Dr. Ann Harvey

2541 Kimberly St.

Silver City, NM 88061

575-534-1083

annmharvey@embarq.net; harveya1@wnmu.edu

When Jake saved the Free World. . . . . . with Steve's Help.

How did Jake save the free world, you ask?

The year was 1972 during the second Arab-Israeli War. The men in the bunker at Schierstein were Air Force Intelligence Officers trying to puzzle together the information delivered to them by the photos taken by a fly over of the F-10 Fanthoms that had just landed at Wiesbaden Air Base.

For four years the DIA had tried to figure out a problem connected with the photos. They needed an efficient way to interpret photos of the same land area that were taken at different angles. Planes would approach at different banks and the smoke stacks, planes and tanks on the ground were , of course, disguised by shadows and varying distortions which were delivered from these oddly-shaped horizons. The photo interpreters would spend hours deciphering the information, but it needed to be delivered instantaneously so that military decisions could be made.   If the battle were already finished, this vital information was no longer vital.

Jake wrote a computer program that would do it. It is hard to believe that a formula could apply to the different yawl, pitch, and roll of the plane and its photo, but Jake, genius that he was, figured it out. Now was the chance to prove that the little 15 man computer intelligence shop buried in the bunker could make the headlines.

But alas, there was a problem with the computers overheating.   Steve did his best to keep them cool, but something was a miss with the air conditioning system that kept it cool. Steve opened the door to the bunker, which was strictly against security procedures. The eastern block countries probably had spies sitting outside on the street listening to pick up electronic emissions   He turned on several industrial strengths fans to circulate the air from over-headed 1410 computer. All of this was to no avail.

Next, the air conditioner came under scrutiny. Several guys, with more mechanical expertise than Steve, were called in to take a look at it. The problem was a belt drive that kept the motor to the air conditioner going. By this time it was midnight and Germany did not have a local 7-11 with all night service that carried the right size of belt. What to do? Well, one of the guys had made a run to the BX earlier that day on an errand for his wife and had, miracle or miracles, six pair of panty hose. The idea was wild enough to work. They cut up a leg of the panty hose and placed it in the slot. It was a ridiculous idea but Henry Kissinger was sitting at his desk in Washington waiting for this information and someone had to produce it.

The panty hose leg idea worked very well for about 30 minutes and then it broke. The guys were on there third pair of panty hose and quickly running out. A more long lasting solution had to found.

This is when Bud Hedrick remembered the bowling alley at Mainz. Yes, they had belts on the pin setting machines. But how to get in there at 2 am?   Hmmm. Wait, the keys were on a long forgotten key ring in his pocket. He had used it for a maintenance call a year earlier. Yes, he could not only get into the bowling alley in the middle of the night, but knew how to dismantle a pin-setting machine to retrieve the necessary belt. He left with a promise to return within the hour.

As the last panty hose leg was giving way, Bud ran into the bunker with the belt in hand. By some stroke of luck the odd-sized belt fit. Quickly it was installed and the air conditioner continued to cool the overheated computer. It had worked. Intelligence data was being processed and the thermostat on the automatic override for the computer seemed to be satisfied with the temperature. Phone calls were made to Washington and information less than six hours old was relayed to DIA. Henry Kissinger was pleased.

The applications for this photo interpreting project applied to other projects, of course. The intelligence data collecting system relayed information from all the hotspots in the Cold War. In the European Theater their jurisdiction ran from the Ural Mountains on the east to the Atlantic on the west. The northern coasts of Norway to just below the Sahara Desert marked the north and south boundaries. All the aerial photos from this large region came through the shop at Schierstein. The programs that delivered this information were lovingly named Hank I and Hank II for Henry Kissinger who would receive them and make vital decisions about international relations based on the intelligence data. And so, that's when Jake saved the free world. . . with Steve's help.

Short biography of the Author

Ann Harvey is an Assistant Professor of Reading and Elementary Teaching at Western New Mexico University in Silver City, New Mexico. She is a recent transplant from the midwest where she maintains a summer home in Jefferson City, MO. She formerly taught education courses at Columbia College in Columbia, Mo and Lincoln University in Jefferson City, MO. She is also a retired reading specialist from the South Callaway R-2 Schools in Mokane, MO.

This story was drawn from experiences that were uncovered after being under the veil of secrecy for 35 years. At the time this story took place, Dr. Harvey was the mother of a two year old son, Bob, and a Department of Defense elementary teacher at the school for military dependents while her husband, Steve, worked as an Air Force Intelligence Officer in Wiesbaden, Germany. The story came to light during a recent visit with a good friend, John Jacobson, who also worked as an Air Force Intelligence Officer in Wiesbaden during the Cold War years of 1972-1975. Many of these heroic deeds and 24 hour duties were never noted because of national security issues. Today they are long over-due and deserving of celebration.