

The Washington Post

STYLE

P

SATURDAY, SEP

Intelligence Gathering: Insiders

By Jean M. White

If it had been the usual shop talk and reminiscence-swapping among conventioners, each overheard conversation should have been worth at least one plot idea for a thriller novel.

There in the corridors and meeting rooms of the Sheraton Inn and Conference Center in Reston, more than 200 members of the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers were holding their second annual convention with cloak, dagger or cover.

Each wore a boldly lettered name tag. They welcomed interviews, held open sessions under the lights of TV cameras, and worried in public sessions about problems such as "good secrets, no-secrets and bad secrets."

But as for any idea for a thriller . . .



Illustrations by Ted MacKechnie for The Washington Post

Meet on the Outside

the only slip came from Helen Priest Deck, former intelligence analyst, who has an epilogue and one chapter for a novel she is working on in retirement in Sudbury, Mass.: "What a story must be behind that Carlos who kidnapped the OPEC ministers. . ." She stopped in mid-sentence, not the former agent, but the writer protecting an idea.

"No one would expect ex-spooks and spies—we really like to consider ourselves intelligence officers—to meet in a convention like this," observed David Atlee Phillips, who was the founder of the association. It was organized two years ago, against the background of disclosures of abuses in intelligence operations by former agents who wanted to show that they were not burned-out cases of conscience but responsible people doing

responsible jobs for their country."

"I realized that we had a public relations problem of some magnitude," said Phillips with wry understatement. "So we needed a public relations program of some magnitude."

"The whole mood has changed from last year," observed Hayden Estey, who once was a newspaper man before he joined the Central Intelligence Agency for a 23-year stint. "We don't have the intensity—that urgency to save a nation—of last year. It's not as lonely as it was a year ago."

"It has changed," Phillips agreed. "We're having a golf tournament this year. Last year I couldn't have kept my eye on the ball, too nervous."

As the plot turns, Phillips, a re-

See SECURITY, B3, Col. 3



The Insiders Meet on the

SECURITY, From B1

laxed, slightly ruffled chap, blew one 20-year-old "cover" when he appeared as an ex-agent spokesman for ARIO.

In 1956, Phillips was assigned by the CIA to Beirut under the cover of an American businessman. He moved into a flat in an apartment house shared by Dick Beeston, an English journalist and his wife.

"Well, we went over to welcome the new couple," Beeston was reminiscing at one of the two-day conference sessions (he was covering for the London Daily Telegraph). "And my wife walked in the apartment looked at the furniture, laughed, and said: 'Oh, I know what you are. You're a CIA man.' Dave is a former actor and he just laughed his way out of it. About a year ago we saw him on TV, and my wife had been right."

It was left for Phillips to give a final twist to the story.

"I was sent over to go 'deep'—to play the role of a businessman, put the kids in school, get an apartment and establish my cover slowly. We needed furniture and I answered an advertisement in the newspaper. I bought

the furniture from a man who had been on a CIA assignment, but I didn't know that. I was in effect, buying government property."

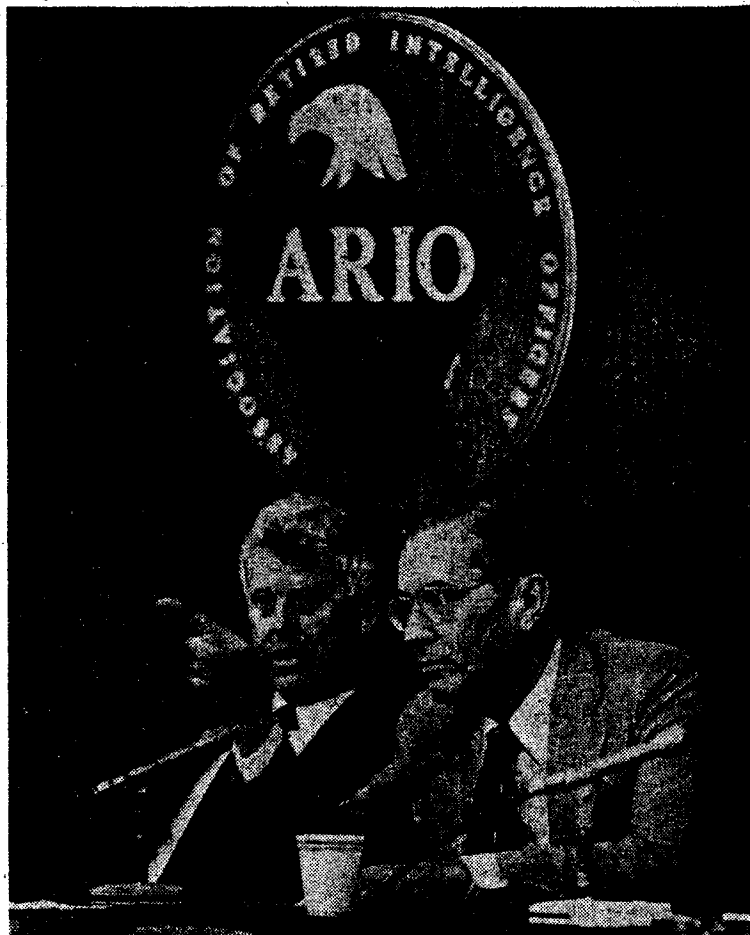
When the Beestons left Beirut a year and a half later, Phillips still remembered Mrs. Beeston's words: "You know at first I thought you were one of those cover-boys—intelligence chaps."

