



(U) 'Odd Jobs' Before NSA (part 1)

FROM: SIGINT Communications
Unknown
Run Date: 09/01/2005

(U) In honor of Labor Day, we asked NSAers to tell us about unusual jobs they've held in the past. We received so many good stories, we'll publish them in two parts! (Part 2 will run tomorrow.) Here's what we learned...

- I played six years of **professional baseball** for several Atlanta Braves minor league affiliates. Traveled around the country and to Australia, and met and played with some of the best players in the world...and got paid for it.

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- Prior to arriving at NSA in 1988, I was a...
 1. radio disc-jockey
 2. law enforcement officer at the county, then state level
 3. bodyguard for a corporation owner in Tyson's Corner
 4. member of the private protective staff for ██████████ Senator ██████████
██████████ & family

██████████

- Worked the night shift (for an extra \$.15 -- yes, 15 cents -- an hour) at a **plastic bottle factory** in Medina, Ohio. Wiped down the molds when they started to get too much condensation inside (which left watermarks on the plastic), praying each and every time that the operator remembered to lock the mold in the open position so it wouldn't dose on my hand. Mixed raw plastic and dye for the various runs (mostly 1-gallon milk bottles and peanut butter jars). Crated and stacked the bottles on pallets in the warehouse, using a forklift (one time raising the stack too high and hitting the rafters, resulting in a shower of really big boxes all around me). Fortunately, the forklift had a protective cage for the operator. Retrieved boxed bottles from the warehouse and loaded them onto trucks.

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- One summer during high school I worked for a couple of weekends as a **bouncer at a Beanie Baby trade show**. A friend of my mother's organized trade shows for Beanie Babies and was tired of all the rowdy and crazy parents (not kids) yelling and screaming and almost coming to blows with the vendors. So I was hired to keep the peace. It was quite exciting when I actually had to toss some parents.

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- My first job after graduating from college was **digging graves** at the National Cemetery in Minneapolis. While just slightly over-qualified for the position, it paid the bills, and I figured there was nowhere to go from there but up!

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- When I was in college I worked for the campus police department. They offered a free taxi service to students late at night. I worked from 7:00 pm until 3:00 or 4:00 am. Mostly during the week I drove students home from the library but on the weekends I **drove intoxicated students home** from the parties and bars. Needless to say it was quite an experience.

-- anonymous

- **Worked with the stars** ... in the planetarium and observatory of the Orlando Science Center.
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- **Packing doggy ice cream.** One summer, I worked in an ice cream factory. Most of my summer days were spent putting popsicles into bins for boxing and then putting the boxes into cardboard boxes for shipping. Towards the end of summer, I got the opportunity to work on the Drumstick and ice cream sandwich machines. One day, I also go to work on the doggy ice cream (brand name: Frosty Paws) machine. This involved nothing more than putting four cups of the dog treat into a bin for boxing. Although I was dared to try the canine dessert, I never did; I had plenty of samples from the rest of the machines though!
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- The most unusual job I ever had was when I was a senior in high school. The job itself was not unusual -- I worked at a small hand-made greeting card company. What made this job unusual was the fact that the owner of record for the company was Questa Churchill Berget, and if you think that is a strange name for a person you would be right. Questa Churchill Berget, or "Churchill" was a pure-bred Dalmatian dog. His owner had an unusual sense of humor, and when she formed the company, she put the company in her dog's name. I guess the one advantage of **having a dog as my "boss"** was staying in his favor was easy, as long as I kept dog treats by my desk for him!
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- While a student, I worked part-time as a **"cereal chemist"** in a flour mill. I burned flour to ash in a furnace, reduced flour to its protein with concentrated sulfuric acid, titrated the residue, and baked cookies (using a recipe which specified ingredients to the gram).
 - I also **pulled fuel elements from a nuclear reactor** and measured them (while shielded by 6m of distilled water) to detect corrosion or other damage, and assisted with a calibration program for police radars.
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- While in high school and college, I **trimmed trees** at a local tree farm. Some of the trees were used for Christmas trees, but most were used for landscaping. To this day, I still cringe when I see an untrimmed or worse yet, a poorly trimmed evergreen tree!
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- A **birthday party host at McDonalds.** I'd have to try and make sure any one of a gaggle of screaming children, mothers, and fathers didn't hurt themselves ... or, make sure Jimmy got the right drink ... or, make sure Mary didn't get ANY pickles on her burger because she was allergic ... and, well...NEVER mind cleaning UP after one of these parties.
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- During college I **tutored GED students at the PG County Jail**. Every day I was locked behind 2 sets of bars with high security offenders (murderers, rapists and armed robbers). I made an impression; but not the one I was hoping for. One of them showed up at my house after escaping from prison! My 16-year old son is following in my footsteps: his first job was as a pheasant plucker and he's now a mule sitter (i.e. his life revolves around the wants and needs of 8 mules owned by a guy who raises them and uses them for parades and actually for hunting. It was his mules that were in President Clinton's last inaugural parade.)
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- My first real job was **unloading watermelons** trucked from Georgia to New Jersey. I still can't figure that one out since New Jersey grew its own perfectly good watermelons.
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- While in grad school, I:
 1. wrote trivia questions for an on-line trivia game,
 2. edited (and wrote) some of the levels for the game Nemesis Factor,
 3. vetted the Paint by Numbers puzzles for Games Magazine and
 4. constructed crossword puzzles for the New York Times and other places.
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- While in high school I was hired to work at the local Dunkin Donuts. During the week after school I was a waitress. On Saturday and Sunday and during the summer, I was the one getting up at 2:00 A.M. to go **make the donuts**. It prepared me for the many years of mid shift work both in the Army and here at the Agency.
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- **Corn detassler:** In order for hybrid corn to develop properly the male portion (the tassel) of one variety of corn is removed so that those ears of corn are only pollinated by the pollen of the desired type of corn, forming the "hybrid". There are no good automated ways to remove these tassles. So I spent one summer in Illinois, the wettest on record at the time, trudging down 1/4 mile rows of corn in ankle deep mud, wearing a long sleeve shirt and jeans to avoid the small cuts that corn gives bare skin, pulling out corn tassles.
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- My working life started young -- nine months to be exact. I did a White Cloud toilet tissue **commercial** . When the star called in sick, I got the call and the rest is history. I actually had to file a tax return for that year and got a refund!
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- Having just joined the NSA last week, I can fairly tell you I am taking about a 50% pay cut from my old job: being an account executive with a finance firm giving home mortgages and HELOCs. Let me tell you, though, these hours are MUCH better!
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To be continued...

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DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108