

THE MISSING C.I.A. MAN

By Ted Szulc

On the moonlit night of Sept. 23, 1978, John Arthur Paisley vanished in the waters of Chesapeake Bay, the silent kingdom of oysters and crabs. He was a quiet 55-year-old man who had a passion for solitary sailing; he was also an expert on Soviet nuclear capability who had worked for the Central Intelligence Agency. Paisley was last seen that morning, crossing a narrow section of the bay aboard his sloop Brillig, a name he had picked from Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking-Glass." The empty boat ran aground under full sail the following morning, its ship-to-shore radio still crackling.

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His 'suicide' was bizarre; the nature of his C.I.A. work, top-secret. Who was John Arthur Paisley, and what actually happened to him?

A week later, on Oct. 1, a bloated and badly decomposed body was found floating in the bay, a 9-millimeter gunshot wound in the back of the head, weighted diver's belts around the waist. The next day, the body was identified by Maryland's Chief Medical Examiner as that of John Arthur Paisley. Over the next 17 days, however, fingerprint identification could not be made — neither the C.I.A. nor the Federal Bureau of Investigation could locate a set of Paisley's fingerprints. The hands were severed and sent to the F.B.I., and the body was cremated in a C.I.A.-approved funeral home outside Washington, D.C.

The Maryland State Police initially

suggested that death was by suicide, and the C.I.A., to questions posed by reporters, saw "no reason to disagree."

The Maryland State Police later concluded that death was "undetermined" after a belated investigation marred by what they called the "contamination" of evidence by C.I.A. security officers, who were the first to search the boat. Presented with this statement by the Maryland State Police, C.I.A. spokesmen said that the agency was not an investigative one and had not taken part in any criminal investigation.

The C.I.A. spokesmen were circumspect, too, when it came time to release information on John Arthur Paisley. As a matter of policy, the C.I.A. almost

never discloses complete biographical data on its officers; various aspects of their careers could provide clues about secret operations they may have been engaged in and thus compromise the agency's "sources and methods."

In its public statements, therefore, the C.I.A. portrayed Paisley as a rather unimportant intelligence officer and analyst. Prior to his official retirement in 1974, Paisley had served as deputy chief of the C.I.A.'s Office of Strategic Research, which deals with assessments of Soviet nuclear forces, and the agency emphasized that he was just another senior analyst, having nothing to do with clandestine operations. After further prodding by reporters, C.I.A. spokesmen acknowledged that Paisley was still a "consultant" to the agency at the time of his disappearance, but they insisted that he had had no access to highly classified information since his retirement.

Yet, from information supplied to this reporter by extremely authorita-

live intelligence sources in Washington, another John Arthur Paisley emerges.

Paisley was an unusually important C.I.A. figure who had been involved in some of the most sensitive agency operations since the late 1940's. Until Sept. 23, he was privy to highly secret intelligence materials. These are the highlights of "the Paisley connection":

■ Within two years of his official 1974 retirement, Paisley was brought back by the C.I.A. to coordinate efforts to evaluate the Soviet nuclear threat — one of the agency's most secret projects. From August 1976 on, he had access to the most highly classified intelligence documents. He had been working on materials related to this project aboard his sloop at the time of his disappearance.

■ When it washed ashore, the Brillig carried sophisticated communications equipment designed for secret transmissions.

■ During the 1960's, Paisley helped to debrief Yuri Ivanovich Nosenko, the most senior K.G.B. defector in the United States. Paisley and Nosenko later became friends, and the C.I.A. officer frequently visited Nosenko in his North Carolina hideout.

■ Paisley's widow, Maryann, was employed for a year in 1974 in one of the most sensitive divisions of the C.I.A.: the office handling funds for foreign clandestine operations. Her immediate superior was Katherine Hart, wife of an agency officer who had dealt extensively with Nosenko.

■ Paisley was a contributor to the top-secret manual on the operations of the United States KH-11 spy-in-the-sky satellite, the most sophisticated in this generation of orbiters, targeted on Soviet strategic deployments. This was the manual sold in Athens about a year ago to the K.G.B., the Soviet secret police, by William P. Kamplis, a young C.I.A. officer who last November was convicted on espionage charges.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, concerned about the possible political and other implications of the Paisley affair, has launched a quiet but energetic investigation to determine what exactly happened that September night on Chesapeake Bay, and in the days thereafter. The committee,



Paisley's mentor, James Jesus Angleton, former C.I.A. counterintelligence chief, chaired by Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, had hoped to come up with a report before Thanksgiving, but it has run into such difficulties trying to learn the truth about the events that it is unlikely to come up with conclusions, if any, before mid-January.

