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SOLDIER OF FORTUNE, OCTOBER 2001



Gary Paul Johnston

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courtesy Newscom/Serbian TV/Rt



FROM BANK ROBBERS TO BOMBERS?

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There are few figures in criminal history with as bizarre a track record as Richard "Wild Bill" Guthrie. A SEAL washout with a genius for creating false IDs and staging near-flawless bank robberies in the early 90s, Wild Bill patched together a rag-tag group of white supremacists that authorities dubbed, "The Midwest Bank Bandits." Guthrie and sidekick, Peter Kevin Langan, chose another name for the group: The Aryan Republican Army (ARA). Besides plundering banks, "Guthrie and Company" had their political sights set on other goals. Topping the gang's wish list was the violent overthrow of the federal establishment. Following that, a strong dose of ethnic cleansing was in store for America.

What Was McVeigh's Link To The Midwest Bank Bandits?

BY J.D. CASH
AND
ROGER CHARLES

On A Mission From *Yahweh*

Indeed, it was a strange mix of juices that ran through this little known far-right figure.

After a five-year gig in the Navy — that ended with Guthrie doing brig-time for assaulting an officer, painting a swastika on a ship and going AWOL — the renegade turned his allegiance to the Aryan Nations and Christian Identity.

Wild Bill began traveling the country, visiting the leadership, studying tapes and reading books on Identity from such figures in the Movement as William Pierce, Pete Peters, Louis Beam, Thom Robb, Robert Millar, Mark Thomas and Richard Butler.

Irrespective of his exposure to religion, by the time the ARA's master plan

was in place, Wild Bill was spending his weekends sucking down beer and watching reruns of his favorite television show, *The Simpson's*.

But then on Sunday evenings a select group of well-trained young men would begin drifting into Guthrie's middleclass rental.

Located on Elm Street, a quiet street in the southeast Kansas college town of Pittsburg, the "company safehouse" could accommodate several of these Identity skinheads. The bungalow even had a full basement for the gang's unique gear and was a perfect spot for "Bible studies."

At dawn the boys would pile go-bags, containing the tools of their trade, into a bright blue extended van that Guthrie dubbed the *Blitzenwagen*. Neighbors later said they paid only passing notice to the comings and goings of what they assumed were college students.

Out on the interstate, these cells of three to five men would carefully monitor police scanners as they made their way to a predetermined city where numerous banks would be appraised. In the van were wigs, masks, costumes of all sorts, fake IDs, bags of bombs — some real, some fake — and enough firepower to hold off a dozen federal agents.

The skinheads received their paramilitary training at Elohim City, an Identity stronghold in eastern Oklahoma. The man in charge of bringing these recruits up to speed was, "Andy the German" Strassmeir (aka Mr. Red).

After enduring months of the former *Bundeswehr* officer's live-fire exercises and swimming through icy waters in the dead of winter — getting out in the field and conducting operations for the ARA was a vacation.



Richard Guthrie after his arrest. What secrets did he know that he took with him to the grave?

While the take might be as little as \$2,500, or as much as \$35,000, the proceeds were carved-up in much the same way: A percentage would be held back for company expenses — and a proper tithe was forwarded to the upper echelons of the White Power Movement. The remainder of what Guthrie referred to as, "Jewish toilet paper" was split among gang members involved with the heist.

Once the accounting was performed, the younger men scattered to the wind.

Dangerous Dude

On 17 August 1994, several letters and cards were postmarked in Syracuse, New York. One was mailed to Georgia's Franklin County Sheriff, Hugh Roach.

Roach had investigated an October 1992 robbery that Guthrie and Langan

pulled at a Pizza Hut, in Lavonia. After the investigation, Roach and others provided information to the Secret Service. Locals had overheard Guthrie bragging that he intended to kill President George Bush.

The Secret Service took the information seriously. They located and raided a trailer house Guthrie had occupied. They missed their primary target but in early November of 1992 they caught up with Pete Langan in Cincinnati. They took the ex-con in on weapons violations. Thereafter, Guthrie would take time from his busy schedule to drop his old nemesis a note.

Over time the taunting grew bolder.

On 24 May 1995 — five weeks after the OKC bombing — the ARA celebrated the heavily televised implosion of the stricken Murrah Building by robbing a bank in Louisville, Kentucky.

