

BARNES ISLAND

"Sorry to get you out on a weekend, Dave, but you know that if I'm out there has to be something to it," Jim explained as I got into his car. I had just returned from San Francisco where I cooled my heels for a week waiting to spend ten minutes on the witness stand and Lorraine was less than pleased that I was called out so soon. I was annoyed too, but I did enjoy my work and this is was what a DEA Agent was paid to do. The supervisor had said on the phone that the group was short handed and that I was "elected." I had worked for him only a few days and I didn't want to get off on the wrong foot by complaining.

As Jim and I pulled out of my street on that sunny Saturday afternoon he confessed to me, "the group isn't really short, but you were my first pick." A nice stroke. Jim was the Backup - assistant supervisor - and the supervisor, being new, relied on Jim to pick the people for him.

"How much do you know about this case?" he asked.

"Some guy rented a whole island and paid cash."

"Yeah, it's called Barnes Island and it's owned by some attorney. He thought it was fishy that they guy wanted some time to meditate about a job offer." Drug smuggling was becoming big business in the seventies, and it was only a matter of time before the big time operations shifted from Florida and California to Washington.

Jim was probably the most cautious men I had ever met, and he did not give up his weekends for wild goose chases -- "hummers". If he was going to sacrifice a weekend, so could I. Besides, running off every once in awhile is part of what a nark should be. When I was a campus cop, I worked details at basketball games and construction jobs just to get a little more experience and the possibility of seeing some "action." One tempting indicator in this case was the request for a shotgun and a night scope.

"Our guy's name is Murphy and he's from Boston. All we have on him is a burglary arrest. No known dope connection. Mike took the original call and he's the case agent."

"Mike took a call?"

"Yeah, I know, some kind of mistake. Anyway, a very fast boat just showed up with a couple of more guys and they have been running back and forth to the island from Bellingham with jerry cans. But that is probably water since there is no water on the island according to the attorney."

"Or fuel for another boat," I offered.

"There's an island next to Barnes that's a state park. We'll watch things from there and see what we can see. We'll need to pick up a night scope and a shotgun at the office. Customs has their boat up there to take you out there." I enjoyed these kinds of assignments. Normally the right-up-front-where-everything-is-happening is the fun part of the job that goes to the case agent, the guy who worked the investigation from the beginning. When it is your case you "get to" do the undercover work, the arrests, the evidence processing, the reports and become the key witness. This was important for a several reasons. First, the case agent knows most about the case and needs to be where everything is happening in order to direct the investigation. Also, reward, recognition and advancement go to those who do the job. But most importantly, it was fun and if it is your case, you should have the fun. Making the buy was fun. Making the arrest was fun. Being the star was fun.

On the other hand case agents had their hands full. They were responsible for coordinating people, for briefing the bosses, for making the right decisions, for doing or seeing to it that all the paperwork is done and for persuading people to spend their time on your case. So, on really big operations, there were opportunities for more people to make the arrests and seizures and to be up front and there was always competition for starring roles. Narcotics agents are no different than actors and each of us happy at the chance to strut his stuff in front of an audience for a little more credit.

(DEA was quite confused when it came to assigning credit. The agency operated like professional athletics only the specific sport was unclear. Like in football it took teamwork and organization to get touchdowns with quarterbacks and ends doing all the glamour work by scoring points and guards and tackles doing blocking. In a good dope case, there are people who do surveillance and help with equipment and seize the drugs, but it is only one agent who actually makes the undercover buy or witnesses the secret transaction. When someone makes a case, the whole team gets credit for the win. Unfortunately at DEA, the agents were treated like basketball players where everyone was expected to get twenty points a game. That sometimes made it hard to get cooperation from people who would have to give up their own chances for stardom in order to help you make the case. It was nice for me that day to be tapped off the bench to be the scorer without the headaches of being the quarterback.)

In two hours we were in Bellingham with Walt and Mike. Mike was a guy we usually used undercover or who ended up low-crawling under a barbed wire fence, but he wasn't any good at the more complex aspects of criminal investigations. Of medium height and wiry, he had been a cop and a Green Beret in Viet Nam. He seemed to have a different hair and beard style every week, the better to buy dope and seduce women. This was not Mike's kind of case, but since he answered the phone that day and took the first call from the island owner it was his case. You catch the call, you catch the case.

Walt was ten years older and not nearly as flashy, but better at details. He was assigned to Mike to provide adult supervision. Also, Mike tended to "oversell" his cases and Walt would be able to insure objectivity. They had come up the day before to watch the new boat and they ended up spending the night. Walt briefed us.

"Two guys in a very fast boat called a Skipjack."

"Yeah, it's supposed to do forty-five knots, faster than anything we've got," Mike added.

"Thirty-five or forty knots," corrected Walt. It's got the name Lady Hamilton, but there is no record of it anywhere. They have it on a trailer behind a pickup."

"Registrations?" asked Jim.

"All to different people. They use an address here in town, but nobody is of record. Just the guy who rented the island."

"Where do they go?"

"Just back and forth to the island."

"I'm not even sure this is a dope case. I think they are making porno movies," Mike offered. But everyone could see that this thing could stand a look, particularly Neil, the new supervisor.

Neil, had been in charge of the small DEA office in Las Vegas, and had recently arrived

in Seattle under something of a cloud. An inspection at the old office revealed some irregularities, so with less than a year before retirement, he was transferred to Seattle. Neil had been with the LAPD in the Fifties when there was still a death penalty and when the LAPD was a law unto itself. Then he worked for Customs for many years before being reorganized over to DEA. Neil never really adapted to the changes in law enforcement begun by the Warren Court and his style was, to say the least, unsophisticated. His purpose on the planet was to put people (preferably non-white people) in jail and he did anything necessary to accomplish this objective. When he got to Seattle he had a bad reputation and a bad attitude, but he still loved to put people in jail and that suited us. Neil was happy to affect the shaggy hair and long moustache of the younger narks mostly as a protest against traditional fed-types who preferred gray suits and short hair. He was a large man and in his aloha shirt, he looked like the portly Las Vegas lounge lizard that he aspired to be.

Soon after taking over our group, some local cops and the state narks organized a series of raids on biker houses and the Feds were invited. You always hit bikers at dawn. You never knew where these guys were living exactly and they had a proclivity for violence, so dawn raids had become *de rigueur*. At the briefing, where the names and photographs and addresses were handed out Neil asked, "What's your policy on shooting dogs?"

"What do you mean?" asked the officer in charge.

"Well I got bit by some asshole's dog once and it ain't going to happen again."

He got an answer like "Do the right thing," or "use your best judgement," or some such thing and the comment was forgotten. Officers in raid jackets crammed into cars with their shotguns and flashlights and they caravaned in the darkness down an unpaved road to an isolated farmhouse with several cars and trucks parked in the yard. Police cars blocked any possible escape and the raiders clumsily spilled out to cover front and back doors.

"Police! Search Warrant! Open the door," commanded the officers in accordance with law and procedure. Just as the door caved in, the deep throated protest of a large dog came from the back followed by "BANG!"

A cop's first reaction to a shot being fired is to freeze for an instant and think "Oh shit!," because any shooting incident is a cop nightmare. Was it my gun? Was anyone hit? Was I hit? Did I do something wrong? Am I in trouble? All the questions were answered by shrieks of pain and a howling dog. When Fido started barking at Neil, he cranked one off and clipped the poor hound in the ear leaving it to screw its bloody ear into the backyard. But Neil, the Blue Knight, wasn't done. He went right past the screaming dog and the stunned officers, kicked in the back door (after announcing his authority and intention, he testified) and advanced into the house. The first person he encountered was your basic dirt bag. Standard procedure would have been to gain control of the individual, search him for weapons, cuff him, advise him of his rights and start the paperwork, but Neil was real weak on standard procedure. He grabbed the biker and held him in front as a human shield and went after the rest of the house. Even Hollywood had given up on that technique, but Neil apparently didn't go to movies much. The human shield was rescued from the Blue Knight by the other officers and taken to jail and safety.

Later, one manacled suspect was heard to complain, "Man I heard you narks were bad, but to shoot a man's dog is really low." Another legend was born.

In spite of the popular image, the Feds don't jump on every suspicious circumstance and pursue it forever. It's not that suspicious circumstances aren't crimes in the making, it's just that you need to go after things that have a reasonable chance of success. Every organization wants to succeed, whether it is in government or business or organized religion. Success needs some measurement and measurement is usually numbers. Numbers make the world go round. Everyone must spend their time accomplishing something and they need to produce successes to stay in business. The cops don't spend much time on thefts where there are no leads because they have real leads that they can pursue with some chance of closure. Drug cases were the same way; you spend time on the investigations that you think you can bring to a conclusion. Law enforcement may be about public safety and upholding the law, but it boils down to the crooks you can catch.