The investigation could hardly have come at a worse time. Cracks in internal security have been bedeviling the agency in recent years, what with mysterious disappearances, thefts of top-secret documents and talk of a Soviet "mole" — a deep-cover operative in a high-level position — having penetrated the American intelligence community. In addition, the C.I.A.'s ability to collect and effectively evaluate vital foreign intelligence is now under attack. Policy-making officials in many parts of the Administration are unhappy with the agency's assessment of Soviet mislery, and the C.I.A. failed

Paisley refuses to talk to reporters, but friends say that she questions both the suicide theory and the identity of the body found in the bay. She did not see Paisley's body, nor the photographs of it. Actually, no one who had known Paisley in life is reported to have been shown the body before the cremation.

From the accounts of the Maryland State Police, the F.B.I., the Coast Guard, the medical examiners, sources in the intelligence community, and from people who knew him, it is possible to reconstruct events leading to what Senate investigators familiar with the case have described as one of the "spookiest" cases ever involving an intelligence operation.

John Arthur Paisley's final drama began in the late afternoon of Saturday, Sept. 23, a warm autumn day. He had sailed aboard the sloop Brillig that morning from a mooring on Solomons Island, at the mouth of the Patuxent River, to Hooper Islands on the Eastern Shore of Chesapeake Bay — a short and easy easterly crossing — with friend or friends unknown. The mooring belongs to Col. Norman Wilson, a retired Air Force officer who had served in a top-secret post in the Defense Intelligence Agency and had been Paisley's friend for about 10 years.

According to Colonel Wilson, sometime during the day he was told by someone (whom he will not identify) that Paisley wanted to be called on the radio. Colonel Wilson contacted the Brillig, as he recalls, between 5 P.M. and 6 P.M., and Paisley advised him "he would be in after dark," asking that the dock lights be left on. This was the last anyone heard from Paisley.

At 10:30 A.M. the next day, Sunday, Sept. 24, the Coast Guard station at St. Inigoes on Chesapeake Bay was notified by telephone by a state park ranger that two separate pleasure craft had informed him of sighting a vessel under full sail aground at Point Lookout, where the Potomac River runs into the bay. The ranger had driven to Point Lookout. He had ascertained that no-

thereafter, was assassinated by terrorists. Paisley had a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Chicago (he was born and raised in Phoenix, Ariz., where he learned Spanish), and during World War II had been a merchant marine radio operator. It is not clear how Paisley came to join the Bernadotte mission.

It was in Palestine that Paisley came to the attention of James Jesus Angleton, who later became chief of the C.I.A.'s counterintelligence staff. Angleton was touring the Middle East at the time, recruiting personnel for the infant agency. Paisley was among Angleton's first recruits, although it is not known what he did until 1963, when his employment was made formal and he was assigned to do analytical work on Soviet strategic problems. Paisley always stayed in touch with Angleton.

As the pace of the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union quickened, Paisley emerged as one of the key C.I.A. specialists on Soviet strategic research and deployment. He learned Russian in order to study Soviet technical journals and the flow of Soviet intelligence intercepted by the United States. Paisley was privy to one of the most jealously kept C.I.A. secrets — the sources and methods of acquiring intelligence on Soviet nuclear developments. The protection of sources and of information-gathering methods from a potential enemy is a major intelligence function. According to those in the intelligence community, it is known that Paisley worked closely with Angleton in this area.

Paisley was called in when the C.I.A. began the lengthy and laborious process of debriefing Nosenko, a member of the K.G.B.'s Second Chief Directorate, responsible for counterintelligence within the Soviet Union, who had defected to the United States early in 1964. Nosenko was the most important K.G.B. officer ever to defect.

Ostensibly, Nosenko's greatest value to United States intelligence was to provide information on Soviet counterintelligence agents operating at home and abroad. This may have included data on counterintelligence in the strategic field — and Paisley became entwined in the most controversial C.I.A. secret intelligence project of the decade.

The controversy revolved around Nosenko's claim that Lee Harvey Oswald, the assassin of President Kennedy, had no K.G.B. ties. This corroborated the information supplied by a deep-cover Soviet double agent in New York, code-named "Fedora," to the F.B.I. It was on the strength of what "Fedora" had told the bureau that Director J. Edgar Hoover was able to assure the Warren Commission that Oswald had acted alone.

The C.I.A., however, soon concluded that Nosenko might have been a Soviet "plant." In mid-1964, he was incarcerated in an agency "safe house" near Warrenton, Va. There — according to retired C.I.A. officer John L. Hart in testimony before the House Select

Committee on Assassinations in September — he was subjected to three years of brutal interrogation. Nosenko's case was handled by the C.I.A.'s Soviet-Russia division of the clandestine services, and Paisley is said to have been among the interrogators — though he confined himself to his strategic specialty, and had no part in the cruel treatment of the K.G.B. defector.