During the robbery, Guthrie entered the bank with face darkened and ranted at the customers and bank employees in Spanish.

Three months later, Guthrie and some of his men were eating lunch in Bridgeton, Missouri, when they spotted the Magna Bank across the street. Wild Bill liked what he saw.

The usual process was followed: The getaway vehicle would be left at an apartment complex parking lot with a note on the dash that said the car had mechanical problems and the owner would return in a few days for it.

Using aliases, the ARA paid cash for motel rooms rented several miles from the bank. For the next few days, the ARA would case the bank until everything was perfect. On this particular job, Guthrie told the boys to wear FBI and ATF ballcaps when they burst into the bank. On 16 August 1995, the oper-



(above) Cash in-hand, ARA thief vaults over a teller's counter during one of their operations. Over time, the ARA's techniques were honed to near-perfection. Peter Langan (right) during one of his many bank heists. He, too, might possess knowledge that the OKC Bombing was, indeed, an atrocity committed by Tim McVeigh — and others.

ation went forward and lasted less than 60 seconds.

When the FBI finally discovered the getaway car, they also found an article about Tim McVeigh. Guthrie had even drawn a circle around the head of Janet Reno, whose picture was also in that issue of the paper. The Magna Bank job had taken place just one day after McVeigh and Nichols were arraigned in Oklahoma City. And, as usual, the gang got away without firing a shot.

The Sting

Even before Wild Bill was believed to have robbed his first bank, Secret Service profilers studied his "in your face" attitude and concluded Guthrie was dangerous.

From military records and informant reports, the Secret Service realized the subject's raw criminal cunning was fortified by Navy training in explosives and weaponry from the Redstone Arsenal, in Huntsville, Alabama, and EOD school, at Indian Head, Maryland.

As for propensity to inflict violence, Guthrie had already shot and wounded one of his brothers and had been arrested for assaulting a business associate.

Considered in conjunction with reports that Guthrie planned to assassinate President George Bush, the Secret Service concluded Wild Bill was a risk to national security. A contingent of federal agents was assigned to bring him in.

In August of 1993, agents pulled Guthrie confidant, Peter Langan, out of a Georgia county jail, where he was waiting trial on armed robbery charges. The agency leaned heavily on local officials to let them "borrow" Langan so they could put him to work for them.

The DA balked at the idea, and for good reason. Langan already had a record of one bloody shootout with police down in Florida and was also on record bragging to an uncover former police officer that he intended to bomb a federal building if he ever got out of jail. In spite of this, the Secret Service managed to arrange for Langan's release.

Langan manages to locate Guthrie, and ditches his handlers and takes off with his pal. The first stop will be the pine forests of the Ozark Mountains in northwestern Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma. Here Langan and Guthrie will fulfill their dream — recruit like-minded men to join their revolution.

When the district attorney for the Northern Judicial District of Georgia inquired how Langan's work for the Secret Service was progressing, Lindsay Tise received surprising news. The Secret Service told him that Langan would not be returning to Georgia to stand trial after all — *he was dead*.

Based upon that misrepresentation, a local judge signed-off on the matter and the DA tossed Langan's armed robbery case into the inactive file. Peter Kevin Langan (aka "Pedro Gomez")



Aryan Nation leader, Mark Thomas, at "Pretty Boy" Floyd's grave. Floyd hated the nickname because it wasn't macho.

was no more.

Thanks to the Secret Service, one of this nation's most dangerous partnerships had been formed. Peter Langan becomes "Commander Pedro" and Richard Guthrie assumes the title, "Commander Pavel." A growing body of evidence suggests that the residue of this partnership committed countless crimes over a three-year reign of terror, including robbing two-dozen banks and bombing a federal building — killing 168.

Rebirth Of The Silent Brotherhood

The Turner Diaries provide the operational framework for the gang. Guthrie and Langan will also borrow heavily from tactics employed by the Irish Republican Army.

After his arrest, Guthrie provided hours of details to the FBI about the gang's long-term plans to attack federal targets. The funding mechanism would come from bank robberies. Wild Bill named the plan after his favorite television character in *The Simpsons*.