Cases got made 1) by convincing your supervisor that your case was important and had a good chance of success which justified spending money and people's time, 2) by working the case yourself or with a partner and 3) by getting lucky. If your supervisor didn't believe in your case you dropped it, worked alone or got lucky. Mike had convinced Neil and Jim that this was a good case. When Mike came to Neil with this particular set of circumstances Neil was preprogrammed to commit people to it, even on a weekend. This was good since both Mike and Walt were not held in high esteem by our office head, who was quietly referred to as Doctor No.

Doctor No managed by negativity. He said no to everything. All requests and suggestions were immediately denied and criticized. Payments to informants, requests for buy money, suggestions, comments, everything. If the issue was really important or the case was really good, it would, by the process of natural selection, overcome his criticism and prevail. That way he went on record as opposing deals that were unsuccessful ("I told you so") and as the office head he could take credit for the ones that worked out ("Thank you, but I've got good people working for me"). We all learned that dealing with him was like buying real estate: you go in high and he counters low and you settle in between. He became Doctor No. Had it been up to Dr. No the case would have been bad-mouthed into oblivion.

Dr. No probably didn't even know what we were doing. Neil was good at forgetting to tell him what was happening. In any case, even though the case agents didn't really know what was going on, and even though the only crook we had was a petty Irish burglar, they were giving up a weekend and so was I. At least cautious, reliable Jim was out with us. It was Jim's role to watch Neil.

In Bellingham we hooked up with two of the agents who were stationed in the dreary border crossing at Blaine which is about thirty miles north of Bellingham. They were part of the Seattle office and we often worked together. Our current crooks had been busy going back and forth to the island on the Lady Hamilton. They loaded the boat on a trailer and towed it with a pickup to a farm in the woods, only to return to the landing and park. The two guys disappeared.

Out of the water and on the trailer, the Lady Hamilton looked much larger than twenty-eight feet. Her sleek white fibreglass hull towered over our heads and the two large in-out drives alluded both to her speed and the memory of a lusty aristocrat. None of the registration numbers disclosed anything useful, but that was no surprise. Any change of ownership would take months to show up in official files and, if these guys were any good at all,

none of the legal information was true anyway. We looked in windows and poked around the outside to the absolute limit of the law, but didn't learn anything. No marihuana debris in cracks, no unusual marks indicating a heavy load, no clues of any kind. Rather than waste a night watching a parked trailer, we decided to turn in. We could pick up on this tomorrow and see what happens. The only thing of real substance accomplished that night was the identification of an excellent Chinese restaurant.

The next morning the boat and trailer were gone. Had we stayed there all night, we would have seen the subjects pick up the boat and where they went. But because all-night surveillances were not lightly undertaken and because we all knew that dopers usually repeated themselves, we were confident we would find them again. In any event, we had the island and the farm. The plan evolved that Mike, the case agent, and I, who had no car, would fly in our plane over to Orcas Island and meet with a Customs boat crew. The Customs crew would run us over to the little island next to Barnes where we could spy on our subjects. It was great for me since I didn't have to make any decisions and flying and running around on boats was a nice break from the routine.

Veteran investigators such as we were, we knew that real meals would be unpredictable so we decided on a serious breakfast at the little cafe at the airport where we met our pilot. After ordering pancakes I realized that I had left my revolver in the motel. Mortified, I rushed back to the motel hoping that the housekeeping staff hadn't treated itself to a new gun. It was Sunday, so nobody went to work there until past noon, so it was still in my suitcase. In half an hour, I was back at the airport, but the pancakes weren't out of the kitchen yet.

After breakfast we started hunting crooks. Damn, the boat on the trailer was back at the marina, but not the truck. We were just going to have to pay closer attention to the movements of this boat and the suspects. Since crooks experienced the same bodily needs as investigators, we started checking waterfront breakfast joints and sure enough there they were, sucking up grease and carbohydrates at a coffee shop. Our targets looked like they were out all night somewhere and, wherever that was, they needed hip waders and a very fast boat. In a community of commercial fishermen, heavy rubber boots at breakfast are pretty common, so our guys knew how to fit in. From a distance, they were both in their twenties and seemed a bit heavy. But we weren't that close. At this point it was sufficient just to spot them and keep an eye on their movements.

After breakfast they drove the Ford pickup back to their apartment where Mike and I were waiting. Mystery Renter had used this address to register the truck and a telephone, so we had time to find a good view of the front door and I got several pictures as they climbed to the second floor, tired looking, but in good spirits. Their apartment was just a few blocks from a small university and it was a good choice. There was a high turnover and students give little notice to odd schedules. I got a couple pictures of the men as they tramped in their heavy boots up to the second floor. After ten or fifteen minutes to allow them to turn in, I strolled by their truck in the lot and noted an industrial size vacuum cleaner in the back. We were following people who stayed up all night wearing hip waders and were clean about it. The vacuum cleaner was a good indicator of some kind of marihuana caper since moving large amounts of weed usually resulted in spillage and the better smugglers didn't leave any more evidence around than they had to.

Typical of many deals -- all investigative operations were "deals," such as "c'mon, we got

a deal” or “whose deal is this?” -- there was a plan, but no planning. Mike and I were supposed to go over to Orcas in the plane, but we were up in Bellingham at the apartment, miles from the airport. We had to shuffle equipment and belongings into the right car and switch people around so that Mike and the supervisor and the pilot and I ended up at the airport, while somebody else still covered the guys with the boat. Mike knew most about the case so he went to the island. I had no car and had signed out for the scope and shotgun so I went with him. Vance went because he knew how to fly the airplane and Neil went because he did whatever he pleased. Walt and Jim and the Blaine guys would cover things in Bellingham.

The three of us met Vance at the airport and I had my first ride in our new custom built, turbo-supercharged, Short Take-Off and Landing, Cessna. Several such aircraft had been built to DEA specifications to include a special high-frequency single side band radio with world-wide capabilities. However, with that world-wide radio and its antennas the plane wouldn't fly. Apparently, you had your choice of an airplane or a radio station. Since Vance was a pilot and not a disc jockey, he removed the radio until someone figured how to resolve the contradictory functions. The plane did have the car-to-car radios we used and it was a valuable asset when we had to follow someone or locate some remote farm or island. Vance was typical of our pilots, hired as undercover agents, but as the agency grew, their expertise was exploited and they worked full time flying. Each pilot had to be proficient in a variety of aircraft, usually something seized from some crook. Vance's own background was as a Viet-Nam Huey pilot and he was pretty good.

On the short hop to Orcas, I got to see Barnes which reminded me of a butcher knife with a small handle. A small cove was tucked underneath the handle and a reef of rocks flanked the cove like sword hilt. A little house overlooked the cove. We could afford only a quick look at the island lest we alert its residents to our interest. A few minutes later, we dropped into to a small strip at a resort on Orcas where we met one of the Customs Patrol Officers from the boat crew. We could walk from the airstrip to the dock.

U.S. Customs was established in 1789 when the priority of government was, as it is now, money. In those days Collectors of Customs Duties supported the Army, the Navy and the entire U.S. Government. Customs marched down through history collecting taxes and chasing smugglers and they did a reasonable job even though not a few Collectors failed to turn in all those duties. However, a few years before this, the responsibility for going after drug smugglers shifted to DEA. A Presidential Reorganization Plan transferred the cream of Customs Special Agents to a new agency to deal with domestic and international drug trafficking. It was one of those dramatic, quick-fix acts that was good for DEA, as yet unsettled for public policy, but bad for Customs. What was left was white-collar investigators and the uniformed branch, Customs Patrol Officers. CPOs were a bunch of special agent wannabes, recycled sky marshals and retired GIs, but not enough adult supervision. I cannot fault a one of them for their devotion to duty or their bravery, but criminal investigations required more than hormones to be successful. It was as if some NFL franchise lost its A and B teams and was left with bench warmers for the season.

(As a disclaimer, I should be point out that it is customary in law enforcement to criticize anyone not present. This applies to individuals, their offices or departments and to entire

agencies. Hours and days in automobiles, motel rooms and in airports quickly exhaust the exploration of common interests and current events, so talk quickly moves to complaining. You complain about the boss or the department and about prosecutors and defense attorneys and judges. The police complain about the sheriffs and the sheriffs complain about the State and everybody complains about the Feds who complain about the locals and absolutely everyone complains about the FBI. In drug enforcement, DEA agents complain about Customs and vice versa. Although racism and sexism were on their way out, it was still alright to dump on anyone out of the room.)