Paisley and Nosenko, in fact became friends. After the C.I.A. decided in 1968 to clear Nosenko once and for all, and set him up in a house in North Carolina under a new identity, Paisley started visiting him there while sailing up and down the East Coast. Having purchased a 31-foot sloop following his retirement, Paisley registered the Brillig in Wilmington, N.C., often keeping the sailboat at the Masonboro Boatyard and Marina, not far from Nosenko's home. According to a Masonboro employee, Paisley's final visit there was late last spring.

These visits were frequent and extended. The employee recalls that when Paisley sailed out, he would call on the radio to say how long he would be gone — sometimes for 10 days or so — and to say where his mail should be forwarded. "He was a likable person, but he didn't talk about his business," she said. "He got together with the others [around the marina] to have fun." It is not known whether Nosenko and his wife were ever in Paisley's group on the sloop.

The C.I.A. has refused to comment on the Paisley-Nosenko friendship, and on the analyst's earlier role in debriefing the Russian. But, by an extraordinary coincidence,

Nosenko was back in the news the day before Paisley was killed.

Testifying before the House Assassinations Committee, Richard Helms, former Director of Central Intelligence, said that he does not consider Nosenko a bona fide defector, and that "no person familiar with the facts finds Nosenko's statements about Oswald to be credible. . . . Therefore, this tends to sour all the other opinions he maintained."

There is another coincidence. Maryann Paisley's immediate superior in the C.I.A. during the year she is known to have worked there (1974) was Katherine Hart, a senior officer in the Requirements Division, which handles requests for funds for clandestine operations by overseas C.I.A. stations. Her husband is John L. Hart, who testified before the House Assassinations Committee and who played a key role in Nosenko's final clearance. (Mrs. Hart is now deputy chief of station in an important Western European capital.) The C.I.A. has confirmed that Mrs. Paisley was a "contract employee," but it refuses to describe her duties. It is not clear how Mrs. Paisley, a mere "contract employee," held such a sensitive position in the C.I.A.

Yet another coincidence involves Paisley's role as a contributor to the top-secret manual on the operations of the KH-11 United States spy satellite, which was designed to photograph Soviet strategic nuclear deployments. A copy of this manual was sold to the K.G.B. last winter, in what is regarded as a major setback for American intelligence. The C.I.A. vigorously denies any

connection between the theft of the manual and Paisley's death.

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The C.I.A. has not explained why Paisley retired in 1974 (his wife retired at the same time) except to suggest that he may have done so because he was eligible for a Government pension. Nor does it explain why he was brought back as a consultant two years later on one of the agency's most sensitive strategic intelligence projects.

This was the controversial experiment in competitive analysis conducted to determine whether the quality of the National Intelligence Estimate on Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict could be improved. (The estimate is probably the most important study that the C.I.A. undertakes every year.) This experiment ran from August to December 1976. It called for a "Team A," formed by C.I.A. specialists, and a "Team B," drawn from outside academics and former senior intelligence and defense officials, to evaluate separately the same materials on Soviet strategic nuclear capabilities. Total secrecy enveloped the project at the time.

Heading "Team B" was Dr. Richard E. Pipes, a Harvard history professor and former director of Harvard's Russian Research Center. The membership included Paul Nitze, former Deputy Secretary of Defense and negotiator of the strategic arms limitation agreement with the Soviet Union, and Gen. Daniel O. Graham, former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agen-

body was aboard, and "that there were no tracks in the sand, leading to or from the boat." The ranger then put in the call to the Coast Guard.

Shortly afterward, the Coast Guard refloated the Brillig and towed her to St. Ingoes. There were cans of food aboard, three pairs of shoes, various documents, and the radio was turned on.

Identifying the sloop as Paisley's from personal and business papers aboard, the Coast Guard telephoned Mrs. Paisley at her home in McLean, Va. The Paisleys had been separated since August, but his new downtown Washington address was not on the boat.

At 9 A.M. of Monday, Sept. 25, Maryann Paisley arrived at St. Ingoes with her daughter, Diane, Colonel Wilson and his wife, Barbara, and Philip Waggener, Paisley's replacement in the C.I.A. when he retired. After seeing the boat, Mrs. Paisley telephoned the C.I.A. Office of Security at Langley, Va. By noon, two C.I.A. security officers, Joseph Mirabile and Frank Rocco, reached the scene. At 1:50 P.M., they telephoned their first report to C.I.A. headquarters. The C.I.A. men combed the Brillig, finding a live 9-millimeter cartridge on the deck. Paisley was known to have owned a 9-millimeter gun, but it was not on the boat. There were no traces of blood or signs of struggle. At that point, Paisley was simply missing.

