M: I told Sam everything I knew when he was over here a couple of years ago.

George: Let me reveal my ignorance... Is there such a thing as a data base, because I thought it kept shifting whenever there was new evidence that came in.

M: Yes and no. Our experience was that we had pretty substantial shifts for the first six months. In other words we will say that we are here on one January of any given year and we produce a set of figures saying, right, we think the bad guys have "x" number of bodies in the following category; "gorillas", so forth, on this day "x", January, one given year. We know that that is probably wrong and we realize that there is a lot of information that we don't have. But it gets better every month and we keep backdating this one January figure. In June of that year the one January preceding figure, that is to say six months ago, will be pretty hard and our experience was that we don't get much past six months. But things are fairly fluid for that six month period. Two years before that, those figures are pretty stable and they don't change. Even solidifying further, when I was there we had a couple of really good fixes. They were before my time. Sam was aware of these and he was aware of when we had them. Nevertheless we had some really high level documents that we captured that corroborated with a lot of sources and that we believe to be correct. They had "had" because this happened before my time (that is to say, the time we captured the high level documents. Our information arrived from other sources. Then we captured these particular high level documents and they pretty much confirmed what we had independently determined. So we said right, there is a good fix. We are going to call this right.

George: This would be category by category.

M: Yes, category by category. This is, I think sort of eighteen months a year anyway. But perhaps as long as eighteen months before I got there all this happened. So, in that sense there was a data base. Added to that we did not get many changes past six months previously. In other words, once a month had faded into the six month oblivion it was pretty well stabilized. Once in a while we had a few changes. But usually when an infiltration group had been in the country for six months we had put this package into a regiment and not much else changed. In other words we did not get much past six months. But we got a lot of action the first two or three months and then, on a curve, things settled down.
George: Would that have been established after the National intelligence estimate, in the fall of '67?

M: Which?

George: One of the anchors...

M: Oh-hhh yes, I think it was before that.

George: Even before...way back in McChristians time probably.

M. Oh yes, before my time. I didn't investigate the particulars of this but it was presented by my predecessors who said "Look we had a good fix back at this point in time" Nobody argues about it. We didn't change our system because of it. Because, by and large it corroborated our own independantly, that is to say independant of that particular set of intelligence... documents, or whatever they were.

George: So even by one month figure, you didn't put it in as to exactly that the system seemed to be coughing out, you knew you had it there and you could come back to it.

M. Well...I don't think I am explaining this very well. Say I got there at the end of '67. We'll say it was eighteen months before that. I don't know the precise time, but Sam is aware of this and I think he can tell you. So, at some point in time, way in antiquity, as far as I was concerned then. We had a set of figures that we had cooked up from all sources and then later we got a piece of intelligence that corroborated at a previous time to the time we got that with a set of figures that we had come up with independantly.

George: Basically, you got more documentary evidence to make you feel even better about that base that you had back then.

M. Well, we had a base line that we had drawn continually without a real good solid hard base. At two points in time we got what was considered a good hard fix. Now, at this point, which we'll say was Jan. 1, 1967. They said "okay we have now received this really hard piece of intelligence that we are absolutely certain it gives all categories and breakdowns. We believe this. It says "in the middle of 66 we had this many people: Now lets look and see what we had in the middle of 66...Ha..its almost the same. We think our system was pretty good in 66, because we have this hard corroborated stuff.

George: I am with you there.

M. Alright, so the Danny Graham change...we had followed almost the same system; from our hard point fixes to April (the present) of '68, the same system we followed before the hard point fixes, that is to say "the generating system, which generated the figures that did match with the hard point fixes. We
followed basically the same system. From the hard point fix time, to the time that I came there, through most of my time, realizing all the problems involved in it, nevertheless, we had followed a consistent pattern of assessing problems and difficulties. Now, in January of my tour there we experienced some unusual difficulties. In that, you must understand - we had ingoings and outgoings every month.

ingoings: recruitment, infiltration, stuff like that.
outgoings: killed in action, died of wounds, deserted.

We knew the outgoings of any given month almost immediately. We had KIA's, wounded, prisoners, we knew all those things. But, we did not have the infiltration guides for six months, or increasingly accurately during the six month period. Now this doesn't make any difference when you in a steady state war. But when TET happened we got an enormous number of KIA's in one month. We didn't get the infiltrators then. We had to pick them all up. We picked up some of them, sure, but in retrospect maybe we should have picked up more of them.

But we had certain rules that we had to abide by, and you know, you have funny things that are happening to you. You get some intelligence that turns out to be wrong and you evaluate it, and it takes some time to do it. So, when TET came along we had an unusual circumstance, that we had a huge number of losses but at that particular time we hadn't picked up the infiltrators.

