

Tales of drugs and sex

By Don West

I toiled in the vineyards wholeheartedly, because it was fun, fun, fun. Where else could a red-blooded American boy lie, kill and cheat, steal, deceive, rape and pillage with the sanction and blessing of the All-Highest?

— Excerpt of a letter to a CIA friend from George White, Narcotics Officer

A Telegraph Hill brothel set up in the 1950s by the federal Bureau of Narcotics for Central Intelligence Agency drug experiments was just part of a long working relationship between the two agencies, Senate investigators have disclosed.

Evidence of narcotics work being used as "cover" for illicit domestic operations by the CIA is being probed by

from CIA brothel diary

Sen. Edward Kennedy's subcommittee on Health and Scientific Research.

Some of the evidence has been found hidden in 35 years of hand-scrawled journals recently donated to Foothill College in Los Altos Hills by the widow of a narcotics agent who doubled as a CIA agent as early as 1943.

"We have evidence a lot of nationally known people were involved, but we

can't talk about them yet," said Dr. Larry Horowitz, subcommittee staff director. Hearings will resume Tuesday.

The journals being combed by investigators were kept from 1934 to 1970 by George Hunter White, a longtime San Franciscan who carved an international reputation with audacious undercover work until he retired in 1965. He died

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two years ago.

His notes reveal that he moved among top intelligence, political and media people while working ostensibly for the Bureau of Narcotics and keeping intimate ties with the CIA or its predecessor agency, the Office of Strategic Services.

Transferred from narcotics into OSS in 1943, White began his intelligence work on a search for a truth drug needed for interrogating prisoners taken on World War II battlefields. So Stan Lovell, a Massachusetts chemist heading OSS research, had asked for help from White's boss, Harry Anslinger.

White worked on the project with Dr. Lawrence Kubie of the New York City Neurology Institute and Dr. James Hamilton, now a San Francisco psychiatrist.

At the time, Hamilton, 36, was fresh from his internship at Stanford Hospital. White was 35 when they began an association that was to make them friends and lifetime associates in the intelligence business, his journals reveal.

The first tests for a truth drug used an acetate derivative from the Indian hemp plant, charis. The drug was called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). White served as the willing guinea pig.

After a few tests, they turned out a June 2, 1943, report suggesting THC "might prove exceedingly valuable in extracting specific information from key personnel," but warning it was not the perfect truth serum.

A July 2, 1943, entry in White's journal showed that he, Hamilton and Lovell conferred with Time-Life publisher Henry Luce, but his sketchy reference did not explain why.



DOUBLE AGENT GEORGE WHITE
Narc also worked for CIA

Further tests on the drug ranged from hospital rooms to White's weekend cabin at Fire Island, with White experiencing blackouts and considerable euphoria from the applications.

The finale took place the week of Aug. 30, 1943, when a suite of rooms was rented at the Belmont Plaza Hotel in New York for experiments using seven agents and six soldiers.

A quantity of the drug was turned over Sept. 21 to Army Lt. Col. Jack Lansdale, who had been present during experiments with the substance on an Italian prisoner of war near Washington, D.C.

Lansdale, now an attorney in Washington, told the Examiner he could not remember taking part in drug experiments. When pressed,

he insisted that none had been used on American citizens.

White was transferred the next year from the research division to OSS counterintelligence in Calcutta, India. While there, he maintained close contact with friends in New York City, including columnist Earl Wilson.

One of his Calcutta encounters — a half dozen versions of it were floating around — found its way into Time magazine and several newspapers.

Published accounts of the encounter, with a suspected Japanese agent named Iyok, differed but here is how White described it in his journal:

"Tuesday, Nov. 23, 1944, 8:15 am with Welch to 49 Chewringhe preparing for Iyok visit. I remain in bathroom. Welch returns 9 am with Iyok, who pulls knife and slashes Welch. I fire five shots .38 and Welch fires six shots (.32)."

After nearly a year in India, he returned to the United States, was subsequently separated from the OSS and returned to narcotics work.

About this time he became a central figure in another controversy, involving the parole of mobster Charles "Lucky" Luciano. Luciano's parole for "services rendered to the

war effort" had become a national issue.

White, who acted as a go-between in a message from Luciano in 1943, knew the mobster had not helped.

Augie Del Gracio, owner of a bridal gown shop on Christie Street in New York, opium addict and longtime tipster used by White, brought a message from Luciano, who was in prison.

Luciano would provide special information to ease the way for Allied troop landings on Sicily if he was released from prison, the message said.

