

A Community That'll Bug You



Arthur Hoppe

A GOOD DEAL is being written these days about the American Intelligence Community, but few tourists have visited there.

Actually, the community is located just beyond Sanity, Pa., on the brink of Chaos, N.M. What strikes the casual visitor is the preponderance of bugs — tiny bugs, middling bugs, giant bugs. Bugs, bugs, bugs. Underfoot, overhead, in the walls. Everywhere, bugs.

"Frankly," said the distinguished mas-ter-spy, General Homer T. Pettibone, DSM, CIA, FBI, who serves as the community's unofficial mayor, "I believe we have the finest collection of bugs anywhere in the world. A bug for every occasion — that's our motto."

Pettibone, who was wearing earphones in order to monitor his own conversation — ("You can't imagine the valuable intelligence I pick up that way," he explained) — kindly agreed to conduct a disorganized tour of the community.

"It's the only kind we have," he said.

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NOW ON your right — don't trip over the wires—in that imposing underground building is Army Intelligence, a fighting outfit with an enviable record. Nobody knows how many civilians they've captured in their dossiers. 'If you can't get a Russian, get an American' — that's their battle cry.

"Then there's Naval Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, Secret Service, IRS, Alcohol and Tobacco, 15,342 local police intelligence units, 50 state agencies: the Bureau of Obfuscation and so on. But now we're getting into an interesting neighborhood.

"See that huge edifice on the corner? That's the FBI. It's become a bit rundown

lately since the caretaker left. But on the other side of that high wall perforated with peepholes is the CIA. You'll notice they're having a fire sale on wigs, disguises, phoney identification cards and rubber gloves — one half off.

"And kitty-corner is that white house. Between you and me and this wire-tapped lamp post, there's no one but rank amateurs in the white house. They've been giving the community a bad name. We refer to them as The Gang Who Couldn't Loot Straight.

"But they do provide a valuable liaison between the CIA and the FBI. For example, they told the CIA to tell the FBI to call off its investigation of the white house's Mexican laundry. But, of course, the CIA had to refuse on the grounds it hadn't spoken to the FBI in years."

Over a refreshing lunch of microfilm and coded messages — the staple community diet—Pettibone proudly estimated that the American Intelligence Community over the years had accumulated through burglaries, bugs and surveillance several thousand tons of intelligence — 98.2 per cent of it totally American.

"In all due modesty," he said modestly, "we are obviously the most intelligent community in the world."

Asked how this intelligence was shared and coordinated, he appeared flabbergasted. "Shared? Coordinated?" he cried. "It is the patriotic duty of every member of this community to gather intelligence — not to give it away!"

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THUS it's safe to say tourists will agree that while the American Intelligence Community is an interesting place to visit, you wouldn't want to live there.

Not in a place as buggy as that.