Three CPOs had motored up from Seattle in a thirty-six foot patrol cruiser and they set up shop in a time-share condo called Smuggler's Cove. All were past forty and looked and dressed like the retirees that they were. At least they didn't look like cops. The condo was a nice modern unit with its own kitchen and dock which would be handy if this thing went several nights. We commended them for willingness to sacrifice comfort and convenience for the needs of the service. I assured the officers that I would bring their devotion to duty to the attention of the Secretary of the Treasury personally.

We briefed them on the recent developments and asked them to drop Mike and me on the far side of the island next to Barnes. We suggested that it would be better if the people who we were watching did not know we were there. But the hull of the cruiser was emblazoned with "U.S. Customs" in twelve inch letters. Not cool at all. These islands were really just a small town and the fact that the Customs boat was even in these waters off-season was already being discussed at fuel docks and coffee shops, so we needed to tone down our visibility. They didn't like running a boat so obviously labeled, preferring the more attractive plainclothes image and would love to be rid of the sign. But to do so would be a violation of policy and regulation. One irony about the military mind is that it is unimpressed by danger and death, but liability for violating some rule is frightening. If someone else assumes the burden of responsibility, a soldier is happy to act. The CPOs happily fished out of the hold some spray cans of white paint and we all proceeded to obliterate the pride of Treasury Department official.

Almost casually, I asked if they had oars for the dingy that was lashed to the transom. Um, no. How are we going to row? Um, I don't know. We started looking around and found that the landscaping at the condo development included nautical memorabilia: pilings, rope, seashells, rocks, an anchor and two sun bleached oars. Without comment, Mike and I borrowed the oars and we cast off. The trip would be a simple peek and we'd be back for dinner, so we didn't bother with the night scope or the shotgun.

Fall is lovely in the San Juans. The weather is still mild and the days are long enough to always get warm. The six weeks between the tourists and the hard winds off the Gulf of Alaska make for a special time of year. Scoured by great glaciers out of the volcanic basalt eons ago, the islands form a maze of rocky bays, passes and coves; blue water and green hillsides that stretch for 150 miles into Canada. Once the home of irritable Indian fishermen, they had become a summer boaters' paradise and a permanent refuge for those who didn't mind a ferry schedule coming between them and the rest of the world.

It took about twenty minutes to cruise around to the far side of little Clark Island and we were all very upbeat. We had a big boat, and brand new airplane, lots of people and whatever might happen, we should have enough to go around. We stopped a few dozen feet from the little

island which offered no place for the patrol boat to tie up and only a opportunities for the dingy. The forest grew right up to the rocky drop that circled the island, but one spot might allow us to land the dingy. Mike stuffed the camera and lenses and a couple of portable radios into his backpack (one for DEA one for Customs) and we climbed down into the dinghy. Mike rowed the short distance to the little beach and we tied the boat well enough to prevent any incoming tide from carrying it away. The beach was really just a rocky shore and we had to climb up more rocks to reach the island proper. The Customs boat backed off a mile or two and Mike and I struck out through the woods to where we could see Barnes a few hundred yards to the west.

It was a scene out of a Washington State Tourist Bureau commercial. The sun had dropped behind Barnes and the water, rocks and trees were darkening under a still bright sky. A wisp of smoke drifted away from the small cabin in the still air. The water was a sheet of glass in front of us. Mike and I each got comfortable behind a tree to watch and to wait.

Soon awhile we saw a man in a black long sleeved shirt stroll down from the house to a little beach clogged with driftwood. He picked up some stones and skipped them out over the water, one at a time. Four rocks seemed to be the limit of his attention span, so he sat down in front of a log and gazed out over the water. A scene of pure tranquility: vacationer enjoying the solitude and beauty of the Great Pacific Northwest while two Government spies keep watch on him.

A radio crackled and Jim let us know that the men from the apartment were back at the "Lady Hamilton" and were launching it. The Customs guys acknowledged hearing what was up and they got out of the way.

Forty-five minutes later the sleek Skipjack cruised up the pass between the islands, slicing through the calm water and threw a heavy wake into quiet of our scene. Black Shirt had disappeared from the beach and when the boat came into view another man came out onto the deck of the house and waved. From the Skipjack's cockpit, two men, one in yellow and one in orange waved back. The Skipjack heeled over in a wide turn to make the little cove. It slowed, and the sound of the the engines dropping back to idle came to us an instant later. The sleek boat bumped up onto the beach and the engines cut, restoring the stillness. Yellow and Orange set bow and stern lines without any apparent urgency and then strolled up in the direction of the little house. We watched.

Whatever the popular image of the life of a narcotics agent, the reality was countless hours of surveillance. Dark interiors of automobiles, fatigue, discomfort, hunger and boredom pierced by intense intellectual and physical activity contrasted with the easy affluence of the high level meeting of drug traffickers. Surveillance went all the way from a simple "drive by" address check to see what cars were in a driveway to protracted periods of incarceration in a uncomfortably cold or hot van to lying in the woods in the middle of a picture postcard. Most of it involved sitting in an automobile though.

Usually you sit in a car in a rotten neighborhoods, and try to not be noticed by the neighbors or tossed by the cops or spotted by the crooks and you have to piss. The most uncomfortable hours in my life involve boredom, cold no place to go potty. (I have often wondered if the Government would ever do a health effects study on criminal investigators to find high instances of bladder diseases from holding water too long.)

But this time, we were relaxing in soft sweet grass, surrounded by spectacular scenery with no neighbors or nosey cops. We could piss whenever we wanted.

One of the "Lady Hamilton" subjects appeared out of the woods with a vee shaped board of some kind and he worked it up onto the boat and down the forward hatch. Two others were fooling with a tarp up by the house. There was nothing particularly remarkable about any of this, but Jim, back on the beach, insisted on a minute by minute description of what they were doing. I think one reason that Jim put me on the island with Mike was that Mike could get a little wild at times, especially when he got to sneaking through the woods. Jim relied upon me to act reasonably and not violate rights or procedures too badly.

Mike had been in the Special Forces in Vietnam and he told about laying still in the jungle on long patrols while the enemy searched for them, signaling each other by hitting sticks together. He penchant for close contact with the enemy translated well to police work and as a cop, he worked vice and narcotics. One time while planning an assault on a clandestine laboratory in the mountains everyone was wringing their hands about not knowing what was up there or how to get in when Mike's whispered voice came in on a portable radio describing the house and the layout. Without getting permission or even telling anyone, he had crept and crawled through the trees and bushes right up to the place to scope it out unseen and unheard. The close contact extended to his social life and Mike used his puppy dog eyes and cleft chin to maximum advantage. There in the woods, Mike was in his element and I was having a good time too.

Then, the whole weekend changed. A tan bundle bobbed out of the woods to the beach on the shoulder of one of the men. I think I said something like, "Ho-ly shit Mike they're walking down to the beach with big burlap bales." Mike didn't have the binoculars so his response was, "Oh bullshit." Catching someone actually loading dope was just too good to be true. "Here, look for yourself asshole, they're carrying big bales down to the beach," and I passed him the glasses. I got on the radio to Jim just barely suppressing my excitement to report that the crooks were loading bales onto the boat. I knew that Jim's first reaction would be just like Mike's. Jim just acknowledged my message without comment, probably think we were playing with him. Three of the men were now carrying bales to the beach, one at a time, where they dropped them in front of the boat.

Mike got on the radio and told Jim that the bales were exactly like the one that had come off a large seizure about six months before. On that deal, the Coast Guard came across into a dirt ball freighter with expired license plates making big circles in the Pacific. When they pulled him over to check the registration, they found thirty-seven tons of Colombian marihuana. Some of it had already been off-loaded and it and was never accounted for, so Mike concluded that this was part of that case.

All the years I had been on surveillances I had never really seen anyone DO something wrong. Usually it was something normal like open a door or pick up a plain looking suitcase which MEANT they were doing something wrong, but this time someone was really doing it. Right in front of us! These guys were smuggling dope! I bet thousands of investigators work their entire careers without every really seeing the crime committed and smuggling is especially hard to even detect let alone to witness. And I was taking pictures!

