

## CIA CONNECTIONS: NOW YOU SEE THEM, NOW YOU DON'T

Civilization does not lie in a greater or lesser  
degree of refinement,  
but in an awareness shared by a whole people.

Albert Camus: *Notebooks* [Ch. I. p. 31]

What I knew about the CIA in 1970 could fit on the back of a cocktail napkin. What I knew in 1980 could fill a chapter. In fact, it finally does, right here. But “would have, could have...” Two decades passed before I finally read what had been sitting on my garage shelves and in file cabinets for more than 30 years. And it wasn’t until I started writing this chapter that I found the way some dots from the early 1960s could have been connected in ways that could have been obvious in 1975, if I’d done the reading and thinking when first I had the chance.

That’s what I call not seeing through a glass – one that stayed dark because I forgot to turn on the light. What is the expression? “We get too soon old and

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## Chapter 21

too late smart?" I never used to believe that one but I guess I wasn't old enough.

In 1975, the Inspector General issued a lengthy report on the Use of Volunteers in Chemical Agent Research. (An entire chapter is devoted to this landmark document later in this book.) In the final portion of their report, the IG team takes up the subject of Intelligence Corps Experimentation with Hallucinogenic Drugs. That's the one that turned on the light.

The report notes that the intelligence community was well aware of interest in psychochemical drugs by potential enemies of the United States as far back as the early 1950s. In particular, the CIA wanted to improve its interrogation methods, as well as gain further insight into what other nations might be doing in this regard, with the help of drugs.

The Intelligence Center at Fort Holabird and the Chemical Warfare Laboratories at Edgewood began to work together on a joint psychochemical project in November 1957. On 3 June 1958, the President of the Intelligence Board sent an informal plan (which it had probably formulated several months earlier) to the Medical Research Laboratories. It recommended recruitment of volunteers on a personal basis and letting them know that mental and physical demands would be part of the project. It proposed giving them a very general explanation of the effects of LSD, while withholding any reference to possible intelligence applications of the drug.

According to the test plan, the volunteer group would report to Edgewood, receive a medical exam and pair up with a designated partner. On the first evening of the experiment, they would meet and have a few drinks. The investigators would covertly add LSD "sufficient to provide at least an effective dosage to all concerned" (an interestingly vague description).

During this "happy hour," individual observers would have time to review the dossiers of their assigned subjects, and would pair up with them as the evening progressed. If necessary, the observer would give "additional LSD" (again, no specified amount). Under the guise of conducting a routine preliminary personal interview, the observer would ask certain questions and then explain that the interview would continue tomorrow. When tomorrow came, the observers would tell the subjects that LSD had been added to their drinks the night before, give them an orientation as to the nature and history of the drug they had received, and tell them they had been selected based on their outstanding security consciousness and experience in withholding information.

The clandestine plan provided for subsequent additional visits to Edgewood by some volunteers, for various measurements. These included, among other things, the ability to adhere to a deliberate falsehood under the influence of LSD (while submitting to polygraph testing), and the effect of LSD on simple motor reactions. Environmental conditions could include total isolation and hostile interrogation, the purpose being to reveal how well an unsuspecting subject could withhold information when LSD was augmented by unusual stress.

In 1975, after reviewing all available documents, the Army IG (Inspector General) team had found nothing to indicate that anyone above the level of the President of the Intelligence Board or the Director of the Medical Research Laboratories at Edgewood had ever approved this proposal. Indeed, when interviewed in 1974, the former Commander of the Intelligence Center testified that he was completely unaware of the plan beforehand. The Intelligence Project Officer and the "responsible physician" at the Medical Research Laboratories (presumably Dr. Sim) evidently assumed the project had all the authorization it

### CIA Connections: Now You See Them, Now You Don't

needed, since it appeared to be within the provisions of a previous approval to use human volunteers in psychochemical drug studies.

Between August 1958 and May 1960, a total of 30-35 volunteers took part in one or more of the eight projected phases of this test plan. A lack of records made exact information unavailable, but the IG team suggested that some volunteers might have received 20 or more doses of LSD during that two-year period.