Basic Armed Resistance Tactics, or B.A.R.T., was a plan that included the following elements:

- Rating each target as to location, highway access, parking lot location, number of employees, switch car location, escape route, size of the metropolitan area, traffic flow, etc.

- Timing was limited to a maximum of 45 seconds in the bank itself, which included one of the thieves vaulting the teller counter.

- Use of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in the bank and in the switch vehicle. The devices were sometimes strictly hoax devices to divert and delay law enforcement attention, but some were fashioned, mostly by Langan, as functional IEDs.



Timothy McVeigh gives an impromptu interview outside the Branch Davidian compound at Waco, days prior to the federal incineration of women, children and men.

- The plan called for purchasing a suitable getaway vehicle at a local buy-here, pay-here used car lot or from a private individual. The getaway vehicle would be stored in a parking lot of a 24-hour store if necessary.

- After an experience with exploding dye packs, they added to the B.A.R.T. checklist that the window on the getaway vehicle would be left open during the robbery.

(From FBI interviews: 4-15 March 1996.)

ARA Recruits

Also making a trip to the Ozarks in October of 1993 are Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols. Both are dead broke, both have military backgrounds and both are vehemently antigovernment. And, most appealing, Tim McVeigh is a decorated combat soldier and experienced armored car driver with two security jobs on his resume. Sergeant Mac is attractive to anyone looking for help robbing banks and armored cars.

Terry Nichols' military record is not much to brag on. But he is a rabid anti-tax protester and "talks-the-talk" as well as anyone in the Posse Comitatus. And, unlike most men in the movement, Nichols is disarming, clean-cut, knows weapons and his experience selling real estate and traveling the gun show circuit has made him something of a horse trader. These are precisely the kind of men Guthrie and Langan are looking for.

Robin Hood

Immediately after the brief trip to the southern climes, Tim McVeigh and Terry Nichols will gather at James Nichols' farm in upstate Michigan. Very shortly, tragedy will strike the farmhouse.

Terry Nichols' Philippine-born mail-



Camera-shy Andreas Strassmeir arrives back in Germany. How he flew beneath the feds' radar screen is open to speculation.

order wife discovers her three-year-old, illegitimate son suffocated in a trash bag. Immediately, McVeigh is a suspect. Marife Nichols refuses to believe her son's death is an accident. Local law enforcement does nothing to follow-up. No charges are filed in the case.

As soon as the funeral is over, Terry Nichols moves out of the Michigan farmhouse and takes his depressed wife to Las Vegas. After a few weeks of bitter fighting, he puts the young girl on a plane back to the Philippines and her family. It is a process that will repeat itself over the next 18 months.

Using the alias, Daryl Bridges, Nichols and McVeigh obtain a pre-paid calling card from the *Spotlight* newspaper. A clue to their intentions arrived

in Jennifer McVeigh's mail during the holidays.

Jennifer McVeigh told the FBI that she received a "weird letter" from her brother that was dated 24 December 1993. Her brother told her, "She should reevaluate the identity of true criminals. He indicated that persons who rob banks might not be the criminals at all." He implied that Jews are running the country and a large degree of control is exercised by Freemasons.

Jennifer told the FBI that the purpose of the letter was to allow her to redefine her conceptions of good and bad. "It was Tim's 'Robin Hood' philosophy," she said.

Under intense pressure, Jennifer also admitted that she and her brother were involved in a bank robbery scheme.

"He [Tim McVeigh] had been involved in a bank robbery, but did not provide the details concerning this robbery. ... Although he did not identify the participants of the robbery by name, he stated that they had committed the robbery. His purpose for relating this was to request that I exchange some of my own money for what I recall to be approximately three \$100 bills. I observed at that time that my brother had on his person an undetermined quantity of \$100 bills, of which he provided me a small portion. I recall that my brother remarked that the money he had in his possession represented his share of the bank robbery proceeds."

Let The Games Begin

After mailing the "Robin Hood letter," Tim McVeigh spends several more days at a friend's place in upper Michigan. Oddly, with the Super Bowl between the Dallas Cowboys and the Buffalo Bills coming up, the unemployed McVeigh, a rabid Bills fan, does not stay at his pal's to watch the game. Instead, McVeigh says has other plans and leaves a few days before kick-off.