One at a time, more bundles arrived on the beach while Red Jacket sat on a rock with binoculars halfheartedly watching for boats and airplanes and narcotics agents. No one seemed

to be in much of a hurry. A harbor seal began doing some evening fishing in the water in front of us, looking at us and then ducking under the surface leaving ripples radiating outward. It was all very calm and very peaceful. For them. Mike would whisper urgently, "Lemme see the glasses," and I would take pictures. I would say, "Lemme see the glasses," and he would talk on the radio and we would both say, "oh shit, oh shit, oh shit." We had to be careful with the radio because sound can carry quite a ways across open water and our easy going smugglers didn't need to have their evening spoiled by hearing a "10-4, kshshst."

Bundles appeared, one at a time, from behind the cabin, sometimes on a shoulder, sometimes carried in front. As the accumulation of bales grew, I tried to keep count and snap photos and make radio calls. All the while, giggling with excitement. They then began using the vee-shaped board to push the bundles up onto and into the Lady Hamilton.

Mike and I had a ringside seat to crime and the guys in Bellingham later allowed that they thought we were just entertaining them with an imaginary narrative. Fooling around like that was not unheard of when things were not happening, but when I radioed that there were fourteen bales down on the beach and they were loading them on the boat, they realized that it was no joke and that we needed help. Jim immediately got on the phone for reinforcements.

This surveillance situation was now probably an arrest situation, but all Mike and I had was the camera and binos. The shotgun and our cuffs and other equipment were back at Smugglers Cove. As soon as we saw the bales start to come down to the beach, we radioed the Customs boat to get the hell back to the condo and get all our gear. Hopefully, our crooks would still be there in forty-five minutes. About the time our boat should have been on its way back, the plane relayed to us a message that the boat had swallowed some seaweed and it couldn't move. Murphy's law applies to all, but somehow our fine colleagues in their fine fast boat obeyed that law all too well. Mike had wanted to get a second boat up to the islands, but Customs couldn't get a crew together or find the right truck to pull it or some damn thing. We needed these guys here right now or the smugglers were going to get away, but they were cleaning kelp out of the cooler.

Our smugglers were under no such pressure though. They were on the beach posing for snapshots with a couple of their bales in front of the "Lady Hamilton." While we were ready to scream, they were playing tourist. I had shot up all our film and we were just watching now, waiting for help. Since the Skipjack was far faster than the Uniflite it was critical that we catch it on the beach. If the bandits got away from the island, they would be impossible to catch. Finally, Customs limped into radio range. Mike told the skipper to swing wide of Barnes, come around back of Clark, and pick us up. We'll just get in our boat and zip on over and arrest all those guys and take their dope and seize their boat and, as I once heard a couple of cops say, "be captains by midnight."

Mike and I stuffed our gear into his backpack and we made our way back through the woods to the dingy and stumbled in. I shoved off, scraping the bottom on the rocky beach. Mike rowed and I sat in the stern and we headed out towards the Uniflite which was bearing down on us.

What I saw next made me want to scream and cry all at once. The "Lady Hamilton" was rounding the north side of our island at top speed and turning in our direction. The crooks had probably been listening to our radio calls and now they were out of the bag.

At twenty-eight feet, the Skipjack was designed to get a party of fishermen from the marina to ocean fishing grounds before they got too hungry or too seasick or too drunk. To that end, two huge Volvo-Penta marine engines could push it to forty knots. In the calm water of an autumn evening, it could easily run circles around the Customs boat. In surveillance terms we were heated up and in serious danger of getting burned. The Skipjack was probably headed back to its trailer at the marina and Jim and the boys could take them off there. If they saw us in the dingy, they might make us for cops, and would be gone. We would be writing fugitive status reports for the rest of our careers. I crouched down in the dingy and radioed the Customs boat to get back, hoping we could go unnoticed. It was not to be. As Customs showed us their transom, the Skipjack turned toward our little dingy, bobbing in the water; ducks in a barrel. Twenty-eight feet versus eight feet and we would be driftwood. Frantically, we hid radios and bins and camera under the seats and I tried to come up with a story. What do you say to a guy when you are standing in his backyard on a Sunday evening, claim you are the meter reader? That had been tried, so we needed to do better. It was well after the tourist season and there just weren't very many other folks out on the water, so a lonely dingy with two men was quite odd.

In spite of the fact that Mike and I had little in common personally or professionally, at that moment we were on the same frequency. He dug his PPK out of the backpack and hid it in his pants and I made sure that my Magnum was concealed. As a guy who worked undercover a lot, Mike preferred the compact German 9mm, but I was of the traditional American revolver school. Even the two guns together, however, would not be of much use against a thick fiberglass hull. In any case, we wanted to arrest them, not kill them.

"Let's scam out way on board somehow, and then we can take them," somebody said. It was two-on-two and we had the guns. If we could just get in front of these two pirates on somewhat equal terms, we could take them into custody and drive away in their boat.

In making an arrest, it is critical to gain control of the situation. Pointing guns and acting official not enough.

The guns were only in case they had guns, so if they just resist we couldn't just shoot them, and if they ran away, we couldn't just fire a well aimed shot into the fuel tank which would turn their boat into a fireball. We needed to physically bring them under control with our own hands and moral authority, and they had to submit. That all required us to get from our little boat down here onto their big boat up there. It was going to be a neat trick.

The Skipjack drew closer and I could clearly see Red Jacket and Orange Jacket. The cockpit was set up high which, from our vantage, magnified its size and our sense of exposure. They throttled back and turned a little to present their side to us. Napoleon once said, "audacity, audacity, always audacity."

As soon as they got close, I hollered, "Did you hear a distress call?"

"What?" one replied looking surprised.

"Did you hear a distress call?" I repeated, a little more confidently, but stalling for time just the same. "We were ferrying camping gear over to that island and our boat took off. Maybe they heard a distress call. Did you hear one?"

"You're going camping on that island?" Red Jacket asked.

"Yes, did you hear a call?" The blank stares suggested that they were considering whether these campers were for real. These were the same two suspects that I had put into the apartment

earlier that day, but now they were smugglers -- felons, subject to arrest, prosecution and prison. They knew who they were too and our presence was obviously troubling. Orange jacket was heavy set with a bushy black moustache. In his watch cap, he could have been a hardworking fisherman instead of an international criminal. Yellow Jacket was younger and clean shaven, but he appeared just as dubious as his partner.

"Can we help you?" Red asked. Think fast. That Skipjack looked might big and the distance up to the gunwale would not allow either of us to simply vault onto their deck like some gymnast. They were numerically equal, but they had the physical advantage, as if they were behind a barricade or inside a big car. There was no ladder and unless they helped us up, we would stay right where we were. We needed to get them in a position where the physical arrangements were a bit more even. That meant the patrol boat, which was, at that moment, speeding out of sight. If I couldn't get Customs here, I would get the crooks there.

"Yeah, can you catch up with our boat and tell them to come back and pick us up?" But before we say anything else that might convince them to take us aboard, the Volvos gunned and the Skipjack took out after the Uniflite, leaving us, literally, in their wake. Boy that Skipjack was fast.

I worked the Customs radio out of the backpack and called the Uniflite skipper, a retired G.I. who managed to overcome his military training and became a pretty fair law enforcement Officer.

"Get ready, the Skipjack will come alongside," I radioed.

His voice crackled back, "Exactly what do you want us to do?" It was a good question. We were in different organizations and had different ways of doing things. It was a good idea to understand clearly what was expected of each other. I felt a little embarrassed at being so sloppy and I expanded on my message. "Arrest the crew on probable cause that they possess marihuana. Use your normal arrest procedures." I added that last part because in all the training I had, no one had ever told me how to arrest people in a boat. We trained with cars and houses and anything else we could think of, but boats? Nope. I was assuming that Customs officers should know how to do boat arrests. It seemed best just to give the instruction and let them work out the details.

The Skipjack dropped over the horizon and its wash was just a blur. I told Mike, half in jest, "They're going to shoot those guys" and he just chuckled. Out of our hands now. We kept busy juggling radios and keeping Jim and the plane advised. Vance and Neil had returned to Smuggler's Cove with Customs, had launched the Cessna, and were now orbiting at a discreet altitude. The idea of taking a smuggler's boat on the "high seas" was definitely a thrill and the further prospect of multiple arrests and a big seizure made our little boy hearts glad. This was really fun!

Jim had not been idle at the Marina. He had gone to the local Coast Guard station and they got clearance to respond with one of their boats.

