

# Walter Munk Chronology of Wartime Security Clearance

Deborah Day, UCSD Libraries  
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October 3, 1932	Walter Munk (WM) entered the United States at New York from Antwerp on M.S. <u>Pennland</u> under the quota for Austria.
May-September 1934	WM visited Austria
May-September 1935	WM visited Austria
March 3, 1936	WM entered a declaration of his intention to become a U.S. citizen.
May-August 1937	WM visited Austria
August 1937	WM moved to Los Angeles from New York City.
September 24, 1937	WM entered California Institute of Technology.
March 12, 1938	Anschluss, Hitler marches into Austria. WM requests CalTech registrar to defer his examinations as developments in Austria endanger his family and cause him mental anguish. WM's mother, stepfather, sister and brother escape from Austria within a month of Anschluss.
February 29, 1939	WM petitioned for citizenship from the U.S. District Court of Los Angeles.
June 9, 1939	WM received final citizenship papers at Los Angeles
June 29, 1939	WM enrolled at Scripps Institution of Oceanography
September 6, 1940	WM enlisted in the National Guard, joined 146 <sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, Camp Murray, Washington.
November 12, 1940	WM promoted to corporal.
September 29, 1941	Harald Ulrik Sverdrup (HUS) writes to War Department requesting that WM discharged from army and posted to Navy Radio & Sound Lab.
October 16, 1941	WM writes his commanding officer requesting discharge to work for NR&SL. War Department denies the request.
November 12, 1941	WM honorably discharged from Army 146 <sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, Battery F as a corporal. Cause of discharge: defective vision.
January 6, 1942	CIC Agent Buckley interviewed Karl Nathan on WM's background.
February 1942	WM at Scripps Institution of Oceanography
April 1, 1942	G-2 Agent Neil Ruge interviews Capt. S.W. Chambers, who gives G-2 a list of WM's friends and associates and says that he doubts WM's loyalty because he

appeared to avoid military service and is associated with Michael Huquet. Ruge finds Chambers credible though possibly over-suspicious.

- April 1, 1942 G-2 Agent Ruge interviews Claude ZoBell who said he “could not give an estimate of subject’s loyalty, integrity or discretion,” but said that other members of the staff considered WM pro-German. Agent Ruge concludes that ZoBell “knows considerably more about subject than he is willing to divulge.”
- April 3, 1942 G-2 Agent Ruge interviews Owen Martin, SIO Janitor, who “believed that subject was not loyal to the United States. Martin said subject kept an office at Scripps Institution and he frequently brought girls out to the office at night. Most of these girls spoke with a German accent... Martin said he had got into an argument with subject over the moving of Japanese from the coastal area. Munk had stated that there was nothing wrong with the Japanese, that he was an alien and nothing was wrong with him. Martin then replied that he thought General DeWitt knew what he was doing. Martin then stated Munk said the Army didn’t know what it was doing and that the Army was ‘dumb.’ ” Martin quotes ZoBell as saying that WM attended a party at HUS home the night Singapore fell and “there was much laughter over this event.” Agent Ruge concludes that Martin is highly patriotic and may be prejudiced against the subject because of his Austrian background and accent. Martin “claims to have been a major in a Jubaland (East Africa) British Camel Corps detachment during World War I.” He had been employed by SIO for three and a half months.
- April 3,8, 1942 G-2 Agent Ruge interviews Alice Clark, WM’s landlady, who vouches for his loyalty.
- April 9, 1942 G-2 Agent Ruge interviews WM’s landlady Mrs. C.F. Cole who vouched for his loyalty integrity and discretion, but said she wouldn’t rent a room to him again because of his extreme untidiness. G-2 interviewed Dr. George F. McEwen who vouched for WM’s loyalty, although the agent found McEwen “unsuspecting.”
- April 9, 1942 G-2 Agent Ruge interviews Denis Fox. “He stated that he knew nothing definite to discredit Subject’s loyalty, but that he ‘kept his fingers crossed’ concerning him.”
- April 9, 1942 G-2 Agent Ruge interviews ZoBell again. ZoBell refused to give the agent the names of the staff members who considered WM pro-German because Sverdrup “had told him to forget it. Dr. Sverdrup had also told him that he, ZoBell, was getting over-emotional about the war.” Agent Ruge concluded that “ZoBell fears for his position” and had the impression that ZoBell doubted the loyalty of both Munk and Sverdrup.
- April 15, 1942 MID loyalty report on WM concludes, “This agent recommends that subject be removed from work on secret and confidential projects.” The agent states that while most of the information about WM is favorable, other information indicates the possibility of disloyalty, and WM’s association with HUS whose pro-German tendencies are proven to the agent’s satisfaction, persuade the agent that WM should not be allowed further access to secret material. This report is shared with ONI.
- May 27, 1942 CNO objected to WM’s employment by the University of Chicago and cites his relationship with HUS who has been found “guilty of subversive tendencies.”
- June 1942? Investigation instituted by FBI when two soldiers complained that they encountered WM at Lake Hodges, California where he told them he was going

