste, Rubbish or Garbage in Town Highways, Etc."

First paragraph, Section 1, of said Ordinance, shall be amended to read as follows:

"It shall be unlawful for any person or persons or corporation to place, deposit or leave any dirt, filth, waste, rubbish or garbage in any street, highway, walk, or public place, or adjacent thereto, in the Town of East Hampton, Suffolk County, New York, outside of the Incorporated Villages of East Hampton and Sag Harbor."

Section 1(a) shall be added to said Ordinance to read as follows:

"Any garbage, waste or rubbish placed outside dwelling premises for pick-up or otherwise shall be contained in a covered container, sufficiently secure so that dogs and other animals cannot gain access to the contents."

These amendments shall take effect immediately.

Dated May 7, 1975

By Order of the
TOWN BOARD
Town of East Hampton, N.Y.
CHARLES T. ANDERSON
Town Clerk

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noon. Taut, lean, long-distance-runner kind of build. Cavernous cheekbones, jet black hair. A cursory hello, and doors and drawers and files were flung open, and he was into everything; pulling, leafing, thumbing. Marvelous hands; long, nervous, expressive.

Where was this, what was that, what about something else? Never mind, he was supposed to be at a meeting, he'd get back to all this stuff later on—he'd see me in the morning.

Next morning he'd obviously been there for some time. The place was an absolute mare's nest. Papers, chewed pencils, brimming ash trays all over his desk. More papers on mine, and more on the floor.

Here I was at last, he seemed to imply. He tilted his chair back at a nerve-racking angle. But I knew he couldn't break his neck, the room was too small.

Favorite Poets

And we got acquainted. He discoursed on his favorite poets, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and others. He was sensitive and highly knowledgeable on the subject. He described his passage over; his troopship sounded like the most nauseous, chaotic vessel ever to sail the seas.

He informed me that he had been married recently, that he was becoming a father; he was rather vague as to when.

Now to work

He proceeded to dictate a report of immense length, depth, and complexity. Leaning back in his chair, leaping out suddenly to pace like a panther. He quoted poetry, intrinsic to the report, for the most part; to strengthen an argument, to dramatize a point.

Now and then, just for the sheer joy of it, and not to be included. I took down, and typed up, a whole section of "The Waste Land." A dumb error; I blamed it on first-day nerves.

The Processes

Such lapses were to strain his patience. Try as I would, I couldn't always follow the processes of his mind. All crystal-clear, self-evident to him, of course. But in his mind.

He wrote another report on his own, that night. Pages and pages, some typed, some handwritten. Crossed out, rewritten, with inserts in every margin. Footnotes, and addenda to footnotes. Simple... all I had to do was just to follow right along. Six carbons, please, and as soon as possible, the Washington courier was leaving early in the afternoon.

He had a few more afterthoughts before we were through. He prowled and paced as I raced the deadline, and pounced on each new batch of copy hot off the typewriter.

The Pattern

Such was to be the pattern of my days. He worked best under pressure, so we rocketed from crisis to crisis. When day was done, he continued on, far into the night. He expected everybody else to share his drive, keep to his pace, conform to his incredibly high standards.

He took a dim view of women. The secretaries around here, a bunch of prima donnas. We all considered him quite a volatile handful. He censured my feminine traits, as he saw them; lack of dedication, subjective thinking, faulty logic. And my problems, my endless problems; why did I have so many

Low Tide Table

Times given are for low water at Promised Land. For low water at Montauk, north side, subtract an hour; for Three Mile Harbor entrance and Accabonac Creek add half an hour; for Sag Harbor, add an hour. To figure high tide, add six hours to the time of low tide. For low water along the ocean beach, subtract two hours for an approximate time.

Date	a.m.	p.m.
Friday 16	7:49	8:08
Saturday 17	8:43	9:06
Sunday 18	9:40	10:08
Monday 19	10:38	11:11
Tuesday 20	11:37	—
Wednesday 21	00:12	12:34
Thursday 22	1:13	1:29
Friday 23	2:09	2:24



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problem? My "endless" problems: John Schaffner had not yet appeared in my life. I shared a house with two other redeployed Bletchley girls. We were seeing people off to battle stations far and near, welcoming others home. And there were the daily things: toting laundry, tracking down a can of Spam, lining up for powdered eggs—all to be accomplished in the lunch break.

Disrepair

Jim didn't believe in lunch breaks, he didn't even believe in lunch. He looked ravaged. Woman fashion, I worried about him. Such a loner; underneath the sound and the fury, so vulnerable.

And he was in a constant state of disrepair. I wanted to move in on him with needles and thread. He broke his glasses, patched them up with Scotch Tape.

His young bride, Cicely, wrote to him every day. Long fat envelopes from Arizona, always decorated with funny little faces. Jim, married to a girl who drew funny faces; it didn't add up. Kind of lonely for her, off in Tucson, waiting for that baby. I hoped that he wrote to her sometimes during the night watch.

"Incident"

Living on his own high ascetic plane, he paid little heed to the perils of the times; air raids, nothing like our nightly pounding of the Blitz, just occasional sharp reminders. One such "incident" landed nearby. The blast shattered our windows, buffeted the typewriters, and drove glass into every cranny.

It had rained hard, too, and a brisk gale was blowing. Jim had spent the night elsewhere, for once, a lucky fluke he considered irrelevant. I found him stamping around in his overcoat, wondering how we were going to get any work done. I said we weren't, not for a while, too much glass in my typewriter; and, anyway, our papers would all fly out into the street.