The C.I.A. officers removed several documents from the boat — the agency insisted later that they were not classified and marked only "For Internal Use" — and, with Mrs. Paisley, drove to Paisley's bachelor apartment at 1500 Massachusetts Avenue, where they picked up additional documents. They also found several live cartridges there. Later that week, Colonel Wilson sailed the Brillig back to Solomons Island — and he found still another live cartridge aboard.

Paisley's disappearance went unreported publicly for the rest of the week. Then, at 3:48 P.M. on Sunday, Oct. 1, the Coast Guard station on Taylors Is-

land, on the bay's Eastern Shore, received a radio message from the pleasure craft Ramada that a body was floating in the water east of the mouth of Patuxent River, just a few miles from the Solomons Island mooring. A Coast Guard utility boat picked up the frightfully decomposed body at 5:15 P.M., taking it to the Naval Ordnance Dock on Solomons Island.

The Maryland State Police had been notified by radio. A Maryland state trooper and Dr. George Weems, Deputy State Medical Examiner, were awaiting the body's arrival. Dr. Weems spent 30 minutes in a preliminary examination, then had the body dispatched to the office of the State Medical Examiner in Baltimore. The autopsy was apparently performed the next day; the death certificate, made out in the name of John Arthur Paisley, was signed on Oct. 2 by Dr. Russell Fisher, the Chief Medical Examiner.

At this point, the immediate question that comes to mind is this: How could Dr. Fisher be sure that the body was Paisley's? It was decomposed beyond recognition, and the top layer of skin on one hand had been eroded. All hair, including Paisley's scraggly beard, was gone. Fingerprint identification would still have been possible since one hand was relatively unscathed, but, incredibly, neither the C.I.A. nor the F.B.I. had Paisley's fingerprint sets in their records. A (Continued on Page 56)

C.I.A. spokesman explained to this reporter that while all agency employees are fingerprinted and the impressions sent to the F.B.I. in this instance they had been "inadvertently destroyed" in the bureau.

The Maryland State Police, by its own admission, had made no attempt to lift fingerprints from the boat; to the best of its knowledge, it added, none were lifted from Paisley's apartment or office in Washington, D.C. (It is not

known whether the F.B.I. or the C.I.A. have done so.) However, the Maryland State Police said, on Oct. 19 the F.B.I. came up with a set of prints, which had been voluntarily given to the bureau by Paisley when he was 17 years old; the fingerprints were filed under the name of "Jack Paisley." No reason has been given as to why Paisley, if that's who "Jack Paisley" was, would wish to volunteer a set of his fingerprints. If indeed Paisley's fingerprints were not lifted from his boat, office or apartment, it is impossible to determine whether the "Jack Paisley" fingerprints belonged to John Arthur Paisley.

Five days after the autopsy, a dentist who had treated Paisley was reported to have identified as his work an upper plate removed from the body's mouth. The dentist has refused to discuss his findings with reporters.

It appears that Terrence O'Grady, an attorney for Mrs. Paisley, did not receive the signed death certificate until Oct. 20, 18 days after its issuance.

The body identified as Paisley's was cremated a few days following the autopsy at a funeral home in suburban Virginia, apparently on Mrs. Paisley's instructions. But the hands were first severed (it is not known who had ordered this), and sent to the F.B.I. Spokesmen for Federal agencies have refused to discuss the reasons for this unusual procedure, seemingly unnecessary if the body had been positively identified. To date, the F.B.I. has not disclosed the disposition of the severed hands.

Also puzzling are the details of Paisley's demise. The bullet that killed him entered his head behind his left ear, a bizarre form of suicide, if suicide it was. (Continued on Page 60)

Also, Paisley's body was weighted with diving belts weighing 38 pounds. Was this an attempt to conceal the fact of suicide? Paisley's family attorneys say that payments on his two insurance policies would have been made even if there had been a finding of suicide. In newspaper interviews, Paisley's psychiatrist and a woman friend whom he saw often before his disappearance said that he had given no "clues" of contemplating suicide, although they say he may have undergone an "emotional crisis" that September weekend.