to “blow up the dam.” Soldiers gave them license number of the man’s car, registered to WM. FBI interviewed person who said that Walter H. Munk of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography fit the description of the individual identified by the soldiers.

- June 29, 1942 FBI interviews WM who “readily admitted having made the statement to the soldiers. He stated that he had been dancing with a lady friend and had been annoyed by questions of the soldiers. ... He stated he made the remark as a jest...” FBI accepts WM’s explanation and terminates the investigation.
- July 1942 WM informed he could no longer work at NR&SL, Pt. Loma.
- July 14, 1942 FBI San Diego report filed on HUS and WM.
- August 13, 1942 A government agency initiated a loyalty investigation on WM in connection with his employment by a government agency.
- August 31, 1942 WM employed by AAF Directorate of Weather as assistant meteorologist, later assistant oceanographer, through Seiwel and Krick.
- September 9, 1942 Navy informed the War Department that it objected to WM’s employment on the Army Air Corps research project because another federal investigative agency had found WM “guilty of subversive tendencies.”
- September 12, 1942 G-2 conducted a series of interviews in Los Angeles and San Diego on WM. One of these was with CalTech President Robert Millikan who noted that WM “was seeking in every way to get on the firing line to help beat the Nazi machine.” He noted that his good impression of WM could be consistent with that of a clever foreign agent. “However, Informant believes that a “spy” type is normally not as good a student as the subject.” Dr. John R. MacArthur, CalTech noted that WM’s [step] father was a government official under Dolfuss in Austria.
- September 14, 1942 G-2 conducts more interviews. Sheldon Crane reported a heated exchange between Munk and Le Huquet at the SIO community house in 1940 in which WM disagreed with Le Huquet’s pacifism.
- September 14, 1942 G-2 interviews Claude ZoBell again. “Informant distrusts subject because of the company he keeps and the views he expresses. Subject was a member of a La Jolla group opposing the draft legislation; the group was composed of a group of young fellows who circulated a petition and canvassed house to house for names. It is reported that subject tried to get to Canada to avoid induction. Subject’s addiction to drink seriously interferes with his work.” The agent notes that ZoBell “is obviously afraid to talk or wishes to create an air of mystery. [He] believes that Dr. Harald U. Sverdrup, the director, is pro-Nazi. He stated that because of Sverdrup’s nazi sympathies and liking for Subject some of the faculty members may be reluctant to express themselves freely.”
- September 14, 1942 G-2 conducted interview with Denis Fox. He repeated much of the same information as ZoBell. “After WM was dismissed from Point Loma in 1941 he arrived at Scripps when Dr. Sverdrup was absent...and took over Dr. Sverdrup’s office with all the records of the Institution contained therein. This considerably annoyed certain faculty members and Acting Director ZoBell finally asked Subject to move to another room. ... Subject was ‘fresh’ with the professors and was generally disliked.”