We always had this problem, but it was never serious before, because they never got out of balance. You have a big fight and they do get out of balance temporarily.

We lived through that, after having a couple of arguments with the CIA and Sam's bunch. After that, (the conference) perhaps as a result of something that happened there. After that Danny wanted to go back and change the whole basis, which would have affected the numbers going back into antiquity, that by that time we were having some confidence in.

George: Was it just one category Jim, or all of them?

Was it penetration infiltrators?

M. I don't recall. It certainly would not have been all categories. But, of course any one given category would affect the total number.

George: So, it was probably concentrating on the infiltration figures?

M. I can't tell you. I do remember I was quite exercised by it at the time, at was Wyler and Bernie Catazzi. Catazzi can probably tell you more about it. But, the idea was to change the data base and that's just the figures back, you know, just six or eight months before, to reflect another specific total.

Now, he had some arguments that I disagreed with violently. I just did not think they held water. We didn't have any hard stuff for justification, like what they used for their previous fix. The second reason was that even after they had the hard stuff it did not disagree and in fact corroborated the use of the system that they were using at the time and is still the same system.
George: The infiltration figures... Is it possible that this would have been a category that Graham would not have wanted to introduce a whole bunch more of them into the rolls.

M: I don't think so. It might have been. But, I can't tell you.

George: Was it in Macvee's computer or sic-vee?
M: Well, I suppose the computer was physically in sic-vee.

George: Did you not keep duplicate records or tapes or weren't there manual systems backing it up?

M: Oh yes. I don't think there was any question about destroying these things forever. However, I remember the time that I had made a mistake by putting it on the computer. (Ed Parkins used to work this out by hand). At the time when Ed did this I thought it was quite silly because it was something the computer could do instantaneously. As soon as he left we changed this. But then when I ran into this trouble, I thought you know, if we had to do all this by hand we never would have been put on such a wild goose chase, because it would have just been too hard. On a computer it's easy, you change one number back there and a microsecond runs the whole things out again for you-up to date. See you can go back to any point previously and say "we're going to change this figure to such and such and lets see what happens, bang." Now, I don't recall the mechanics of it. Certainly the whole thing was not wiped out. It seems to me, that for the first runs we didn't tinker with the basic system, but we just fiddled around with the extra numbers. Bernie Cataazzi could give you a better idea of what went on, because he is the one that had to do it. Danny told him how to juggle the figures and he came back and did it. It certainly would have been possible at any time to go back and reduce the things by hand. I am sure there were some kind of records somewhere. If nothing else there were paper reports that we sent forward to...<footnote>

George: But nobody was going to go back and say we will do this by hand.

M: Right, if sic-vee said we have reset the figures, nobody was going to check this further.

George: Some people have had mental blocks. When we talked to Gaines Hawkins, he physically had a mental block for about a month and a half of the time he spent there. So, Sam and I went over the chronology with him and then it all came back. Also, Bernie Cataazzi, who has been very helpful, draws a blank when it comes to that. He asks that we fill in some of the details to trigger his memory. But did he actually work with Danny Graham with that?

M: Oh yes. He physically went up to Danny Graham's desk. Graham said "you" do this for me and he did it.
George: So did Bernie have to get other people to help him?

M. Oh, I don't think so. Bernie was the computer Czar. He knew everything about computers and that's why he was in the meeting with Danny and the rest of us.

George: You know, Bernie said to us that he wants to get a better sense of the context, to try and piece things together. He remembers many other things, like the gorilla problem. However, when it comes to that one he draws a blank.

M. Well, when we had this imbalance problem the gorillas had to take the brunt of it. It looked funny for a couple of months.

George: So did you actually tell Bernie to go to Graham?

M. Oh sure. I remember this particular crunch meeting. It was in the main headquarters and everybody was there; Danny, Wyler, Davidsong, me and Bernie. The end result was that Danny won the argument. He said, "you send Bernie to me and I'll tell him what I want." We played dumb and said "Danny we think your doing this wrong" and he just said "you send Bernie to me". So there was no question about who was going to do what.

George. Would Bernie have had to design a methodology for approaching it?

M. Oh no, the methodology wasn't changed at all. Just the numbers were.

G...and you thought it was a simple task?

M. For a guy like Bernie it wasn't complicated.

G...and Wyler objected too. Do you remember what Wyler's point was?