The IG cited several violations of the initial 1955 Chief of Staff Memorandum 385, which had established ground rules for volunteer testing with chemical agents. For example, there was inadequate informed consent and, in

fact, the researchers sometimes made a deliberate effort to withhold information from the volunteers. They did not even tell some subjects that they would receive a drug, prior to its administration. It is somewhat surprising that none of the volunteers withdrew his consent to continue receiving LSD in accord with these test plans.

One witness did say that he had felt obliged to volunteer lest he disappoint his immediate superior, but in general, there appears to have been no discernible pressure or coercion. The volunteers, both officers and enlisted men, were unusually dedicated and felt their participation was an important contribution to National Defense.

In November 1958, Dr. Van Sim wrote to the Commanding General, Army Intelligence Center, reporting that he and the research team had completed the testing with rewarding results. He recommended the

experimental use of LSD in real situations. He proposed they test LSD as an aid to interrogation in the field. The Intelligence Center contributed an additional plan to use LSD on foreign nationals overseas. Together, they petitioned the Surgeon General for approval. After reviewing all these proposals, the Surgeon General offered no medical objections.

Accordingly, on 8 August 1960, a liaison team went to Europe to brief key military personnel and obtain their cooperation. Van was a member of the team and returned to report that the European command was ready to select the subjects. They would be foreign nationals, and they would be "non-volunteers." After further correspondence, planning reached a point of readiness in December 1960.

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, (ACSI) perhaps sensing impropriety, expressed the opinion that the project should have been coordinated with the CIA and FBI. But after learning that this was scheduled to occur after the tests were completed, the ACSI argued further that the FBI and CIA could even be helpful and might facilitate the use of LSD with higher ranks of foreign nationals. The team, however, declined to follow the ACSI's recommendation.



Dr. Van M. Sim discussing nerve agent research at a scientific meeting

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## Chapter 21

In January 1961, a Special Purpose Team (SPT) made ready to launch operation Third Chance. At the end of April, they departed to Europe for a 90-day field experimentation program. The goal was to ascertain whether LSD could be a useful aid, either for “interrogation” or for the “exploitability of actual subjects of intelligence interest.” The team then chose “recalcitrant subjects of critical interest” to receive the drug. As they had done previously, they arranged a social environment in which consumption of alcoholic beverages would be followed by interrogation in separate rooms.

Ten individuals partook of LSD without their knowledge in 11 “experiments” (one was dosed twice). Nine of them were foreign nationals who were considered to be intelligence sources or actual agents. One was a U.S. soldier who admitted to unlawfully removing classified documents. He insisted he had disposed of all of them in the river, but on suspicion of espionage he was placed in “voluntary protective custody” in an off-post safe house for six weeks.

Two Army medical doctors, one of whom was a psychiatrist, interviewed the soldier under sodium pentothal on 26 May 1961. Later, they repeated the interview using “voluntary hypnosis,” followed by several additional psychiatric evaluations. One of the doctors suggested that a “tension method aggravated by tension-producing drugs might be useful.”

The team therefore tried interviewing the soldier after giving him LSD surreptitiously on two occasions between 8 and 12 June 1961. These yielded little so further interrogation (as part of operation Third Chance) Military Justice Proceedings were initiated. Instead of a court-martial, however, the judges decided on a discharge under AR 635-209 (for unsuitability) on 23 October. This rather innocuous disposition (which did not permanently dispossess the suspect of all rights as a veteran) seemed preferable in view of the stressful handling of his case. It might also have been chosen to minimize the possibility of unfavorable publicity and exposure of a secret operation.

More than a decade after publication of the IG report, however, the ex-soldier sued the government and eventually received a six hundred thousand dollar award through special congressional legislation. I recall meeting with a former member of the California State Senate in the early 1980s, who importuned me over lunch to help prevent approval of this claim of psychological harm. Although I agreed that the former soldier might well be exaggerating his claim of LSD-induced injury and might also have been guilty of espionage, I did not feel my opinion would carry much weight. I had retired from the Army in 1976 and had little interest in participating in a contentious legalistic dispute about LSD.

When the Special Purpose Team had returned to the States in 1961, their enthusiasm continued to bubble forth. They recommended that:

“a comprehensive field testing program be established in conjunction with appropriate associated U.S. intelligence and security agencies for the scientific derivation of empiric data upon which to standardize the EA 1729 technique; and that future field experimentation utilize real subjects or actual cases for both research purposes and operational advantage.”