On 25 January 1994, the ARA is credited with robbing the first in a string on nearly two dozen banks. Shortly after the Ames, Iowa, heist, Tim McVeigh will show up in Greenville, Texas. Here, he will make a few phone calls from a Motel 6 before heading back to Arizona.

Outside Kingman, the unemployed drifter will rent a concrete blockhouse and build a wood redoubt along the perimeter of the property. McVeigh tells his pal, Mike Fortier, he expects the FBI to raid the property, someday.

Around the first of April 1994, Terry



The ARA's "heistmobile," the vehicle used in many of the bank robberies. Was Tim McVeigh (aka Speedie) the wheelman on some of these jobs?

Nichols will take a low-paying ranch-hand's job near Marion, Kansas. The same week, the ARA will rent a safe-house two hours away in sleepy Pittsburg, Kansas.

During the next several months the ARA will hone its robbery skills — averaging a bank job every few weeks.

Nichols always seems to have an alibi on the day of these robberies, but not McVeigh. Save one instance, in July of 1994 when the drifter flies to New York to see his ailing grandfather, Tim McVeigh continues this pattern of disappearing around the time of each ARA heist. That is, until the Congress passes sweeping gun control legislation.

Members of the ARA see these new gun laws as a warning sign, straight from *The Turner Diaries*. All hell is about to break loose.

The Bombing Conspiracy Is Hatched

On 13 September 1994, Bill Clinton and some supporters are expected to gather in the Rose Garden to sign a

Eleven months later a federal grand jury issued indictments for the bombing of the OKC federal building. The grand jurors found that Nichols and McVeigh were involved in a conspiracy to bomb the federal building and it was formed “on or about the 13th of September 1994.”

The very next day, 14 September 1994, Tim McVeigh is filmed in Wichita, Kansas, liquidating precious coins at a gold and silver exchange. Within 24 hours the *Spotlight* calling card purchased by McVeigh and Nichols will be used to make a number of calls to businesses that sell components that could be used in a bomb.

Weeks later, Tim McVeigh and at least four members of the ARA gather in Arizona. A subsequent debriefing of two of those present confirm that from 1 February until the middle of March 1995 the ARA remains in the deserts of Arizona. McVeigh's phone records and an eyewitness account confirms his presence during this same parameter.

An example came from legendary paramilitary organizer of the Arizona Patriots, Jack Oliphant. Known as “the Colonel,” Oliphant was an ex-con who served four years for his involvement in a conspiracy to bomb federal installations and other crimes. Oliphant told the *LA Times*, “The bastard has put the patriot movement back 30 years by blowing up a building with people in it.”

With the feds hovering over Elohim City, several of the young skinheads living there took flight. Most go into hiding at Mark Thomas' farm in Pennsylvania.

Guthrie and Langan close down the Pittsburg safehouse and open up a new one in Columbus, Ohio. Bank robberies, though, are few and far between now as the ARA's image of invincibility falters. Bickering among members increases. Guthrie is considered dangerous and his “devil-may-care” attitude is blamed for the heat they are feeling. Even McVeigh's investigators are making regular pilgrimages to Elohim City, asking about contacts there. “Andy the German” flees to Europe, through Mexico — the historic route of many German spies.

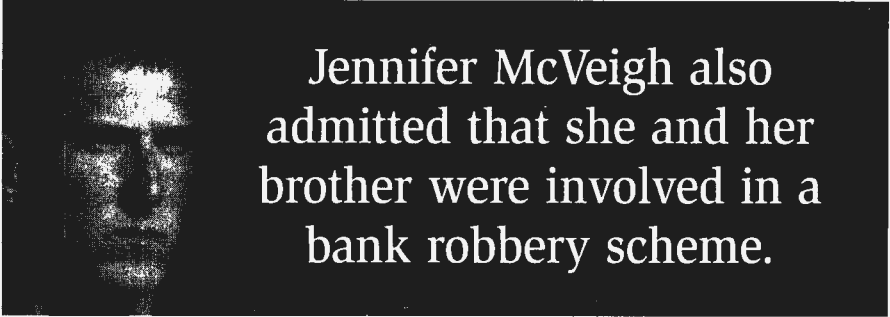
Possibly it's only a coincidence, but just as Mr. Red returns to Berlin, Wild Bill Guthrie is arrested on 15 January of 1996. The feds catch up with him in Cincinnati after a brief car chase. No shots are fired. The FBI says an informant who was a former close friend of Guthrie's has provided his whereabouts. Three days later, Langan is captured outside the Columbus safehouse. Somehow Commander Pedro survives the 47 rounds fired at him by the FBI SWAT team.