M. Wyler and Bernie and I all had the same point. In our various arguments with the C.I.A., we had always gone back to this rock bottom point, where we said; Idok, the system as we designed it may not be perfect but is the best one we can think of and inbetween a couple of points here which we have hard evidence to support, our system was working. We designed a system in year one, which generated the right number when we got a really hard fix. We're pure lily white folks and have not deviated from our system. Sure, we had trouble with TET but that was because of the time lag difference with a lot of losses at once and no gains. But that will eventually wash out. Whereas, now if you, Danny Graham go back and tinker with the numbers they will no longer be compatible with our system as extrapolated from the hard point. We will lose all the arguments of "being tinkerers with systems."
George. I think I understand everything in an impressionistic sense. Hypothetically, what could the emerging problem be that made him go back and change the figures?

M. In May of 68, right after we got back from the April arguments with CIA, he was probably still feeling the hot breath of the arguments and seeing our figures diverge from the CIA figures (or not converge fast). The figures of enemy bad guys should have been higher than our figures.

George: So when he wanted to back into the historical basis, was that in order to reduce or increase the size of the estimates back then?

M. (long pause) I'm not sure I can tell you. I would think to decrease them. However, on the other hand, that would make us farther off from the CIA's position, wouldn't it?

G. Probably to increase them, no? Because we were accounting for a lot of rises at TET.

M. That may be right. But I can't attest to this one way or the other.

G. A working hypothesis in my mind: When all the kill figures came in at TET, and the loss of one way or another... from the estimates?

M. We'd have to jack the TET figures higher so we'd have a bigger base to subtract them from. I see what you're saying but that would have been inconsistent with having lost the CIA April battle. It would have been curious for Danny to come back and try to back track.

G. Yet, no one would have come back and looked at that figure anyway, would they?

M. I suspect so... I don't know.

G. Jim, who else would have a sense of this other then Bernie?

M. Danny would and Davidson.

G. What about other people that were working with you?

M. Oh, they might "peripherally". But you know, everyone was buried in their own little book. Ponder might know something, but he was so thick.

G. Who was your aid?

M. Rus Cooley was with me at that time. He was very bright. Again, I'm not sure he was involved in that. Although, he might have been. The four people involved in it the most were: Bernie, Wyler, Danny and me.
G. The problem is that everybody draws a blank on this subject.

M. That is because the things that appeared important to us at the time aren't the things that are important to you now. We were more worried about tinkering with our beloved system than we were about the results that came out.

G. I seemed to me that this was a moment which Bernie should have had a keen memory of. It was tampering with the "beloved" system.

M. I'm surprised these records aren't around some place.

G. How would one go about having a look at those records. If you could identify them, what would you do? (to figure out what happened)

M. I don't know. I just sent them to Charlie Morris. Some of the figures; the in bottom line figures went into a thing called the MOP (Measurement of Progress). This is a monthly report we made in Singpac. We had an officer there who didn't do anything else but this. It wasn't just strength figures. He got everything: # of rounds fired, ammunition, etc. He made a great briefing of this and went back to Singpac with it every month.

G. Would that include the historical changes?

M. No, but you might be able to see some unreasonable jig in the spring of 68. Sam ought to be able to tell. Surely they had access to the whole damm thing. They definitely had them. When we had this great argument in April they were very much in our knickers: They knew exactly what figures were when. They didn't realize how we got them. But they had the results of everything and that was the argument.

G. Do you think that the actual computer records would be stored somewhere?

M. I don't know. At the time everything had a look of permanence. But they could have wiped everything away.

G. But if they were there, would it be easy to go back and spot the change.

M. Oh yes. It wouldn't be any trouble at all, because you had two sets of figures from then on. I can't really recall... but I think we did it formally...

G. You mean two sets of figures?

M. No. We wouldn't have kept two. We would have shifted from Danny's figures to mine. The system the used previously was pretty consistent. However, about the time I left Bernie did a lot of tinkering with it for Danny.
G. Wasn't it more complicated for Bernie when he went to Danny about changing the figures?

M. As I recall. He had to do this quite a few times, going back and forth to Danny. I suppose he was trying various combinations.

G. It wasn't automatic that it was going to look right.

M. It wasn't a ten minute visit.

G. Did Bernie work with anybody else on it?

M. No, well, with the computer people of course and the mechanics. They wouldn't know what the hell he was talking about. He'd day make it do this and they would do it.

G. If you were going to go back to it, what would you retrieve?

M. The historical strength reports from Mic-vee. Somewhere in the DIA these things are still around.

G. I am right in thinking that this one went over the line in importance. Am I not?

M. Again, one of the problems is that I didn't see much of this thing. When it happened, it was near the end of my time there. While I opposed it strongly, I'm not necessarily sure that it did displace the system that we had been working with the whole time I was there.