Cooler heads must have come into play to temper this expansiveness because there is no evidence that the proposal was ever presented to or approved by the ACSI or the Secretary of the Army. It was clear that, on many counts, the project had violated Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of the Army (DA)

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### **CIA Connections: Now You See Them, Now You Don't**

policies and procedures from the start. The blame, however, in the view of the

IG, had to be shared by the ACSI, the Offices of the Surgeon General and the Chief Chemical Officer.

On went the experiments, nevertheless. Operation Derby Hat next launched another LSD project, seeking to explore the same questions as Third Chance, but this time in the Pacific area (USARPAC.) They chose Hawaii as the test site and scheduled the operation to begin on or about 20 April 1962. The Chemical Corps sent the same medical officer to carry it out.

Intelligence staff officers also agreed to provide "Oriental" subjects, of various nationalities, for use in the LSD experiments. The individuals who actually received LSD, as well as their locations, were redacted from the IG report, which otherwise is almost completely uncensored. (There is reason to doubt that the planned administration of LSD to these unwitting subjects took place as scheduled.)

At the end of October, a U.S. Army officer who had worked on Derby Hat was hospitalized for symptoms thought possibly to be due to covert administration of a drug. The Special Purpose Team (SPT) rushed to Korea to check on this. To decide whether LSD was involved, the physician gave the officer a dose of actual LSD to permit a subjective comparison of the effects with his previous symptoms. The team, according to a witness, concluded that the officer simply had had too much to drink, and was not under the influence of LSD. Ironically, in their eagerness to clarify a medical diagnostic problem, the team had violated a "prime directive" – "thou shalt not give drugs to U.S. citizens without informed consent." They were scolded by the ACSI whose words left no doubt: "You are hereby instructed that under no circumstances will you use or allow to be used material EA 1729 on U.S. Citizens."

What a mess!

In late November 1962, the SPT was in Tokyo. The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (ACSI) wrote to the commanding officer of the Research and Development Laboratory (CRDL) at Edgewood Arsenal to say that, based on instructions from the Secretary of Defense, the team (including the two officers from Edgewood) would have to stay in the area for another 60 days. They were told to go on to Saigon. One member of the team, already back in the States, was ordered to join the others in Vietnam. He was also instructed by the ACSI to hand carry a letter to the commander of the US Military Army Command in Vietnam (MACV). "Need to know" was restricted to the Secretary of Defense, the Army Chief of Staff, ACSI and the Chief MACV (but not the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the Secretary of the Army). The letter announced the Secretary of Defense's decision to use LSD on Viet Cong POWs as well as to insist that the Vietnamese provide suitable subjects. (The IG team could not find the actual letter.)

Two of the three-man SPT provided sworn testimony that they never gave, helped or observed the administration of LSD to anyone in South Vietnam. Reasons given were varied and included difficulty in finding appropriate subjects, inability to enlist Vietnamese cooperation and lack of a suitable site for the secret procedures.

Finally, at the conclusion of a 10 April 1963 briefing on Operation Derby Hat, the deputy ACSI directed that no further field testing with EA 1729 (LSD) be

## Chapter 21

undertaken. “The discontinuance was based on a lack of data, inconclusiveness of the testing and the legal, political and moral problems inherent in the use of EA 1729.” An interesting cross-link between this meeting (closing the door on LSD field testing, at least by the SPT), and the 1975 IG report is described in John Marks’ *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate*. Marks, however, did not publish this excellent book until several years later, when he had the advantage of additional sources of information.

As I think back, there was one occasion, in 1962, when I was asked by Edgewood psychologist Ernie Clovis to provide medical coverage (as a disinterested observer) while a candidate for the CIA was brought to my “padded ward” and interrogated by (I presume) another CIA agent. I did so, but never received any explanation of the purpose. The unidentified civilians sat at a desk while the interrogator posed mundane questions, which the candidate, although smiling at times, seemed able to answer. Then they disappeared and I heard no more about it.

