

THE STORY OF THE NEW CLUE

Jim said: “Just recently, I gave out a surreptitious new clue that I didn't tell anybody about, but I'm sure you know about that. I kind of gave it out as a pandemic bonus just to keep people busy out there. I was surprised. I first leaked it to one guy in the Outback of Australia and somebody else in South Asia. But it took months, it took four months for that to come out, to, to reach the KRYPTOS community.

And I had debated that layout. I had debated quite a while, whether I was going to release Northeast or East Northeast, and I decided to just release Northeast first. I made the layout the same time for the two, and then I released the first one and then I released the second ones, you know, just as a surreptitious kind of thing.”

I said, “There are theories out there that ‘East’ is just part of the word that it's really like least or beast or yeast. Maybe it's a recipe.”

Jim replied: “Well, that's great. I mean, whatever, whatever comes out of it, that's great, but it is an ever-decreasing thing to crack. And I also figured that the more spaces I've filled in and there will not be any more clues, but the more spaces I've filled in, the more inclined people will be to guess. To guess a string of characters is, is totally impossible, but to guess a shorter string, like before East and then center section, the people could guess those parts of it.”

I said, “But that is it. No more clues. That's the end.”

Jim said: “Right.”

THE CARVING OF THE LETTERS

Jim said he initially wanted to cut out the letters on the screen with a water jet. But the water jet company was charging too much money.

“So, basically, I went through, I think, fifteen different assistants, nine hundred jigsaw blades and twelve Bosch jigsaws and cut it by hand over two and a half years.”

I said, “My heart goes out to the fifteen assistants.”

Jim said, “One guy was just out of drug rehab, and for some reason he found peace cutting the letters out. So he did a huge amount of it all by himself.”

WHAT HAS CHANGED ABOUT KRYPTOS SINCE IT WAS INSTALLED

Jim said his last visit to KRYPTOS was probably 12 years ago.

I asked him if anything had changed. He said, "Only that there were tree frogs living in the petrified tree." I said, "Are the frogs part of the code?" He chuckled and said, "Well, I wouldn't tell you if they were."

THE LENGTH OF TIME TO CRACK K1 THROUGH K3 (NOT K4)

Jim: "Well, the reality is, it took a lot longer for it to come out than I expected. I mean, the first three, I figure it'd be cracked within weeks."

DOES HE WANT K4 CRACKED?

Jim said, "Honestly, I had really hoped K4 would take this long or never be cracked. But the first three, I thought would be done quickly."

I asked, in his ideal scenario, would he want K4 cracked

Jim: "Oh, I could care less if it's cracked. I mean, I really don't want, I would rather it, you know, outlive me."

I asked him why then he's given out clues.

Jim said, "to allow it to keep simmering."

THE POSSIBILITY OF BURIED TREASURE

I said that the plaintext of K2 mentions that it's "buried out there."
Which makes me think that something might be buried on the grounds of the CIA. So when I visit the CIA, should I bring a shovel?

Jim said: "I can't respond to any questions about what may or may not be or happened or whatever."

CREATING THE CODE

I asked him about his meetings with Ed Scheidt. I said that I've read that they never talked on the phone, but would meet in secret.

Jim said, "At the time there was a little restaurant a few miles from the agency and we'd have lunch there, off in the corner talking in very hushed tones....I asked them to give me a history of codes more or less, you know, nobody had really written too much about it at the time.

We did exchange some, some written material about the history of codes and I came up with a system based on the materials that he had given me and suggestions from him. You could do this, you can do that. You can do this, you can do that. There are codes that depend entirely on patterns.

There are pattern codes that are woven into blankets in some countries in Africa in particular. I mean, so codes can come in many different shapes and sizes.

So basically I was able to take that information and come up with codes and then I asked him what, you know, what could I use for the final section that would make it difficult there, you know, making it as difficult as possible, whatever. And he gave me a few, again, a few suggestions, all of which I could then modify myself into something that he wouldn't, he would have to have, he personally would then have to, take, go to great effort to find out what it said.

But basically he doesn't know, he still doesn't know what it says.

I used that information [the information on codes that Ed Scheidt told him] and manipulated it the way that I could in order to come up with all of the codes."

WILL THE FINAL ANSWER TO K4 BE ANTICLIMACTIC IF IT'S NOT SOMETHING MOMENTOUS, LIKE THE SECRET TO LIFE?

Jim said, "Well, I have alluded to this many times, is once you decipher the plain text, once you have the text that doesn't necessarily mean you know what is going to happen. I mean, it's, it's something that at least you could call it a riddle, but it's not, it doesn't, it isn't like clarity, this moment of clarity, about what I've said."