Who, then, was John Arthur Paisley? C.I.A. spokesmen were willing to say only that Paisley had worked for the agency from 1953 until his formal retirement in August 1974, and that he had reached the post of deputy chief of the Office of Strategic Research, which is part of the Directorate of Intelligence (D.D.I.). This is the analysis side of the C.I.A., the so-called "white side," as distinct from the "black side," the realm of clandestine operators of the Directorate of Operations (D.D.O.). Spokesmen at C.I.A. headquarters in Langley insisted that Paisley never had links with the clandestine side.

This is one of many implications surrounding the C.I.A.'s characterization of Paisley's highly covert activities. From a variety of intelligence sources, it appears that Paisley's covert activities began some years before he officially signed up with the C.I.A.

In 1948, at the age of 25, he went to Palestine as a radio operator with the United Nations peacemaking mission, headed by Sweden's Count Bernadotte, who, shortly

cy. It was a formidable group, and John Arthur Paisley was designated as the coordinator of "Team B."

Paisley had already been serving as a consultant on the Military Economic Advisory Panel, a group of outside specialists advising the C.I.A. on Soviet military expenditures, but his assignment to "Team B" placed him in an exceedingly crucial position. It gave him access to the highest classified materials on the Soviet Union in the possession of United States intelligence — perhaps more access than he had while working full time for the C.I.A.

As one of the group's members recalled recently, Paisley was the man who provided the team with top-secret documents. Sometimes, because of the special sensitivity of the documents, he brought "Team B" experts to Langley to examine the papers there.

A C.I.A. spokesman has confirmed Paisley's assignment to "Team B," a fact that had not heretofore been made public, and acknowledged under questioning by this reporter that, contrary to earlier assertions, Paisley's access to classified information had not ended with his 1974 retirement.

The C.I.A. spokesman denied, however, that there were classified "Team B" materials among documents found aboard Paisley's sloop and at his downtown Washington office (since 1977, he had worked for a nationally known

firm of public accountants) and his apartment after his disappearance. This is in conflict with reports from reliable intelligence — community

sources. According to them, Paisley had still been working on a report on the "Team B" exercise. The report supposedly concerned leaks to the press in January 1977 on the conclusions reached by "Team B," something of a Washington scandal at the time, since the leaked version purported to show that the outside panel took a much more serious view of the Soviet strategic potential than the C.I.A. Again, there is no explanation as to what Paisley was doing with this material in September 1978.

But there is still another mystery. Intelligence sources say that Paisley's sloop was equipped with a "burst transmitter," a radio device designed to transmit and receive tens of thousands of words or signals a minute on a preset frequency. Burst transmitters are, in effect, scramblers for top-secret communication, normally used by the C.I.A. and the National Security Agency, which is in charge of classified intelligence communications for the United States Government. They can receive and decode, through tape transcribers, transmissions from surveillance satellites.

C.I.A. spokesmen, admitting that the sloop Brillig carried "sophisticated" radio equipment, have denied that the equipment had been issued by the agency. Burst transmitters, however, are not available commercially. (One cannot rule out the possibility that the equipment was supplied by the National Security Agency.) It appears that the transmitter, along with other communications gear, has been removed from the sloop by Mrs. Paisley and taken to her home. The equipment remains unclaimed.

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What, then, actually did happen to Paisley on the night of Sept. 23? Although suicide cannot be wholly ruled out, motivational clues are missing. Paisley was in good health, and his family attorneys firmly deny he faced financial problems. He had an income well over \$50,000 annually, from his Government pension, C.I.A. consulting fees and his accountancy job. He and his wife were making efforts to mend their marriage. Paisley was close to his two grown children.

If suicide it was, why did Paisley attempt to prevent the discovery of the body by wearing the diver's belt? Could Paisley have killed himself because he had been compromised by Soviet intelligence?

If it was not suicide, who pulled the trigger and why were there live shells on the boat? There has been some speculation that if Paisley was murdered, whoever killed him captured him on the Brillig, and moved him to another craft for the execution. Some intelligence experts say that Paisley's profound knowledge of the C.I.A.'s methods of acquiring and evaluating secret data on Soviet nuclear forces could make him an inviting target for the K.G.B. But agency people doubt this. It is an unwritten code of behavior that the C.I.A. and the K.G.B. do not murder each other's operatives — except under the most extraordinary circumstances. Numerous interviews within the intelligence community offer no suggestions as to why the K.G.B. would be interested in Paisley's death.

There is, finally, this question: Was it Paisley's body that was found floating in Chesapeake Bay?

In the end we do not know, and we may never know, what happened to John Arthur Paisley. However he met his fate, in some sense he may have been the latest casualty of the great intelligence wars that are inevitably waged around us. ■



The day Paisley (above), a 55-year-old C.I.A. analyst, disappeared, he went sailing on his sloop, which carried radio equipment designed for top-secret transmissions.