CIA Director George Bush told the convention in a luncheon speech Thursday that there has been a change in the attitude toward the CIA, both in the nation and in Congress, and now "no one is campaigning against strong intelligence." There also have been changes in attitudes on the other side. There on the platform, for the afternoon session following Bush's speech, were a former CIA director and the former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, willing to discuss kinds of secrets with two newspapermen on the same public panel.

William E. Colby former CIA chief, with obvious reference to the Daniel Schoor case, said at one point: "We would remind our journalist friends that we are as concerned about the secrecy of our sources as they are about theirs."

A gray-haired, straightbacked officer, retired Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham rejected the argument that the real culprits in a secrets-leak are the intelligence people who provide the papers and not the reporters who print the material.

That, said the general, would be



By Craig Herndon—The Washington Post

Daniel Graham, left, former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and William Colby, former director of the CIA, at the Association of Retired Intelligence Officers' convention.

like giving immunity to a reporter who argues he shouldn't be prosecuted if he asks: "May I go along on the burglary and write a story."

The Association of Retired Intelligence Officers is really a misleading cover name, Phillips admits, and the organization has been thinking about

changing it. It has more than 1,200 members, a quarter of them women. It draws its members from a broad range of skills in intelligence-gathering and analysis—the scholars, analysts, technicians and researchers who stand behind the romantic spy figure.

Some may have been with the agency a few years, others are veterans of 20 to 30 years in operations both at home and in the field. But quite a few do not fit the picture of the usual out-to-pasture retiree. Some are in business and others in academia. "What a waste of talent. Just think what they could do in a career of crime," one observer said.

ARIO has a speaker's bureau and has former agents available to address organizations from Rotary Clubs to garden clubs and for TV or radio interviews. "You have to reverse the whole pattern of your life. Intelligence people by nature are loners, taught not to talk," observed Lawrence Sulc, who left the CIA about a year ago after more than 23 years and

posts in the Far East, Latin America and Europe.

"I know I used to go to a party and if I heard that a reporter from Newsweek was there, I would sidle away. I might even get my wife and leave the party. Now here I am talking to you."

Sam Halpern, who had 32 years with the CIA and was a branch chief, recalled how he spoke to a group and someone came up afterwards and said the speech was fine, but he was a little disappointed that Halpern didn't reveal any secrets.

"I told him he must have rocks in his head if he thought I was going to reveal any secrets," Halpern said.

Halpern, a cheerful, even ebullient man, always knows what he is saying and pointed out that much of intelligence information comes from "the little bits and pieces put together from cocktail party chatter."

One ARIO member who is publishing is William Buchanan, who left the CIA in 1958 after six years of service. He works with Carrollton Press,

Outside

CITYSCAPE, From B1

tree beds of Park Road and 18th Street the leaves she has gathered from Cleveland Park.

Mount Pleasant didn't always have to filch leaves from west of Rock Creek. The area took its name from the once privately-owned area of Pleasant Plains.

It has one of the most complete histories of any area of Washington, thanks to the sense of duty of the mostly New England-born citizens who developed it after President Grant issued a proclamation asking cities and towns to write their histories in honor of the nation's centennial.

The village had started just after the Civil War. Much of it was owned by Samuel P. Brown of Maine, who made a killing selling supplies to the Union during the Civil War and bought the property after the first Battle of Bull Run. Land in Washington was going for a song.

Dividing it into lots...



Illustrated by Ted MacKehnie