September 14, 1942	G-2 interviewed Dr. S.W. Chambers, who suggested WM was avoiding American military service. He also questioned WM's loyalty on the basis of his association with Sverdrup, Le Huquet and Lek. "Dr. Sverdrup said that Subject is one of three men in the United States (two others in Europe) who can do the work Subject is doing in oceanography. This is Sverdrup's reason for making every effort to keep subject out of the Army. Informant believes that this is ridiculous as subject is "too young a kid' to be so valuable." "Informant believes that subject is at least a Nazi sympathizer and that everything subject knows or could find out would be available to the Nazis."
September 18, 1942	War Department asks FBI for report on WM. G-2 interviewed Peggy Clark who describes WM as loyal, trustworthy and "very much against Adolph Hitler."
September 19, 1942	G-2 interviewed several CalTech professors, including Beno Gutenberg, who support WM loyalty, integrity, discretion.
October 23, 1942	FBI agents meet with Major general blank of G-2 (Brigadier General Sherman Miles?) and General blank, Chief, Technical Services Army Air Corps. The Army Air Corps general informed FBI "Messrs. Sverdrup and Munk, in their capacity as Oceanographers, have come into possession of information concerning impending military operations which are to take place within the next two weeks. The information in the possession of these individuals is said to be of such a nature that disclosure of said information to enemies of this country would be disastrous." G-2 Generals consequently order surveillance to continue for two weeks.
October 23-29, 1942	HUS and WM under FBI surveillance for espionage in Washington, D.C. at request of G-2.
October 27, 1942	CIC interviewed several individuals who knew WM, and none reported anything adverse about his loyalty or integrity.
October 28, 1942	WM employment on AAF project with Seiwel was permitted on the condition that he be kept under strict surveillance.
November 14, 1942	WM employment on AAF project disapproved, and his work "terminated with prejudice" on the basis of reports from military intelligence.
November 18, 1942	WM informed that he was dismissed from AAF project. No reason given.
December 5, 1942	WM discharged from AAF project.
December 9, 1942	AAF (General Strong) requested military intelligence to reconsider WM's case.
December 18, 1942	HUS and WM taken off the Censorship watch list.
January 7, 1943	MID interviews several of WM's associates about his loyalty and background. Major John Mott and other associates express confidence in WM's loyalty.
January 16, 1943	Military intelligence concludes that WM "is loyal to the United States and is not engaged in any subversive activities. The few allegations to the effect that subject had pro-Nazi sympathies are unsupported in fact and there is ample evidence obtained from reliable informants indicating that he is actually anti-Nazi. Subject's own actions tend to support the latter conclusion." Seiwel supports WM's loyalty, but condemns his discretion and would not recommend WM work with classified material.

February 9, 1943	WM reinstated on AAF project, but project terminated and turned over to Navy.
May 30, 1944	War Department investigation of WM concludes that he had no pro-Nazi sympathies, and that any evidence that he was pro-German was entirely hearsay.
June 6, 1944	WM granted access by BUSHIPS to secret and confidential information on waves, surf and the best behavior of landing craft associated with military problems.
February 6, 1946	Navy authorized WM to participate in Operation Crossroads.
February 15, 1947	WM received Ph.d. from UC/SIO
June 18, 1948	WM issued passport for six month visit to Norway on a Guggenheim Fellowship
March 15, 1950	San Diego Tribune reports that WM declined to sign non-communist oath. This item shows up in FBI files.
1952	FBI source says during World War II, WM made remark that “Army is dumb for removing Japs from the West Coast.”

Munk, W. and D. Day. Harald U. Sverdrup and the War Years. *Oceanography* **15** (4): 7-29, 2002

Munk, W. personal communication 5/7/2011: “...And by the way, I never refused to sign the loyalty oath. I wish I had, it was an unfortunate chapter in U.C. history....”