Mike and I could see two blurs in the distance that were the Skipjack and the patrol coming together. They were so far away, the only engine noise was Vance's Cessna circling high above. Once again it was a peaceful Sunday evening with the water lapping softly against our wooden hull surrounded by a canvas of emerald green and deep blue.

Then the Volvos in the Skipjack scream back at throttles shoved to maximum, followed immediately by the flat whop-whoppity-whop-whop-whop so distinctive of gunshots. A Customs voice broke through on the air, an octave higher with, "We identified ourselves and told them to heave-to and they fled, so we fired into their engine compartment! They are now proceeding south and we are in pursuit." The screaming engine quickly receded as the Skipjack easily outdistanced the heavier Uniflite. But not the Cessna. Vance later described, with some satisfaction, the looks of shock on Red and Orange, in their cockpit, having just been shot at, as the Cessna came diving at them out of heaven. "We were so close, they were ducking every time we went over and Neil would have shot them if he could have gotten the window open." But at the time, we couldn't see any of that. Only the slow rising and falling of the Cessna's supercharged engine and the occasional flash of his strobe told us that Vance was buzzing the prey.

Soon, it was completely quiet, and there we still were in our little boat with no way home. Our big plan to snap up a bunch of international drug traffickers and to seize their boats and take their dope had just disappeared in a volley of shots and a mad chase away from us. The crooks now had every chance of getting away and our job had just gotten harder. As the saying goes, we had just snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. But wait a minute! There's only two of them back on the island and there's two of us and we got the guns and a boat. The only thing between us was a couple hundred yards of calm water.

"What do you say we go take those guys, Mike?" We had a boat and now we had the advantage. He didn't even respond. He just started rowing. I would rather have done the rowing, but Mike was a real take charge guy and it was his case. Case agents are always expected to row and it was no time for discussion. So, he rowed and I the radios and relaying the progress of the chase between the plane and Customs who had different radios. I also had to keep Jim informed who seemed to want an update every minute or so. In only about five minutes, the chase had rounded an island and we lost touch with that drama. It was about half a mile to the island and it should take about fifteen minutes. In the dusk they might not even see us.

But, everything had been going too well for too long because one oar, which had started the day as part of someone's garden, snapped its oarlock. The oar became my paddle and our progress slowed substantially. Paddling was less efficient than rowing, so even though we both worked hard, the boat yawed wildly and when we didn't zig-zag, we circled. Just when we would begin making way, the radio would crackle and one of us would have to talk while the other attempted to get pointed in the right direction. Then Mike's oarlock broke and we went from half inefficient, to totally inefficient. We paddled and bitched and talked on the radio and spun around in circles. The scene could have been used as a skit for school children showing the importance of cooperation. I would say do this and Mike would say no do that and I would say do something else and he would have a better idea. In any case it took us about half and hour to go one hundred yards.

We were making our way (sort of) through some rocks on the north side of our island and we could see the light from the house. Our goal was in sight. I looked up and was stunned to see our Skipjack speeding back to Barnes. They got away! How could that happen? We last saw them going the other directions. The balance of power had once again shifted calling for yet

another change of plans. Mike and I quickly agreed that we would wait right here in the safety of the rocks until help arrived. There was no sense in continuing into open water where the Skipjack wouldn't even bother now to ask us what we were up to. Having been shot at probably changed their points of view toward us.

Jim radioed that he had gotten the Coast Guard going after the Skipjack, but the chase was too far gone for them to be of any real help. Then a new voice with a Customs call sign came on the air and officiously announced that he would commandeer a boat and assist us. More lifers following that old axiom, "Do something, even if it is wrong." When I informed Jim of this, his groan came through loud and clear. Jim didn't like it when things were out of control and things were way out of control. Customs and the plane were on a wild goose chase to the south, the crooks on the island were alerted to our presence, Mike and I were all alone and very vulnerable and now some cowboy was commandeering a purse seiner. There had even been shooting.

Jim had given the Coast Guard one of our radios and at first told them to find us and pick us up, and then to join the chase, and then to go pick us up. That required a lot of "say agains" and "rogers" and "overs." I could only imagine how this must sound to the crooks, who were obviously monitoring everything we said.

I couldn't figure out why I could no longer hear the patrol boat or the plane when the boat they were chasing had just come back. They must be following the wrong boat. The Coasties couldn't understand who was who or what they were supposed to be doing. Everything had fallen apart, everyone was in the wrong place, and the crooks were going to get away.

One of the things you learn at nark school is to plan cases and to have enough people to be safe. You don't just go disappearing off someplace undercover like they do on TV, you don't just run up on a house and kick the door and you don't go floating around in the dark in tiny boats. We didn't have a life jackets or handcuffs or a flashlight or anything. At one point I got so frustrated at not being able to reach the Customs boat, I took their radio and started changing the settings and calling out. In about a minute I was talking to their comm center in San Francisco who was just as confused as everyone else. Customs had a great radio system with a thousand mile range, but our oars were broken.

But the DEA radio was beginning to work a little better as the Coast Guard got closer. I talked to the Coastie and realized that he was actually in a boat. I got him vectored in our direction and instructed him to pick up the guys in the dingy. The hesitation in his messages was explained when he asked if the guys in the dingy were good guys or bad guys. Uh, good guys. I'm the one in the dingy. Oh. With no light we would have a tough time finding us. He was running without lights, so we couldn't see him, and he sure couldn't see us. He asked me if I could see a flashing light on the water.

"Well that's the fisherman whose net we just ran over." "Affirmative, now we see you," I radioed back.

From the direction of Barnes we could hear the Skipjack's engines racing up and sputtering. We figured that he had taken some vital hits and was trying to effect repairs before he ran. I pictured frantic efforts to evacuate the smuggler base, to fix the engines and to flee into Canada before the trigger-happy Feds found them. We had to get there soon.

Then Mike saw the outline of a boat with a high superstructure. The forty-one foot cutter

was totally blacked out and we paddled out beyond the rocks that were protecting us. He got closer, making almost no noise, until a figure in a baseball cap on the prow calmly spoke.

"Move around to the stern, it's easier to board there," as if we were just a couple of scissorbill boaters out of gas (which we were). We bumped up against the steel hull and then, hand over hand, we worked our way around to the stern nearer the deep murmur of the engines. We passed up the painter and Mike's pack to other dark figures and then climbed up one at a time. It was right out of some war movie where the Navy plucks a couple of resistance fighters out of the North Sea. It was just unreal.

I was first with a greeting: "Where's the skipper?"

"Right here." replied a silhouette.

Here we were, with three guys we can't even identify and we had to figure a way to get them to help us without killing someone. My military training did teach me that decisiveness and self confidence went a long way on short notice. Mike didn't usually try to take command. He just did it and if anyone followed, so much the better. I think I was most concerned with screwing up and we needed to take command somehow.

"Do you have firearms?" I asked.

"Yes sir!" replied the skipper shape.

"OK, we are going to arrest some people over on Barnes Island. We have probable cause to believe they possess marihuana. We only use our weapons for defense. We don't shoot anyone trying to run away." I had never worked with the Coast Guard before and I just didn't know what their training was. When you meet a cop for the first time you are pretty sure he or she has had basic arrest and firearms training and can rely on them for simple police work. All I needed was for some eighteen year-old to blow away a crook in an adrenalin rush. I don't think Mike even considered it.

I suggested that we just tie the dingy off to the stern because we didn't have time to haul it aboard. The skipper spoke one short sentence and it happened. Mike and I went to the bridge where a soft glow from the instrument panel understated the tremendous power of the vessel. The "forty-one" is two huge engines in a heavy steel hull made for work under the worst imaginable conditions. An Bosun's Mate and two crewmen run copies of this vessel on coasts, rivers and bays all over the U.S. and they spend much of their time at lifesaving duties. The berthing space below is more for victims of the sea than for the comfort of the crew, and about a mile of wrist-thick nylon hawser is coiled on the deck to drag hapless vessels out of danger and back into port. The Coast Guard must be able to respond to a laundry list of missions from lifesaving to vessel inspections to fisheries patrol to pollution to catching smugglers. Tonight they had to shift gears and be policemen. Each "Coastie" wore a .45 in a leather holster on a pistol belt in a configuration that had changed little since Douglas MacArthur was issued his at the Turn of the Century. Each man also carried a small yellow his overboard kit on his belt. Their blue utility uniforms and baseball caps gave them a simple and confident appearance, even in the dark.