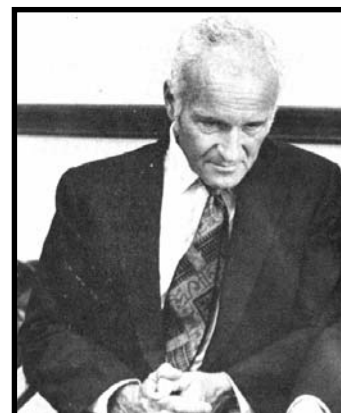
In the beginning and throughout the duration of my work at Edgewood Arsenal, it was my firm belief that in future conflicts the skilful use of incapacitating agents might minimize casualties. I was never aware, however, of the CIA’s use of LSD on unwitting citizens, and indeed this did not become widely publicized until 1999, after the death of Dr. Sidney Gottlieb. As chief supervisor of the secret LSD programs, Gottlieb had insisted that giving LSD covertly to unwitting Americans would provide important information as to how an unsuspecting enemy agent might react. He obviously assumed this “experiment” was justified in the furtherance of National Defense. Today, of course, few would regard this practice as other than an indefensible violation of individual civil rights.

During my years at Edgewood, I was also completely unaware that the CIA had been quietly carrying out a separate secret program of research with LSD and other compounds. Only recently, in preparation to testify as an expert witness in a suit involving alleged covert administration of LSD to a former Deputy U.S. Marshal in 1957, did I take time to read the tall pile of documents given to me by my friend Dr. Sidney Cohen a few years before his death. It is the same material that was available to those who took part in congressional investigations conducted by Senators Rockefeller, Church, Kennedy and others in the mid- and late 1970s.

The documents were an incomplete subset of memoranda and reports from the MK-ULTRA program. They do include a description of some subsidiary projects, such as Bluebird, Artichoke and Derby Hat. In January, 1963 Gottlieb, at Helms’ direction, had already destroyed most of the other documents from the earlier CIA activities. Still others were withheld or heavily redacted. Those that remain refer to some of the “experiments” initiated in the 1950’s under the direction of Dr. Gottlieb. To me, they seemed scientifically unsophisticated and often done at the whim of the local agent in charge.

As one example, Colonel George White (as Morgan Hall), ostensibly working for the bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, also directed projects such as Midnight Climax – paying prostitutes in San Francisco to give LSD to their customers.

LSD was sometimes (supposedly) given to the prostitutes themselves. George White has been depicted as sometimes drinking martinis and smoking grass while sitting on a secret toilet, observing the consequences of these “experiments” through a two-way mirror. Once, while heavily intoxicated, he is



Sidney Gottlieb, M.D. – Head of MK-ULTRA’s secret LSD program



Retired Army Colonel George White, Gottlieb’s head of “Midnight Climax” and other “cutout” secret operations with LSD in San Francisco and New York

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### CIA Connections: Now You See Them, Now You Don't

alleged to have lain on the floor and spelled out his initials by shooting holes in the ceiling with a .22 caliber pistol.

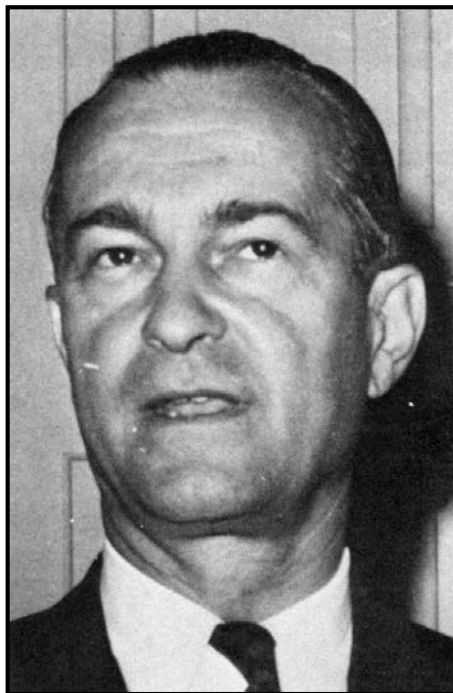
Many other unwitting citizens from all walks of life, including government employees, were targets of covert LSD administration, often carried out without a systematic protocol. In summary, this freewheeling program was clearly ill-advised, and left a severe blemish on the CIA's reputation. Much blame must be laid at the feet of Richard Helms, who approved the projects, and tried to keep detailed knowledge of their existence from his boss, CIA chief Allen Dulles.

