

Gary Kersten or Kirsten or Kursten (or some similar spelling) is the name I knew him by. I was introduced to him by Slim Brooks, a well-known French Quarterite in New Orleans. Slim generally referred to Gary as his brother-in-law. I met Slim in 1961 and became acquainted with Gary later that same year -- probably in the spring or summer. Sometime during the initial phase of the period of time that I knew Gary he purchased some land in Kenner, Louisiana, and built a house on it.

Gary was in his late thirties or in his forties. He was balding and had a somewhat unusually large forehead. Five-o'clock shadowy clean-shaven face. Protruding lower lip that may have gotten that way from his constant pipe smoking. He was not tall, had a pot belly, and tended toward the thin side.

His voice, while quite masculine, was somewhat on the high-pitched side at times, especially when he let out with a brief giggle at one of his own jokes. He had a rather capricious sense of humor which often centered around his own arbitrary prejudices. He spoke at a normal pace but his words were somewhat clipped, for lack of a better way to describe it.

He used to say that he came from a German family in the mid-West and that he was a Nazi and always (?) had been. This, he frequently alleged, was why the government had put him and other Germanic mid-Westerners in the Pacific Theater during the war. He may have told me that he was in intelligence in the service, but that is an extremely vague recollection and I forget whether he was in the Army or the Navy.

He generally wore short-sleeved blue or white shirts and <sup>dark</sup> slacks.

I think his small plot of land and the house he built on it were on the Jefferson Davis Highway.

For a long period of time while I knew him he worked at the Anheiser-Busch brewery not too far from where he lived.

I do not recall ever having spent any time with Gary which was not also in the company of Slim (Roderick R.) Brooks. I recall receiving he, Slim and Ola Holcomb as visitors in the apartment on St. Louis (Mrs. George - landlady; next to Napoleon House bar) where Greg Hill and I lived in spring and summer of 1961.

One time, a day or so after one of these visits (possibly the only one), Greg's typewriter vanished, and I always suspected Gary, who made jokes occasionally about being a burglar and a fence for stolen goods. This was a Hermes (I think Italian) model upon which I was then typing the first smooth draft of The Idle Warriors, my forever-unpublished novel based on Lee Harvey Oswald's defection to the USSR. (I would have been working at the Foster Awning Co. as a part-time telephone solicitor when this happened, which was where I met Slim; we reported the incident to the police and they came by and told us from now on not to leave our door unlocked.)

Another visit with Gary took place when Jessica Luck, Slim, and Gary and I went out to look at the property Gary had purchased in Kenner. I can't place when this was, but it was possibly autumn of 1961. I recall Gary warning us about copperhead snakes, and telling us they actually chased people, as we stomped around in the underbrush. It was on this occasion or another one (I seem to recall driving out in the woods for a picnic -- the same four of us, but this is vague) when the car we were in was a black (dark, anyhow) limosine. Later, during the week, Slim told me and I think later repeated to Jessica: "I've got a ~~surprise~~ surprise for you.... That was Carlos Marcello's car you were riding around in last weekend." I was also told or had read in the papers that Marcello was in Guatemala at this time.

5 Aug. afternote: Greg Hill says the typewriter was an Olympia & was ~~stolen~~ stolen on Memorial Day of 1961. It was the short-story versions & one rough draft of The Idle Warriors I would have typed on this, I have since recalled.

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Henry Wendell Thornley