

NCR engineer who broke codes for Navy in WWII dies at 92

By Jim DeBrosse

Staff Writer

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IRMO, S.C. — Louis "Lou" Kruse Sandor, one of the key NCR engineers in the Navy's top-secret codebreaking project in Dayton during World War II, died Friday at his home here. He was 92.

A Piqua native, Mr. Sandor was one of four NCR engineers, along with project chief Joe Desch, to receive a commendation from the Navy for outstanding war-time service inside NCR's Building 26 — the Navy's laboratory for creating computer-like machinery to decode German and Japanese messages.

In an interview in 2000, Mr. Sandor said security in Building 26, located at Stewart Street and Patterson Boulevard, was so tight that shotgun-toting Marines stood guard at office doors and on the building's roof. The guards were wounded veterans who had seen action early in the war, and they could be skittish, Mr. Sandor said.

"I had a habit of slamming the door to the restroom whenever I went in," Mr. Sandor recalled. One day he startled a Marine who was shaving in a restroom sink. "All of a sudden, I was staring into the barrel of a .45. I don't know who was scared more — me or the Marine who almost shot me."

Mr. Sandor and the other engineers at NCR never took credit for their top-secret work, which wasn't declassified until the mid-1990s. "We worked hard and we worked long hours, but I wasn't out anywhere where I was being shot at," he said in 2000. "Those were the guys really out there doing the tough job."

Mr. Sandor was transferred in the mid-1970s to Columbia, S.C., where he later retired from NCR to run an electronics repair shop for Radio Shack.

Mr. Sandor will be buried next week in Piqua's Forest Hill Cemetery. Jamieson Yannucci Funeral Home is handling the arrangements, which are still pending.

Surviving are his six children, Patricia Gnodle of Kingman, Ariz.; Phyllis Smith of Dayton;

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