I had often observed that the "prettiness" of a policeman, was in inverse proportion to the amount of police work he did. It seems like hardworking, effective cops don't have the time or the need to dress up their uniforms with patches and pins and buckles and straps that appear in some departments. New York police officers are much more drab looking than some rural

sheriff's deputy. When you are the best at what you do, you don't need to dress up. With a couple thousand horses and several tons of steel under our feet, I felt like we were on our way back to winning this one. It's not over until it's over.

The skipper, who introduced himself as John, pushed the throttles forward and we made for the island. Mike briefed him as to what had happened and what we hoped to do. Our only points of reference were the light from the cabin and the anchor light from the Skipjack. A soft word from John and the two crewmen quickly broke out some flares from lockers somewhere in the darkness. The flares were designed to fire when a safety pin was removed and then they were struck against the deck. A rocket shot high into the air where it ignited and floated slowly to sea under a little parachute.

It only took about two minutes for us to reach Barnes and we were completely blacked out. To hide our approach, John kept the speed down. Soon, we were sliding into the small cove with the rocky reef on our left and a bluff on our right.

As we entered the little cove Mike started saying, "Get in a little closer," while I said, "any time now." I wanted to shoot the flares and Mike wanted to sneak some more.

"Get in a little closer."

"Any time now."

The skipper did his own thing and we continued at dead slow. Then the Skipjack's anchor light moved and it began to swing around.

"Get in a little closer."

"Any time now."

Without any warning at all, John hit his floodlights and police siren, whoop whoop whoop! and a crewman smacked his flare against the steel deck, bang, swoosh! Night was now day and the gangbusters were here!

On the bridge of the Skipjack was Red Jacket, but without his red jacket, and even in the eerie light of the flare and floodlights he looked different than the man who had offered to help us an hour before, but I could see that his face was expressionless, beyond disbelief. Mike and I both started screaming official things like "Federal Agents" and "Heave to" and "Stopmotherfucker!" I'm sure that John did some kind of Coast Guard thing on his loudspeaker, but I wasn't listening. Mike walked around the wheelhouse of the cutter on the narrow walk way towards the bow and I followed. We had our guns out, but only because we always did that in an arrest, but usually arrests were on dry land where we didn't have to hang on to avoid drowning.

Suddenly, the cutter cut to starboard and slammed into the Skipjack just forward of the cockpit. The Skipjack shook from the impact and the cutter's heavy steel bow scraped along the side towards the stern. The boats would be this close only a few more seconds and the next thing happened without thought: Mike and I jumped from the Coast Guard cutter into the air towards the Skipjack. I stumbled and fell to my hands and knees on the bow as the cutter went by and my only light came from the parachute flare. I got to my feet and scrambled along the walkway around to the cockpit.

The cockpit was empty because Mike had tackled Red Jacket and they were down on the main deck in the stern, but we were still moving out into the darkness of the cove. Step number one in any raid, or boarding, I suppose, is to secure the premises. Find everyone there and get

them under control. A favorite trick of instructors in basic training is to hide a role player in a closet or under a bed to ambush careless agents. Indeed, there were actual instances of officers being surprised after they thought a house or apartment was safe. Concerned that there were more people on board, I went through into the cabin below and stood up on about four burlap bales piled in the companionway. I remember thinking, "This boat is seized!" But the boat was still out of control and I had to get onto the shore with the Coasties so that we could continue this raid. Mike and I were having a good old time jumping on boats, but it was time to get back into the game and take charge.

My dad once owned a boat, a little smaller than the Skipjack, and I got competent, but no more, at using the one rudder and one screw in turning and backing. I knew that when you have a throttle quadrant you push the handle forward to go forward and pull it back to go in reverse. In the middle is neutral. The two screws on the Skipjack made things a little easier, because you use can the two engines together and in opposition to steer. I had never run a big set of twins like this, but I knew the principle. There is another principle that applies in boating which involves patience, caution and care. The first principle I remembered, the second, I forgot.

Mike was on the deck frantically wrapping jacketless red jacket in about thirty feet of anchor line because he had no cuffs. Under floods from the cutter, the Coasties were on the beach yelling urgently. I was in the cockpit of this big, powerful boat and I needed to get it ashore. I had just jumped from a United States warship with a gun in my hand, across to a fleeing smuggler and now I must get to the beach! I saw those throttles and remembering what I was told about steering a twin engine boat, I stood over the helm and the throttle quadrant and took one silver handle in each hand. Feeling the vibration of the Volvos, I shoved both throttles forward smartly. The engines jumped to life with a roar, but not the boat. All I heard was a chomp chomp chomp chomp. I pulled the throttles immediately back to idle, but we were still off the beach. I shoved the throttles forward again and got more Chomp chomp chomp chomp when I heard Mike and the bandit yelling at me that I was up on the rocks. We had drifted toward the rocky bluff and the screws were catching the bottom. I realized then that I was much too excited and needed to calm down.

I took my hands off the throttles and made two fists for a few seconds and then remembered that second principle. I took the throttles again, this time softly and carefully. The Skipjack responded as designed and it swung around until I could nose it up on the gravel beach.

I moved the handles to idle and switched off the key. Not wanting to leave a perfectly good boat for someone else to use, I pocketed the key which hung from a red and white foam float. I ran to the bow and swung down from the railing, now at least six feet above the beach.

To my left, lights blazed down from the cutter and John stood on the prow, hands on his hips, .45 still strapped to his side. One of John's crew was in a combat crouch aiming his .45 with both hands at another suspect about three feet away. The target was wearing rubber waders and was on his knees, hands behind his head. He was paying very close attention to the Coastie with the .45. With a suspect in custody on the boat and another being covered on the beach, my first response was to get up to the house and find more suspects, but I realized that I had no gun. I had a gun when I jumped from the cutter a minute ago, but not any more. I looked in my belt and it wasn't there. I know I didn't drop it. Where could it be? I was truly puzzled. But I had to have a gun and this Coastie had one.

I grabbed for the .45 leveled at the wide-eyed man in hip waders and ordered the wide-eyed Coastie, "gimme your gun."

"No man I can't!" he protested and I let go. But I still didn't have a gun. I need a gun. I am a nark and I have to have a gun.

"Gimme your gun!" I ordered and grabbed for it again.

"No man I can't!"

I realized that this guy must have had long standing strict orders about never surrendering his piece, except upon death, and he was not going to give it to me. I can only imagine what the guy on his knees thought.

Then I remembered. I ran back to the beached Skipjack, swung up onto the bow and regained the cockpit. There was my Magnum right where I had left it, next to the throttles. Now I had my gun, now I was a cop again.

I ran back to the beach past Mike who was trying to get his prisoner, all tied up, down off of the boat. He can take care of that. I'm going after that house. I ran back to the Coastie who still had his gun, and told him that I wanted to get up to the house. John, up on the cutter, said he would watch the prisoner and told my new partner to go along.

The trail off the beach was obvious, but we had to be careful since the floods cast deep shadows that could conceal hazards and enemies. The light from the cabin guided us to a little porch and a screen door. I reached down into my diaphragm for my best stick-em-up voice and announced "Federal Agents" and pushed the door open with my foot. There was no need to force entry because the door was ajar.

Inside was a clutter of furniture, clothing, sleeping bags and food, all illuminated by a single gas lantern. On a couch sat a dark haired fat guy who seemed resigned to our arrival.

"Get your hands up and don't move!"

"I'm not moving!" replied the fat man emphatically.

While keeping one eye on him, I quickly checked adjoining rooms which might conceal more enemies. The Coastie came in right behind me and I thought I would use his presence to my advantage. "This man is a member of the United States Coast Guard and he is scared as hell, so don't do anything sudden!"

"That's right!" shouted my Coastie, in complete agreement.

"OK!" shouted the fat man, eager to cooperate. We were all shouting.

The house had two small bedrooms and a kitchen off the living room and all were a total mess, but empty of any other humans. One bedroom was completely lined with clear plastic sheeting. Smugglers liked to line their boats and vehicles with plastic to catch any debris that leaked. This was the first time I had seen this technique applied to an entire room.

My main worry was how many bandits were on this island. If some desperate character decided to contest our presence here he could make history by shooting us all from the darkness. And we would have to take some of the responsibility because we did not have enough people to do what we were doing. Fat man was about thirty and looked good and worried, but anyone in custody could be a problem until he was searched and cuffed. I got him to his feet and checked him for weapons, which was relatively easy since he was wearing just slacks and a black tee shirt. I told him who I was and asked him how many people were on the island and he said he didn't know. I'm sure I told him he was under arrest too, but I had other worries. I grabbed his

moist shirt and pulled my face close.