But the July 1943, Allied invasion went off without help from Luciano, White noted, because officials refused to release him before he provided information.

White was called to testify before Sen. Estes Kefauver's racks investigating committee and told his story.

This contact led to his serving as a special investigator with the committee, where he catalogued gang control of businesses in New York and St. Louis.

His notoriety in the late 1940s kept him from moving into a CIA job directly, but renewal of his double agent role came in 1952, after he told William "Wild Bill" Donovan and James Murphy, two old OSS comrades, that a CIA job was not a good prospect.

Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, who will be the first witness Tuesday before the Kennedy subcommittee, was the CIA head of the chemical section of technical services. He recruited White on June 9, 1952.

Processing his "contract" as a consultant for the CIA took months and involved numerous conferences between White, Anslinger — his boss at the narcotics bureau — and Gottlieb, his journals show.

An entry for Nov. 28, 1952, shows that White had his first encounter with the drug to be used in CIA mind control experiments before his contract was signed.

"9p-la — Pat & Gil, Jo and Nai — to Carol C for drinks — try LSD — shows delayed reaction — They have a circus later that night."

The next day he noted:

"Gil calls re Pat's symptoms of last night — puzzled!"

Gil and Pat Fox were White's friends and his journals contain no explanation of why he was using LSD with them before the official experiments began.

Between Feb. 22, 1953, and

April 22, 1953, White made a tour through the Caribbean and South America that netted him big headlines for narcotics busts in Ecuador.

On the same trip, he was making inquiries about "that drunken affair" of columnist Drew

Pearson in a Havana night club for the CIA and his own narcotics bureau, he noted in his journal.

He picked up his CIA contract in New York City on May 7 and a week later went looking for a

"Morgan Hall apartment," he wrote.

Morgan Hall was the alias he used for CIA work in New York and later in San Francisco. He rented an apartment at 81 Bedford St., Green-
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wich Village, for \$215 a month with Gottlieb's okay.

On May 26, he opened a National City Bank account in the name of Tall and a girlfriend listed only as Shannon C.

He deposited \$3,400 on June 8 from \$4,123.27 in cash Gottlieb delivered. Another \$4,235.60 was deposited two weeks later.

Part of the money, a check for \$860.40, went to an ex-narcotics officer named Lafitte who was commissioned to "decorate" the apartment as a luxury prostitute pad. Microphones, recording equipment and two-way mirrors went in with the curtains and upholstery.

Thus was launched "Operation Midnight Climax" for the CIA, one of 148 experiments on mind-altering drugs the agency ran in this country, subcommittee investigators believe.

Shannon C. lured unsuspecting men to the apartment where the drugs were used, investigators found.

White took a brief vacation Aug. 13, 1953, in the midst of setting up 81 Bedford St. Among his unexplained visits in San Francisco was a quick trip to Sausalito, using his friend Dr. Hamilton's car to stop at Sally Stanford's Valhalla Restaurant.

Returning to New York, he found that the FBI had discovered the apartment and its operations. But Operations Midnight Climax was not halted.

White's March 1, 1955, transfer to San Francisco as district narcotics director made it necessary to dismantle the two-way mirrors, recording and other surveillance equipment at 81 Bedford.

After his move to San Francisco, Gottlieb came from Washington

to help him unpack, but there were numerous conferences involving his CIA boss, as well as Hamilton and a Dr. Robert Lashbrook, before White resumed his Morgan Hall work.

The first step was opening a \$3,000 account under the name of Hall at Anglo California Bank on March 4.

On May 2, he rented a one-bedroom apartment with bay view on the third floor at 225 Chestnut for \$200 a month.

The next day, he noted that he and Hamilton went to check the apartment thoroughly and subsequently spent time here with someone listed only as Sands and Waters.

On June 10, narcotics agent Ira Feldman arrived in San Francisco for duty. Feldman was to go underground and pose as a pimp for a prostitute named Janet Jones of

Operation Midnight Climax for the continuation.

The apartment, equipped with recording, photographic and other surveillance equipment served double duty, as did the New York apartment, as a site for both narcotics deals and CIA drug experiments.

White, who had worked at the old San Francisco Bulletin in 1928 and 1929 before going into police work, had maintained connections through the years with old journalist friends Dean Jennings and Dick Hyer. When he returned to San Francisco, his address book listings expanded to include dozens of

working reporters.

His journals, whose entries grew more sketchy as he was drawn more and more into administrative work, failed to show when the apartment on Chestnut was taken out of operation. The last mention of it was on Nov. 29, 1958.