After D-Day, the robots came over. V-1's, buzz-bombs, doodle-bugs, flying bombs—by whatever name, the worst thing yet. Whenever one of them sputtered to a halt, my heart stopped, and my typewriter stopped too. Jim would inquire whether there was anything the matter.

Grooves In The Sky

We had one particularly exasperating day. Jim received some directive from Washington which displeased him. I was transcribing hundreds of names onto hundreds of little cards. My typewriter ribbon was out of kilter, which displeased me. The new weapons were wearing grooves in the sky, one after the other poised right overhead.

Six o'clock came, at last. Jim was arguing passionately with someone on the telephone. He motioned to me. What next, now what? He asked me to reach

into the files, and—I thought he said beef.

Some of those agents and networks had pretty funny cover names. But beef was what he said, and what he meant. A great big roast such as only existed in remote memory; six people's rations for weeks and weeks, if they could ever even get it. Wrapped up in a towel, oozing down into the official contents of the file. I stood there, clasping the lovely gory thing.

"For you!" he announced with a wide grin, "I thought you could use it." Curious man, full of surprises. I never knew what to expect.

A Spot

And then again, a few weeks later, we had a sensational spot. He opined that I wasn't working hard enough, I was slacking; my endless problems... etc., etc. And I pulled rank on him for a change. I told him I'd been fighting this war longer than he had, that I was tired of counter-espionage, and just plain tired. And, it so happened: friends were urging me to visit them in Cornwall.

I sat on a rock and observed seagulls and convoys.

I wondered what kind of reception might be awaiting me on my return.

Jim was a person transformed. Luminous, effulgent. He hugged me and spun me all around. Cicely had borne him a son. Talk of keeping personal matters separate from work! The rest of our days hummed along in sunny warmth. His commission came through. I had a spruce new Lieutenant on my hands, as well as a new father.

He was posted to Rome.

Up, Up, And Away

Four years later, I was in Rome, living it up; my Dolce Vita years. Our eyes met, across a crowded piazza. He came right over. Without further ado, he detached me from my party, rushed me into a shiny sports car, and up, up, and away, to a terrace overlooking the moonlit city.

He said he always remembered the time I told him off. He'd been so ashamed, thought about it again and again... hardest working secretary he'd ever had... We drank to all that, and talked. We ordered another round of drinks and talked some more. Soul-searching, deep stuff.

He delivered me back to my hotel at three in the morning.

"Ciao, Perdita."

"Ciao, Jim. See you... sometime,



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somewhere." Flying over the Alps the next day, I realized he hadn't told me what he was doing. On business, he had mentioned, casually, I knew there was a family business; adding machines, electric typewriters, something of the kind. Maybe. Maybe not. Who was I to blow his cover at this late date?

Reunion

I saw him again at an OSS reunion in New York. A large gathering, we didn't have much chance to talk.

I was now a legal immigrant to the USA.

I met John Schaffner.

Jim, I heard, was quite indignant. I was getting married—and hadn't told him.

I wrote and told him. He never replied. And so the years have passed, we've all gone our many different ways. A number of my old friends have achieved distinction in publishing, the arts, the groves of academe. We secretaries are mothers with children the age we were, back then. One such family owns a neighboring house in the Springs.

Some people have drifted clear out of sight. Yet we've kept up rather well, on the whole, on both sides of the Atlantic. We exchange news of this one and that. Mostly routine matters: homes, kids, jobs. Now and then a bombshell: Kim Philby defecting to Soviet Russia. Jim Angleton back in Washington, back on The Job. Not such a surprise.

Out

Jim in the CIA, very high up in the CIA. Jim and the CIA. Out of the CIA. We've all followed those furrows, with varying reactions.

I keep going back to our turbulent little den. The cluttered desk, the poetry quotations, the flying bombs, the beef in the files and the glass in my typewriter. I hope we'll meet again sometime, somewhere. I've written to congratulate him on his recent award, the CIA's highest: the Distinguished Intelligence Medal.

We shall see.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Town Board of the Town of East Hampton, N.Y., will hold a public hearing at the Town Hall, 159 Pantigo Road, East Hampton, N.Y., on Wednesday, June 4, 1975 at 8:10 P.M. o'clock on proposed amendments to the

Zoning Ordinance of the Town of East Hampton, as follows:

Section 404.03 shall be amended to read as follows:

"Processing, storage and packing of fishery products. Storage and repair of boats. Electric lighting and non-nuclear power plants to serve the area within the Town of East Hampton."

Section 404.04 shall be amended to read as follows:

"Light processing and manufacturing activities, such as machine shops, building supplies, lumber yards, etc. The activities in this district are to meet the needs of the local community for building supplies, etc., and are not intended for any heavy manufacturing or distribution activities unrelated to the local community. The source of exterior illumination shall not be visible across property lines."

Section 404.05 shall be amended to read as follows:

"Light processing and manufacturing, machine shops, laboratories, light millwork, storage and warehousing to serve the local community, and storage of petroleum products for local retail distribution. The source of exterior illumination shall not be visible across property lines."

Section 404.06 shall be added to read as follows:

"Nonflashing signs, subject to all limitations as set forth in Section 403.05 of this Ordinance."

All parties in interest will be heard by the Town Board at the public hearing to be held as aforesaid and may appear in person or by agent or by attorney.

Dated: May 7, 1975

By Order of the Town Board
Town of East Hampton, N.Y.
CHARLES T. ANDERSON
Town Clerk

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