"OK, now this is real important. Are there any guns on this island?" He looked up at me and seemed to relax as he told me, no. No more questions. The courts were real funny about questioning crooks in custody and my rule of thumb was just not to ask any questions. If they want to confess, let them, but don't ask any questions.

Mike came in from the beach, just as excited as I was, and after he took a turn through the cabin he joined me. I told him what fat man said guns on the island, but Mike didn't appear comforted. Our Coastie took fat man, hands on his head, down to the beach and Mike and I had a moment to make some plans.

I got on the radio to Jim, who by this time was going wild because he hadn't heard from us for about a half hour. I told him we had three suspects and a boat and some dope in custody and we needed him and the other agents over here right now.

He said that was fine, but that we had the Coast Guard cutter and they had no way get over. I suggested to Mike that I take the prisoners and the cutter to Bellingham while he stayed and secured the island. He couldn't do it by himself and one of us was needed to handle the prisoners, so we would need one of the Coasties to stay with Mike. We went to the cutter and conferred with John. John agreed to transport the prisoners and to leave one of his men behind. The Coasties set about getting three smugglers, aboard the cutter.

As things calmed down, we noticed that there was an inflatable boat with a big outboard on the beach. I told Mike and John that I thought we ought to disable it somehow, in case anyone else on the island tried to escape. John spoke briefly and a young Coast Guardsman grinned as he walked over to the boat pulling out his knife. I told Mike I would keep the keys to the Skipjack, but he said, "No, give them to me." I had figured that the best way to insure against escape was to cut off the island, but I didn't want to argue.

I scrambled aboard the cutter to find that the second crewman had bound the prisoners' hands behind them with plastic cuffs and were trying to figure where to put them. They didn't want to put them in the cabin because it might not be safe if the cutter sank and besides it was hot down there and they would probably puke. However they could not be out on deck without a life preserver. We couldn't cut the cuffs off to put life the preservers because we didn't have enough cuffs so I suggested that we just wrap the preservers around them and we would keep a close eye on them on deck. That seemed OK so we wrapped them up and seated them on the deck with their backs to the bridge.

John backed the cutter off the beach and I waved to Mike before we headed out into the night, this time under full running lights. Once underway the remaining crewman opened a big ledger in the bridge and turned on a little light and got my name and Mike's name and he attempted to summarize what the hell just happened. We hadn't even bothered to ask the names of the prisoners, and wouldn't until we got them to jail, so they went into the log as John Doe One, John Doe Two and John Doe Three.

My fat man from the cabin began fidgeting and I leaned down to find out what was going on. He complained that his cuffs were to tight and that he had an injured shoulder and was in some pain. It is not unusual for first time handcuffers to get a little enthusiastic so I checked the other prisoners and found them to be appropriately bound. But fat man was pretty tightly tied and I decided to take him below, cut off the one-time, nylon ties and resecure him. I instructed

the crewman to watch the other two, then pulled fat man up. He kicked and struggled on the steel deck until he gained his feet and I coaxed him down the companionway to the berth in the fo'c'sle. I put him down on his stomach and then realized that I had nothing to cut off the cuffs. I left him there and went back up to deck to get something from the Coasties. One gave me his knife.

A better tool would have been a set of wire cutters, but with a few sawing cuts, Fat man's hands came away from each other like a ripe sausage. He groaned and moaned and whimpered and I sympathetically rubbed his shoulders a moment in the bouncing cabin before ordering him to assume the position. I secured him again with the cutter's last pair of plastic cuffs and I got him back up on the deck and seated him on deck. The night was cool, but in the lee of the cabin it wasn't so bad. Every once in awhile I leaned down and rubbed his shoulder and he whimpered and I assured him we would be off this boat soon.

One thing I always tried to do was to be kindly to prisoners. In drug cases you always tried to develop more informants and a little courtesy and understanding helped encourage a cooperative attitude. Maybe the guy wouldn't talk to me, but he might talk to the next agent he met. So I made an effort to bring this guy along.

In about an hour we slowed and turned into the brightly lit fishing harbor at Bellingham. Throttled back so as not to throw a wake, John deftly maneuvered the forty-one past all the fishing piers. It was ten on a Sunday night, but dozens of people lined the dock under the lights, watching us with some interest. Apparently the word got out and the curious had gathered. Bellingham is a small town and word that the Coast Guard is up to something gets around fast. Besides there had been a shooting and a chase and lots of excitement. When I saw my fellow agents and policemen gathered at the public dock, I needed to do this right. A gesture was called for, so I walked out onto the bow of the cutter. I stood up straight and taking off my baseball cap, I held my arms out wide in mock acceptance of imaginary cheers of adulation for the conquering hero. Nobody cheered though.

The cutter bumped up against a float and the crew tied it off quickly, but no one came down to meet us and carry me on their shoulders.

"The gate is locked, open the gate!" called Walt from behind the security fence. My triumph would have to wait until I walked to the top of the ramp and let my fans through. Agents and police officers surged past me to the cutter.

Vance was there and I asked him, "Where in the hell is Customs? Where have you guys been?"

"We chased the "Lady Hamilton" down to Whidbey Island and they found it up on the beach. We're still looking for the crooks."

Astounded I replied, "You mean this is a second boat?"

"Yeah, you should have seen it! We finally lost them in the dark and I finally got the Coast Guard to send a chopper over from Port Angeles to use their spot light. They're the ones who found the boat on the beach. I guess Customs is down there now."

"Shhhhhh! Here come the prisoners." My three smugglers were being led up the ramp to the dock by policemen and agents and more agents and cops with shotguns and a police dog

crowded past them to the cutter. They would be on their way to Barnes within minutes to complete the securing of the island with Mike.

I offered to Jim to stay with the prisoners and to get them booked and to start the paperwork. There was much to be done. Three people were in custody, two more were running, and who knows how many others there were. Vehicles and boats had to be seized and searched, we needed a search warrant for the island; we were still in the middle of this deal and it was going to be a long night. Jim sent me along in a car to meet my new friends at the county jail where we would keep them until we got them to court. The Whatcom County Courthouse was built at the turn of the century and, like most courthouses of the era, housed the jail was on the top floor. From outside, you pick up a phone and call jailer who sends the elevator down for you. On the top floor, you exit the worn and noisy elevator car into a lobby of steel bars.

Part of my job involved going to lots of jails and I always got a kick at being able to come and go with ease in so many different institutions where almost everyone else is there to stay. I had been to state prisons, county jails, federal penitentiaries, city lockups and jails, and even a couple in foreign countries. Jails ran the whole spectrum from state of the art, to positively medieval. My job allowed me to enter the world of jail, stone and steel, sadness and stink. TV and movies never quite capture the detail of any prison: the grime and peeling paint, the din of shouted orders, protests and slamming doors, and the overwhelming sense of sadness. To be one of the keepers in this world is to be a nobleman in a feudal society; you come and go as you please, while the rest toil in bondage. It is also a kick to step off an elevator with someone in cuffs and to get buzzed through gates and doors to the booking desk. Like a hunter parading into camp with his kill.

The County Jail was designed to confine a few dozen men in safe, if not comfortable, boredom. Misdemeanants served short sentences, and a few felons awaited trial or transfer to prison. For anyone arrested, it was the first stop in the criminal justice system (neither justice nor a system, but definitely criminal). At best, it is just a place to post a bond, (by writing a check or plopping down a credit card) before returning to normal life or, at worst, the beginning of many many years of stripped sunlight.

As county jails go, it was archaic, but typical. The public lobby is steel bars in front and to the left with an ancient church pew serving as a waiting room. There are the usual notices and posters admonishing against introducing weapons or drugs into the jail, announcing visiting hours and policies, and cautioning drivers against drinking. Persons conducted their business with the staff as they would with any other county employees, speaking in the raised octave of supplication with the added stress of the situation, except they do it through bars. Admission through the heavy gate to the jail offices is by electric lock operated only from inside. The bars and walls bore layers of paint, the most common color being institutional green. And everywhere were signs of updating for power, communications and staffing. In this jail, everything after one telephone line was an update.

The lockup was reached from behind the bars by an airlock arrangement, where persons were admitted to a short hallway, locked in, and then a second door was opened to the cells. Both doors could not be opened at once, but there were no electric locks; this part of the jail still being original construction. The jailer unlocked a narrow steel cabinet from his ring of

oversized keys, and he pulled on a long handle which opened the appropriate door in another room. The sound was one thing the movies got right: shshshs-clanggggg! this particular mechanism bore the same manufacturer's name as the one I had seen at Alcatraz a week before.