Over the next 18 months several more gang members are arrested. All but two plead guilty. Langan and one of the skinheads opt to go to court. Both will get stiff sentences.

Mark Thomas, the reputed political guru behind the ARA plot, gets a sweetheart deal that will put him back on the streets in a decade. Some of the other men get off with sentences of fewer than five years.

Let's Make A Deal

After several weeks of interviews with the FBI, Guthrie agrees to make a deal to tell what he knows about the terrorist underground. But shortly after getting the plea bargain accepted by the Justice Department, Wild Bill is found dangling from a bed sheet in his cell in Covington, Kentucky.



Jennifer McVeigh also admitted that she and her brother were involved in a bank robbery scheme.

major piece of gun legislation. The 1994 crime bill is advertised as the most far-reaching attack on gun ownership yet, and the Washington elite are full of themselves over the perceived victory.

Coinciding with the White House event, Timothy McVeigh and the number-two man of the Aryan Nations, Mark Thomas, travel separately to east-central Oklahoma.

On the night of the 12th, Thomas stays inside the Elohim City compound. According to motel records, McVeigh checks into a \$17.00 room a half-hour away from the ARA training camp. Where Langan and Guthrie spend the night is still a mystery.

According to investigative reports, the FBI later learns that Guthrie has just been to see Thomas in Philadelphia, and has asked permission to form a new cell. Guthrie has decided it is time to take their revolution to a new level. A girlfriend of Thomas later tells the FBI that during this same period the Aryan Nations' leader told her “his gang” intended to take out a federal building.

Just a few days after the ARA arrives in Arizona, blasting caps and Tovex explosives that had been stored in Tim McVeigh's storage unit in Kingman for several months are suddenly removed and the rent on the locker is allowed to expire.

Next, gang members purchase two vehicles — an older model sedan and an aging pickup truck. However, there are no robberies credited to the gang while they are in Arizona.

Weeks later, eyewitnesses in Kansas recall seeing vehicles of similar makes and vintages coming and going from a large yellow moving truck that is parked at Geary State fishing lake — the precise location, where the feds later claimed, the bomb was constructed that destroyed the federal building.

The Aftermath

So horrifying was the specter of the federal building bombing, even the most venomous members of the White Power Movement were paralyzed by the national revulsion.

That day, 12 July 1996, was also the day Guthrie was to be moved to a different facility. A reporter for the *LA Times* said she had interviewed Guthrie on the 11th and found him in good spirits and was bragging about a book he would write that, "Would go a lot further into what we were doing than robbing banks."

When the AP reported the Guthrie "suicide," headlines blossomed and the internet sizzled with debate over the death of man who took so many secrets to the grave.

James Ridgeway of the *Village Voice* wrote, "Guthrie's death was terribly convenient for those worried about what he might have to say at subsequent trials. A radical with strong ties to Elohim City and members of the ARA, Dennis Mahon, was ecstatic over the news, "He had help," Mahon told the *Village Voice*. "Let me tell you, some of these prison guards are on our side."

Prison officials did an investigation and produced a pair of suicide notes they said Guthrie left for his brother and lawyer. Neither recipient challenged the legitimacy of the handwriting or called for an investigation. But what about the rumor of a book manuscript that Guthrie had been working on? Initially, the feds told the media that they found no such manuscript. The unequivocal denials put to the rumor to rest.

The Ghost Of Richard Guthrie

Eventually, the United States Department of Justice admitted they had the long-sought-after Guthrie manuscript. Mark Hamm, an Indiana State University Professor of Criminology, was one of the first investigators outside government to lay eyes on it.

Afterward, hundreds of pages of FBI interviews with Guthrie and other gang members materialized. Suddenly, the ghost of Richard Guthrie was taking shape. The apparition was as fascinating as it was illusive.

Guthrie as a writer, was one-dimensional. His unfinished manuscript careens down a path from robbery to robbery; supplying details about the motels they stayed in, what banks they robbed, how much they stole and how much fun they had stealing it.