G. You can't say that for sure.

M. I can't say that for sure.

M. The intention of Danny was to input way back into antiquity a different set of base line figures. Maybe for all categories, certainly for some, and certainly different total numbers. This then brought forward, all through those many months, using the same profit and loss figures that we had used, starting from a different base- would generate an entirely different result. in May 68.

G. Jim, I understood that. However, it seemed like a radical thing to do. Anyone could check the records all the way back and feel that nothing was that solid. No?

M. That was precisely our feeling. I suppose the argument on the other side (and I am just supposing) "Well, we have always made these kind of estimates and historical corrections and now we have seen some things in the last few months which we in our wisdom estimate to have changed our previous estimates and so we are going to change them. There was no argument with Danny since, he was the head of estimates. So if he said "We now estimate that the figures for 66 were wrong and we
are going to go back and change them...well there was no arguing with him.

G. Did Danny have any arguments that made sense at that time?

M. As I recall he didn't to us

G. But your strongest argument (you and Wyler) was that "Look beyond six months we don't really have that many changes, unless something is being brought forward that we don't know about,...there isn't a way to justify all these changes.

M. That would be one argument; that we have never experienced these results way back there. Another argument would be that in those previous months, way back there, we have never used estimates. We believe that that far back we can use only hard figures. Now everything from the last six months is soft figures (based on profit-loss accounting). Now we don't want to change anything that long ago unless it's a hard figure. Estimates aren't for the past. They're for the future. A third argument would have been a political one; we wanted to be frank with the CIA. Our feeling was that we had always been consistent, using hard figures and if the CIA wanted to attack us...at least we could show them a strong logic. But if Danny wanted to start plugging estimates in, then, Sam Adams or whoever in the CIA wanted to, couldn't plug their own estimate in. We have ceased being virgin lilies and have tinkered with the system. But now, having won this argument, you (Danny) are putting us all into the position that they accused us of doing.

G. I think I have a pretty good sense of it. The only thing I don't see is whether he wanted to raise them or lower them and why?

M. I suppose that he may have wanted to raise those base line figures so that when they caught up to us in January and we began to hit them with those huge losses of TET, it wouldn't look so ridiculous.

G. Remember when Art Goldberg was being briefed by General DePue over the losses of TET. He added up and said "Well general for every dead there are always three people wounded, maybe more. DePue went along with that and Goldberg, upon doing some calculations said "Theres no enemy left in the field according to that."

M. I think thats overstating the case.

G. Yes, its overstating the case. But thats the kind of dilemma that he may have been confronting.

M. The problem was that after TET we had trouble finding logical forces to lay off the losses. There were several possible reasons for it. But I think that we just didn't have the time to incorporate all the gains that the enemy had at that point. We got the losses the day after TET.
Yet we never had the gain figures. Gains are infiltration and in-country recruitment.

G. In that area he might have wanted to go back and add those infiltration figures.

M. We would have done that anyway. What he might have been worried about was that we would never get these and look silly.

G. Course they hadn't been getting through before. Remember Parkins was shouting about all those infiltrators that didn't get incorporated.

M. That whole incident just passed over my head. But we were always having fights about figures. The fact is the figures were always soft.

G. Maybe what he was saying was that perhaps Parkins was right back then and maybe we ought to just put it in now rather than wait for more evidence to come through.

M. That's possible. I'm not sure that Danny's breadth of span took in the Parkins fight. Though it may have. The Parkins fight would have happened not too long after Danny got the estimates job.

G. It sounds like the infiltration figures are a key to that problem.

M. It might have been. There are two or three keys to it. It could have been the loss figures (the KIA figures). Obviously we knew how many prisoners we took and how many deserters we got. By and large the KIA figures were probably not far off, for the body count figures. A softer figure was people who died of wounds. We more or less arbitrarily used a kill ratio liked what they used in the civil war.

G/ Just in terms of detail and what would trigger Bernie's memory.... Was any of it awkward for him Was he aware of the fact that none of you wanted to do and that he had to execute this?

W. So, whenever Wyler or you didn't want to do it did you just give it to Danny because he was in charge of estimates?

M. Well it wasn't really a case of estimates. We weren't really in Danny's chain. We worked for Charlie Morris, so Danny was not our Boss. But he was more equal than others. So we had to send Bernie up there. But Bernie was in all the arguments. He knew as much about the strength figures as the rest of us. So, there was no question about what to do. It wasn't a ten minute job. He went back and forth with this several times. As I recall, Wyler and I washed our hands or it. There was time when he was tinkering around with a duplicate set of figures, but wasn't destroying our figures.
G. So you know that they tinkered but you don’t know if they actually went through with it.