I said, "You described it as a riddle within a riddle."

Jim said, "Yeah, that's right."

WHAT ARE SOME WRONG GUESSES

Jim said he has received documents as much as 150 pages long with wrong guesses. I asked him for examples of wrong guesses. He said there was a "very elaborate scheme of KRYPTOS overlaying a satellite image of the CIA and somehow it made a guitar in the strings and neck of which extended to England."

MISTAKES

I said that it seemed to me that some mistakes in the coded text were intentional and some by mistake.

He said, yes. There were mistakes he didn't mean to make. "There was nobody I could ask to proofread KRYPTOS. All I could do is read it over and over and over again. And you know how that works."

HOW IT FEELS TO HAVE CREATED KRYPTOS

Jim said, "I do derive some satisfaction from having something like this, um, that's lasted so long, but frankly, the greatest satisfaction I get is that I have created an artwork which keeps on giving which is very difficult to do."

CAN K4 BE CRACKED WITH A COMPUTER?

Jim said, "Sure. It's possible. I'm sure it's possible with nano computing."

I asked if I should try to get a nano computer.

Jim said, "Well, I think it can be cracked. I think it ultimately could be cracked by, you know, it's possible, who knows? But I mean, it could be done with pencil and paper. But it's, just, you know, the more powerful computers become, the more easily codes are cracked."

ASIDE FROM JIM HIMSELF, WHO KNOWS THE ENTIRE ANSWER TO KRYPTOS?

I said, "I know that William Webster, the former head of the CIA, you did tell him the answer, you gave him an envelope, but did you give him all the answers or is there some mystery that only you know?"

Jim said: "Well, let's just say that the agency is not all about complete, uh, honesty. They don't like to expose anything in toto. And neither do I. I kind of played their game. For example, if I gave Webster the code and he opened it and told everybody what it was, then it doesn't bode well for the agency being able to keep a secret. Now, if he kept it secret and somebody leaked it, that doesn't look good for the agency either. So it doesn't matter whether I gave it all to him or not, because they basically don't look good if it gets out."

AJ: "I read another story, uh, that I don't know how true it is. Something about a meeting at the Department of Historical Intelligence where two women got part of it and, and they got very emotional. The stress was too much for them. Did I get that right? Or is that just KRYPTOS lore?"

Jim: "I've told the story before. You've got most of it. I'm quite honest about this and I'm not making anything up when I tell you what that scenario was. I've already divulged a good bit of it anyway. So yeah, they, they, they didn't know what to do. They felt like they had to know what it said.

There's an obvious reason, someone at the CIA had to know what was in it. I was going to put some pornography in there? Was I gonna say something anti CIA? Was I going to do this? Was I going to do that? So, I understood that they needed to know what it said, but I interpreted that as meaning, well, they might need to know what it says, but they don't need to know what it says collectively. They don't need to know what the whole thing says.

So I told them that I would give the text to the Department of Historical Intelligence and their office is in the middle of the agency in a small room, that's in the heart of the old building, which actually has a big graphic of the city of Moscow on the wall.

And there's a little door, there's one single door into this small room. And I asked how many people are there and they said three people, I believe they told me.

So I took the plain text of, I took the plain text of KRYPTOS and I made two packages. I made one package, which was for three people and I made one package, which was for two people. A package, by a package, I mean, I divided, I cut up the plain text into pieces.

I gave a certain set of sentences to one individual, if there were two. And then the rest of the set to the other person. And they were mixed up, they weren't in order.

And I did that for three people. So basically, I went into the room and I asked 'Do any of you have an institutional or a photographic memory?' And two of them immediately pointed to the third person in the room.

And I asked that person to leave.

It was very convincing that they pointed to this third person. So then we're left with a guy, a man and a woman. And so then I took out my little package for two people and I placed it. I just placed this pile of sentences in front of each one. They were sitting at separate desks.

And after about, I don't know, just thirty seconds to a minute of them looking at it, the woman became very anxious and agitated and, and she had to be taken from the room."

I said, "What do you think was going on? She was just stressed by the responsibility?"

Jim said, "Yeah, totally. It was all up to the two of them. And if in fact, if I had lied to them or I had done something untoward, they would be blamed for it and they'd lose their jobs.

So then I picked it up, I picked up my little dog and pony show and took it all away with me. And at that point, um, it was decided to give it in an envelope to Webster."

SEEING KRYPTOS IN PERSON

I told Jim I am visiting KRYPTOS in the near future. I asked if I would get any advantage from actually seeing it in person – like the shapes or shadows?” Jim said, “I can’t say.”

He added, “I get that question once a week from people trying to crack it.”