Equally important to investigators is what Guthrie does not say. For example, just as gaps in McVeigh's timeline in 1994 match nearly every one of the ARA's early robberies — gaps in the ARA's timeline allows for the possibilities that the gang participated in the

Marion quarry robbery — where many of the explosives used in the bombing are stolen; the Roger Moore gun robbery in Arkansas, that yields some 75 firearms and tens of thousands of dollars in cash and jewels. Most important, Guthrie wrote that his gang spent from early February to mid-March of 1995 in the deserts of Arizona. And, Guthrie offers no evidence to corroborate an alibi for himself or his men on the critical days leading up to and immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing.

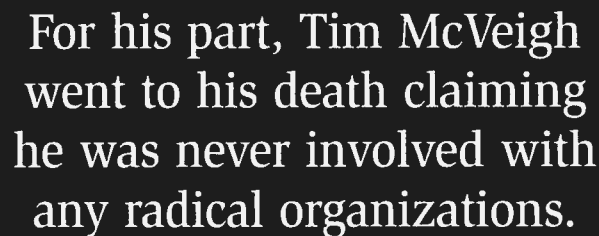
Regarding the bombing, Guthrie wrote with uncharacteristic restraint, "Simply put, within ten years it's my opinion that this country will resemble Sarajevo."

Possibly the most scintillating clue Guthrie leaves behind is the name of a member of his gang, a getaway car driver named Tim. Guthrie dubs the young man, "Speedie" because of his extraordinary driving skills.

After Guthrie died, the FBI said that "Tim" was really a fellow named

When Wild Bill sat down on 20 April 1996 and began writing his story, he made it clear to his brother — who was to be the custodian of the manuscript — that Speedie was the alias for Tim. Guthrie had no reason to lie. In fact, Guthrie warned his brother, Nick, to keep that page of his manuscript away from the media. But Wild Bill must have known the feds would read his manuscript. Was this his way of working a deal? Guthrie also hinted in the manuscript that there was at least one other ARA cell of terrorists that still could be out there. Another bargaining chip? We may never know, Guthrie died three months later.

On 9 April 1997 — only days before Tim McVeigh went on trial in Denver — the IRS building in Colorado Springs was firebombed. When the ATF arrived to conduct an investigation, they discovered the letters "ARA" painted on a wall. Exactly two years later, the new IRS facility in Colorado Springs was attacked in a similar fash-



For his part, Tim McVeigh went to his death claiming he was never involved with any radical organizations.

AP/Wide World

"Mike" — Michael Brescia — one of Strassmeir's roommates at Elohim City.

Brescia was eventually indicted with the rest of the gang. But the Philadelphia grand jury only found evidence he was involved in one bank robbery and that one was six months after the bombing in OKC. Even the FBI admits, Brescia was not involved in any of the ARA robberies in 1994 — leaving open the debate: Who was the getaway driver for the gang in 1994?

Hoping to counter overwhelming evidence of McVeigh's involvement in bank robberies, the FBI produced interviews with Guthrie, where he agrees that "Tim" was really an alias for Mike Brescia. Shortly after those interviews, Guthrie was found dead.

McVeigh's sister has never publicly commented about the bank robberies her brother was involved in. But someday she may. If the OKC bombing case is reopened, investigators will have trouble with the "Tim is really Mike," theory. Strong evidence from Guthrie's own hand refutes the notion.

ion. No arrests have been made or suspects publicly identified.

As it turns out, Guthrie may have been telling the truth about the existence of another cell and Tim McVeigh's connections to the ARA, as well.

For his part, Tim McVeigh went to his death claiming he was never involved with any radical organizations.

Peter Langan may now be looking for a deal. Facing a life sentence for his larger than life role in the bank robbery conspiracy, Commander Pedro says he "suspects" at least three members of the ARA's bank robbery cell were involved in the bombing of the federal building in OKC, "And don't forget the leg ..."

J.D. Cash, a longtime Oklahoma investigative journalist, has broken several major stories on the OKC Bombing.

Roger Charles, a U.S. Naval Academy grad and former consultant on ABC's 20/20, is, likewise, an authority on the tragedy and a frequent contributor to SOF. ✕