In March 1999, when some details of Gottlieb's secret experiments were revealed in his obituary, Deputy US Marshal Wayne Ritchie was browsing through his newspaper in San Jose. His eyes widened when he read that in the late 1950s, George White had been administering LSD covertly to ordinary citizens in San Francisco. His memory flashed to the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 1957.

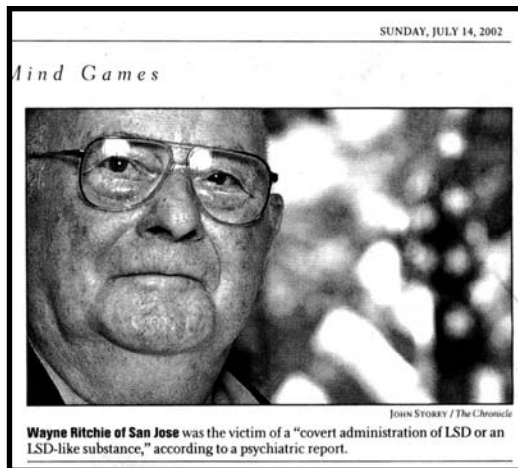
On that day, Ritchie attended the annual Christmas party that regularly took place in the Federal Building, close to the Marshal's office where he worked. After only a few drinks, far less than he often consumed on weekends without any problem, he returned to the office to relieve his boss and cover the desk until quitting time.

Within half an hour he began to feel strangely uncomfortable. As he sat alone in the office his thoughts took on a paranoid tone – something entirely out of character for a man who had always been free of any noticeable psychological problems. Ritchie was in fact regarded as a perfectly normal, highly efficient and imperturbable officer. He had served four years in the Marines with distinction, worked for a year at Alcatraz as a guard (where he was given an official commendation in writing by the superintendent – a unique occurrence) and was respected and liked by inmates and fellow officers alike. During more than three years as a deputy marshal, his relaxed style and detailed knowledge of firearms led, for example, to his being placed in charge of the gun cage and given responsibility for instructing fellow deputy marshals on the firing range.

But on that day, a sense of being disliked and secretly laughed at by his fellow officers came out of nowhere. He felt more and more that his working the full day when everyone else had been sent home early was a reason for their disdain. He was increasingly convinced that they secretly wanted to get him off the force. Soon, he began to think that the people across the hall, whom he hardly



Richard Helms – CIA Chief and sole supervisor  
of Sidney Gottlieb's LSD projects  
under MK-ULTRA



Wayne Ritchie – a Deputy Marshal in San Francisco who believes he was given LSD covertly in 1957

knew, also wanted him out. Rather than feeling angry, he became very disappointed by these insights. Too distraught to remain, he locked the office early – a very serious breach of protocol – and walked directly home. It was the first time he had not used his car to return to his apartment six blocks away. He felt a strong need to be with his live-in girl friend, whom he felt would certainly provide reassurance and comfort. He also felt as though he were walking in a tunnel, unaware of the holiday shoppers crowding the sidewalks.

As he entered his apartment, his live-in girlfriend commented (as she often did) that San Francisco could not match New York, where she'd rather be. Shocked by what seemed to be rejection even by his sweetheart, he left immediately without conversation and headed to the bar owned by his good friend Tony. After serving him one drink, Tony seemed deliberately to turn his back and move to another customer. So Tony, too, was against him!

Unsure what to do, Wayne wandered along the street, stopping at three unfamiliar bars where he ordered Calso, a non-alcoholic drink, wanting to stay sober. Gradually he developed a bizarre plan that would help both his department and his girl friend. He would hold up a bar, asking for just enough money to buy her an airplane ticket to New York. Then he would undoubtedly be charged with a felony and fired from the force. Surely, everybody would then be satisfied.

Walking back to the office, Wayne armed himself with two pistols, something he had never done before. He drove his car from the parking lot to a tough downtown neighborhood and entered an all-black bar. The noise inside assured him that the bartender would have sufficient cash for his purposes. Although an expert in martial arts as well as at handling weapons, he was promptly knocked out with his own pistol (presumably by the bartender) and awoke in a supply room with police officers standing over him and asking what he was doing there with a gun. "One gun!" he replied, "I have two guns!" (referring to the holster he was lying on).

