

Army's Experimental Program

Story of an LSD 'Guinea Pig'

By Mary McGrory
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Washington

THIS MONTH, an Air Force veteran who in 1957 had participated in the Army's newly revealed drug experiment program walked into the office of Representative Thomas Downey (Dem.-N.Y.) bearing documents.

The man, who refuses to be publicly identified, had read in the morning paper about Downey's request for an investigation of military drug research on human beings. Seventy-two hours later in a Pentagon office, he found out that the colorless, tasteless, odorless liquid he was given in a plastic glass 18 years ago had been indeed LSD.

The meeting with representatives of the Army and Air Force was arranged by Downey through the Pentagon Congressional Liaison Office.

The documents the Air Force veteran brought with him included a class picture of the 17 men who had gone with him to the Edgewood, Md., Army chemical center to participate in research they had been told was "designed to strengthen the defense of the U.S. against chemical warfare attack" and "in keeping with the highest tradition of the military service."

Nowhere in any of the papers is LSD or any other mind-altering drug mentioned.

The literature he saw at the time about "Use of Volunteers in Research" emphasizes the urgency of the program to the military.

The information sheets stress the volunteer nature of the enterprise, "without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, over-reaching, or other ulterior form of constraint or coercion." Most importantly, Army recruiting flyers promised that the "individuals are thoroughly informed about all procedures, and what can be expected during each test."

THE "SUBJECT" was relieved when he found out he had taken LSD. It helped him understand the events of the subsequent three years, events which made him, his wife and the Air Force think he was "going crazy."

He relived the hallucinations which followed his unwitting drug-taking several times. In the worst episode, he contemplated suicide. He found himself on a bridge. After that, he sought help from service doctors. When asked if he had taken drugs, he said no because he wasn't sure he had. He had also been told to keep information about the program secret, although he was awarded a certificate and a letter of commendation had been placed in his records.

He was passed over for promotion, threa-

tened with divorce, and left the service. He will not allow his name to be used because he does not want his children to know about this episode in his past.

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THE AIR FORCE veteran told Downey that when the plastic cups were passed out that April morning, the volunteers were informed only that they could drink or not drink, as they chose. He drank. After that, he remembers still to his horror that he refused a direct order, swore at a superior officer and threw an orange at him. When he apologized, he recalled, the officer mysteriously laughed and told him to forget it.

He remembers no warnings before, no warnings afterward. "If they had told me what it did, I never would have taken it."

The "subject's" suspicions were activated when he read about the Army's extensive LSD experiments and the drastic effects of the drug on Frank Olson, the scientist who plunged ten floors to his death after LSD was given him by the CIA.

Until then, the Air Force "volunteer" had not known why he had suffered passages of erratic and depressed behavior. According to the Army propaganda, he expected to be involved in "evaluation of chemical warfare equipment" or "adaptation of defensive items to natural human capacities" or "effects of toxic agents," which could be determined it was said, "by installation of very small amounts."

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THE HOUSE Armed Services Committee, notoriously reluctant to probe any military transgressions, is not expected to heed the call of its youngest member (Downey is 25) for investigation.

"Hopefully we can embarrass them into something," says Downey. "We ought to know why the Army did it and by whose authority, and find out at least what our policy is now."

The Air Force veteran hopes to help others who have survived the program and who have wondered over the years why they were acting so crazy and why for no reason at all they would, like him, suddenly burst into tears.