M. I suspect they did. But I am not sure.

G. Is that because you left soon afterward?

M. If this happened in May, we would have just made one report after that.

G. Do you think for a while Bernie was keeping an extra set of records because he didn’t think what Danny was doing was right?

M. Well no. I suspect he said “Look until we get through with this we will have one set that we can diddle around with without destroying the whole system. In otherwords, keep a duplicate set someplace. So they took the duplicate tape and tinkered around with it and meanwhile we still had the mainstream records (we had them four or five ways. We always did.) We had a couple of tapes and the paper print outs. If we sent the paper print outs anywhere it would have been to the DIA. The net result bottom line figures would have gone to St. Pac in the MOP. It would come forward as Mac Vee information.

*I would ask for the enemy strength accounting figures I don’t the precise term that they would have been reported under. Have a look at the MOP first, then the enemy strength accounting figures. But don’t use the word estimate. That would be out of Sic-vee. Maybe they burned all that stuff when they lost Saigon. However, they may have shipped it all to the DIA.

As far as Bernie... He was a bright boy who happened to be in the middle of this. However it was a bit more complicated than that... (Long pause) You see, in this meeting we all made it clear that we thought he was wrong. Bernie was as aware as any of us. We all realized that eventually he would substitute his sets of figures for ours. We were technicians of the system and if Davidson was going to assign one of his subordinates to do the tinkering. There was nothing we could do but be the instruments of the tinkering.

G. Davidson was at that meeting?

M. Oh absolutely.

G. And he was supporting Danny Graham?

M. At the end of the day he did. Most of the arguing was done between Danny, Wyler and me and Bernie. At the end of the day Davidson piped in and said “Let’s see what Danny has to offer.”

G. So Bernie must have felt bad about it.

G. Well, if I’m not mistaken Bernie was getting ready to leave so he was thinking “Well, I have one more month so I don’t have to worry. There’s no logical reason for him to have a mental block.
G. So Danny was having trouble with the DIA as well as the CIA?

M. Oh, the DIA was basically on our side although in a lukewarm way. We were dragging them along.

G. Maybe the DIA was suspicious at that point.

M. Well I think he believed that they could have supported us more strongly.

G. But you get the sense that he felt the need to provide some reason for the flow of estimates.

M. At the April meeting I didn't have that impression at all. Danny clearly knew a lot more about what was going on. It didn't seem at that time, that Danny was going to back off at all.

G. Why was that meeting called? Was it specifically called to discuss strength estimates? Also, wasn't it unusual for Graham to do this in front of so many people?

M. Yes, that was an unusual meeting. We didn't ordinarily have such big meetings where Davidson was involved. But I don't know whether it was called solely for that purpose or not.

G. Did the meeting immediately follow the Washington DIA meeting?

M. I had the impression that it was a month later.

G. Was Danny Graham in charge of the meeting or did Davidson run it?

M. I had the impression Danny did.

G. Did Danny present a rational case for making the figures jive with reality or did he just come right out and say "look we have to make these things..."

M. Well, we knew what we were getting into before we even arrived there. I had the impression that Davidson was a little surprised with how Wyler and I defended our position with such depth and voraciousness. I had the impression that we came close to winning it.

G. So Davidson was the judge?

M. Oh yes, he was the senior guide there. Quite clearly he was very much in charge of the operations.
G. Somehow he always had a power disproportionate to his rank.

M. Well the army is a great pyramid with a great tube running up the center, and Danny was always in that tube.

G. Did he have anything to do with the call for the change in the gorilla estimates? (right after TET)

M. No, I don't think so. This was always the systems and not something we cooked up after TET. Gorillas were the softest category. Gorillas were used as their "slump" factor. When we had this huge number of losses at TET we ascribed them to gorillas and then those secret self-defense forces and spy-estimates that hadn't changed in years. Obviously this looked suspect.

G. What strikes me is that you, Cataazzi and Wyler wouldn't participate in the one area where you were the custodians of hard evidence ... and then in comes Danny Graham who "crosses that line"...

M. We thought that was a terrible thing.

M. When you speak to Danny don't bring Sam into this. You know how Danny dislikes Sam. The most important people in that situation were Davidson, Morris and Danny, Hawkins and Dave Morgan don't know anything.

G. What about Westmoreland?

M. He'll talk to anyone and say "the politicians let us down and we should have had 500,000 more troops ..." He always looked like he was in a daze.