When he arrived in lockup (after a visit to a nearby clinic where his scalp wound was sewn up), Wayne gradually came to his senses. It suddenly dawned on him that he had committed an unforgiveable act for which he deserved to lose his job and serve prison time. He cried like a baby and even asked a nearby fellow officer for a pistol and one bullet in order to end his life and "save the State some money" – of course this was refused. He then asked for pen and paper and before midnight wrote a letter of resignation. Three months later he appeared in court and was chagrined when he was given probation. He wanted to plead guilty, but his attorney insisted otherwise. The judge fined him \$500 and told him not to drink for five years.



Ike Feldman – a member of Sydney Gottlieb's and George White's CIA team who admitted placing LSD in the drinks of unwitting citizens in San Francisco in 1957 as part of the MK-ULTRA program

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### CIA Connections: Now You See Them, Now You Don't

From March 1957 until March 1999, Wayne Ritchie lived a life of unrelenting guilt, unable to understand his criminal actions and recurrently thinking of suicide. He tried to do penance by taking a low level job as a painter and devoted much of his time to repairing and painting the interior of the church he had joined.

On March 13, 1999, within minutes of reading about the covert LSD program operated by George White and his CIA subordinates, a "light went on" and he suddenly realized he must have been one of those unwitting private citizens used as guinea pigs. George White and his associates had been working close to the Marshal's office and there was bad blood between his boss and White. He reasoned that since his boss declined to attend the party, he had become the "second choice."

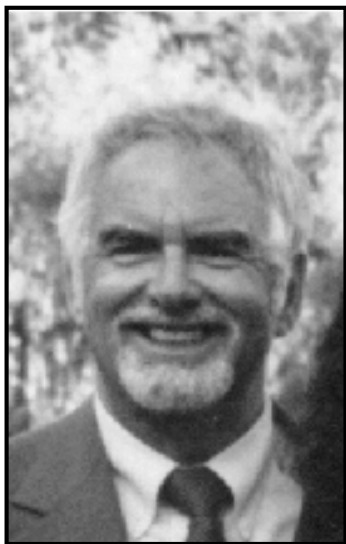
After speaking immediately to an FBI agent, he sought records from the government but was advised that there was no record of any "Wayne Ritchie" serving as a deputy marshal in 1957. This Kafkaesque denial of his existence was only reversed when he was able to produce W-2 forms from 1957. Then, he received 20 pages of employment records including his service in the Marines and at Alcatraz.

Within a few days Wayne found a New York attorney, Sid Bender, who had represented a similar plaintiff in a previous case. Bender filed a claim against the United States asserting a civil rights violation. Based on a referral by Dr. Thomas Ungerleider, acknowledged LSD expert, I was asked to perform an independent psychiatric evaluation. After interviewing Wayne at length, I found his story compelling. For the next four years, I produced several reports and rebuttals of statements by opposing psychiatrists hired by the CIA. Eventually the case was heard as a bench trial by Marilyn Patel, Chief Judge in the 9<sup>th</sup> District Court, in the Federal Building in San Francisco.

Following four days of testimony (two-and-a-half of which I spent testifying for the prosecution), Judge Patel was unconvinced and dismissed the case without requiring the defense to present their psychiatric witness. Since I believed the defense theory was easily refutable, both psychiatrically and pharmacologically, it seemed very unfair that it was exempted it from the hearing. The Court of Appeals eventually agreed to hear Wayne's claim of civil rights abridgement in May, 2006. The appeal was rejected, although one judge allegedly commented: "If this man's story is true, he has paid a terrible price in the name of National Security." To me the whole incident is a sad commentary on the dark side of the CIA. Further appeals were planned by Wayne's attorney, Sidney Bender, the final outcomes of which were still pending as of December 2006.

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One day in the mid-1960s, while I was at Edgewood, three CIA agents came to our lab. One was a doctor who asked if he could discuss some matters of importance. Always happy to give information to authorized individuals, I invited him into my office. He introduced himself as "Dr. Johnny Johnston," a transparently simpleminded pseudonym, but since CIA agents supposedly rarely give their real name, it didn't seem unusual. Dr. Johnston told me he had some questions about how various chemical agents, if given surreptitiously, might affect an unfriendly foreign leader. I briefly described the agents we had studied. He wondered how they might be administered. I told him about the relative ineffectiveness of the percutaneous route, the ease of detection of some agents but not others, and whatever else I thought might be relevant.



Dr. J. Thomas Ungerleider, UCLA professor, good friend and LSD expert

## Chapter 21

I never heard what use was made of this information, but we subsequently had a couple of additional visits from the same group. “Johnny Johnston” also queried me further, although I cannot now remember the details. I do remember that when the men showed up in the hallway of our facility one day, I treated their visit rather offhandedly. I called out to Fred Sidell, “Hey Fred, the CIA is here again!” The agents winced and gestured to me vigorously to “hush up.”

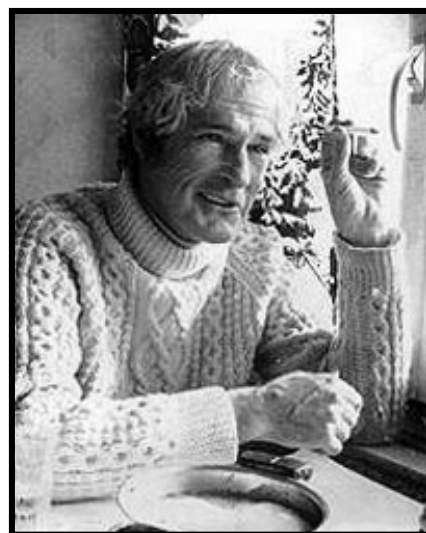
In 1970, I took part in a brainstorming session at our parent organization, the Chemical Research and Development Laboratories (CRDL). Its chief, Dr. Seymour “Cy” Silver, Ben Witten, head of the Chemistry Division and the three CIA agents who had visited me previously were all present. The topic was the feasibility of intervening in a hostage situation at the Tel Aviv airport. Hijackers were holding the occupants of an airliner captive and making unacceptable demands. We considered the pros and cons of using incapacitating agents and various other options. As it turned out, we could not imagine a scenario in which any available agent could be pumped into the airliner without the hijackers possibly reacting violently and killing passengers. Ultimately, the standoff was resolved by other means.

While at a research meeting at another Post, a vaguely familiar civilian psychologist casually asked me whether I would like to join the CIA. We were walking outside at the time and he was very nonchalant in manner. I answered with equal nonchalance that I did not think I would like being in the CIA. I said I felt that clandestine work was unnatural to me, since I liked to talk about what I was doing, and could not imagine living a secret life (as must be obvious from the personalized contents of this book). He accepted my decision with equanimity, and I was never asked again.

There is no doubt that many groups and organizations shared an interest in LSD. These included civilian scientists (initially), the CIA and intelligence community, the U.S. military, cultish groups (such as those initiated by Tim Leary and his disciples), the “Counterculture” of the late 1960s and many ordinary recreational drug users throughout the country. The CIA and the US Army Chemical Corps, two branches of government with different goals, evidently collaborated to a significant degree beginning in the 1950s and continuing (secretly) into the early 1960s. While I was at Edgewood, I was unaware that anyone in the Medical Research Laboratories was involved in such collaboration. Information that came to light in the mid-1970s, however, leaves little doubt that at least two individuals at Edgewood did, in a sense, lead a compartmentalized double life, and participated in some highly secret CIA projects, both in the U.S. and overseas.

Many books and articles have been published about the shady and nefarious activities of the CIA in relation to LSD, supposedly contemporaneously with our own officially approved medical research. I have read several of them and it is distressing how often our clinical research program has been confused with the CIA's covert use of LSD. Some authors do not even refer to the drugs we studied by their correct names, and attribute properties to them that are quite fanciful. A primary purpose of this book, therefore, is to provide truthful, comprehensive, accurate information about the Edgewood Arsenal medical research program, and what we actually learned from our studies.

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Timothy Leary – Psychologist, LSD pioneer  
and “new age” philosopher