Into this museum of penology we brought our catch, fresh from the sea, the fruit of an extemporaneous amphibious raid. Flares and flood lights, guns, shouted orders, plastic handcuffs, cold dark boat ride, back seat of a strange car and now bricks and bars from another time; our prisoners must have been pretty stunned. As we stepped off the elevator, a Canadian woman was attempting to post bail through the bars for her husband and she was being told that he could not be released before Monday morning. One thing that jail saw a lot of, was British Columbia residents who took advantage of the more liberal liquor laws in Washington and took it too far. But no drunk drivers for us. We've got international drug smugglers here, by golly.

We held up gold badges to the uniformed officer and he hit a button that released the gate to "the inside." Unimpressed by our arrival, the overworked officer just pointed to a wooden bench where we were to place our charges. I asked for some wire cutters for the plastic cuffs and he dug them out of a drawer without looking. Once released, our bandits rubbed their wrists and sat down in some relief. One man started to speak to another and I sharply ordered both of them to sit apart and no talking. There was no sense in letting them cook up a story right away.

Once while working the airport detail, we picked up a cocaine courier from Key West, Florida. He was a nice looking young man and gave us no trouble, other than lying about his destination. We had two cars, but only two agents to take him to jail, so I belted him in my front seat, cuffed of course, while the other agent, new to our office, followed me. It's best to have two agents in one car for a prisoner, but in a pinch, you can handle one prisoner this way. On the way to the jail my prisoner tentatively began asking about our destination. What's it like?

"Oh, it's no picnic," I said, "but it's not horrible. It's boring more than anything else. You'll find the officers professional and reliable and there's nothing to worry about. All those stories you hear about homosexuality and how younger inmates are harassed and raped are just not true. I mean they can't possibly be true. Those things are invented by yellow journalists and bitter convicts and do gooders. Don't worry, those things are all made up. Think about it, does all that seem really possible?" He spent the last ten minutes of the ride silently.

In the jail garage, my partner joined us and we used the elevator that runs only between the basement and the jail on the top floor. We locked our guns in the boxes and pocketed the removable keys. The first steel door ka-chunked open for us. When that one slammed shut, a another door into the booking lobby opened electrically. We could see the deputy in a eerily lit control booth, arms outstretched over his console of lights and buttons like an church organist. As we passed through the second door, a black man about six foot six and two-eighty was standing with his knuckles on the booking counter. A deputy typed intently on his computer terminal behind the counter. The giant toward us and just glowered with yellow eyes at me and my prisoner. I saw a man under arrest and angry at the whole system, but my defendant saw only the yellow eyes.

"One for the U.S. Marshal." I announced cavalierly to the deputies.

"We'll get to him in just a minute," replied the booking officer. "Step into my office and have a seat." He touched a hidden button and the door to a small holding cell ku-chunked open. I unhooked the nice young man from Key West and as he rubbed his wrists he saw that there was

a human being unconscious on the floor of the cell. The deputy called to my prisoner, "Don't step on my friend, now. He doesn't feel too well right now," Key West, with obvious misgivings, stepped inside and took the corner seat on the steel bench, hands folded between his knees.

I couldn't resist. In my pocket, I had a little Marine Band harmonica, which I had learned to play by the numbers, and I whipped it out and started with "Home, Sweet Home." The strains of "May it ever be so humble..." echoed off the jail walls as the doors ku-chunked behind us. My partner, who had just transferred in from several years in Southeast Asia, thought I was the sickest sucker he had met in a long time and would be happy to work with me some more.

I always hated being identified with doing paperwork well. Saying an agent was good on paper was like describing a blind date as having a great personality. There were things unsaid. I was never intimidated by reports and forms and had the attitude that if you want paper, I'll give you paper. But I paid for that ability. The agents who had given us rides to the County Jail left almost immediately to raid a farm connected to our smugglers so I was left to fill out forms since I was good on paper.

The jailer showed me the captain's office where we could sit down like civilized people and begin the process of formally denying these men their freedom. "You, in here." Step one: advise the prisoner of his rights. "Do you understand your rights? Do you waive them? No? Fine. But you have to answer the questions on this form. They relate to your identification and how to find you if you jump bail. I can't make you answer them, but if you don't it will influence your ability to make bail. Kay?" Everyone got the same speech.

It was the usual name, rank, serial number and everything else. My first customer was the man in hip waders who had watched me and the Coastie discuss his .45. He turned out to be the Boston burglar who had rented the island. He provided the phony he had used on his rental papers, but I put it in the space anyway. Filling out the Personal History Form was always a good way to break the ice with people and sometimes they gave up a little more information. He wanted to talk to a lawyer first. OK, fine.

Contestant number two was the fat man from inside the cabin, an Italian from Connecticut who sounded like the guy from Boston. He could explain everything. He was invited out the Pacific Northwest by his friend to do some camping so he jumped on a plane and came right out. When he got out to the island he discovered to his horror that they were running drugs! Well there was no way to get off the island and he just got scooped up with the rest. I assured him that we would straighten everything out.

My last customer was from Nevada, but his wife lived near Boston. He wanted to talk to a lawyer. Boston again.

When I was done with number three, numbers one and two had been decked out in grey coveralls and slippers and each was carrying a thin mattress. We had asked the jailer to keep them separate and he was able to accommodate us. One and two were admitted through the airlock arrangement and he started booking number three. I thanked the officer for his help and would he buzz me out. "You can't leave until I get this last guy put away, I'm the only one here." Welcome to county jail. Number three was treated to a private room since there were only two cell blocks and his buddies were already in there.

Just as we were putting him away, off the elevator stepped Neil and Vance and a pitiful

looking little man who was shivering. "Look what we found!" Neil beamed." The police dog caught him up a tree and is he ever cold."

The subject was pretty friendly and grateful for warmth and safety. He said that when we started shooting at the island he went up a tree and he was afraid to come down. All he wanted to do was get warm again. He was from Boston also.

After the forms, number four got his slippers and mattress and because of the high demand for private rooms, that evening, had to go into the block with one of his partners. Let them cook up a story, see if I care. Now can I leave? Not just yet.

The deputy had a prisoner who had sawed off his new bride's head. He had gotten a court order allowing him to have a tape recorder to help in preparing his case. But the tape recorder was disturbing the other prisoners and the jailer had to get it back for the night. Could we help? The Blue Knight's eyes lit up as if he was told his mother had just dropped off some cookies and he rubbed his hands together in anticipation of more fun.

The officer got his ring of big flat brass keys and the four of us went down the narrow hallway lined with heavy steel doors. Each door had a peep hole and a square slot for a meal tray. The officer opened the peephole and softly told the killer that he was coming in to get the tape recorder. Quickly, he pulled open the door and ducked inside. In an instant, he popped right out clutching the recorder and slammed the door before any of us could move. But as soon as the door closed an animal scream erupted from the cell and echoed along the corridor. A hairy arm thrust out of the tray slot like the trunk of an angry elephant grabbing for anything it could reach. Neil had been primed for some sort of violent contact, and as a substitute swatted at the arm until it returned to the cell. We all laughed and the officer just sighed. It was six hours until he went home.

It was past midnight, but as they say at parties, the evening was young yet. My adrenal glands had spent themselves in the leap from the cutter and, just like a drug rush, it was followed by a crash. All I wanted to do was lay down and sleep for about two days. However, such personal considerations were never an issue when there was a case still to be made. We needed search warrants for the island and the farm and the apartment, the defendants had to go to court, and the men from the Skipjack were still missing. Dope and boats and trucks and trailers, had to be seized and stored and paper, paper, paper.

Search warrants are the sine qua non of drug enforcement. The Constitution required them, our manual required them, the prosecutors and judges required them and the community and the press required them. No warrant, no case. No case, no credit. No credit, no promotions, and so on. Putting four mopes in jail in jail for the night was just the first step.

In those days, agents usually pecked away at typewriters hoping to get a legible affidavit and warrant that had all the proper verbiage. One mistake in language or useage or an improper form could kill your case. Once typed, the paperwork had to be taken to a judge who, hopefully, signed everything and we could go about our work. In Seattle in the 70s we were spoiled. Our AUSAs would meet us at the courthouse and even get their secretaries out of bed to make sure we did everything right.

Jerry was the lead dope prosecutor and he drove up from Seattle on a Sunday night to start the paperwork. He was a career prosecutor, quite unlike the whiz-kids getting tickets

punched for their legal careers. He liked to be in on the kill as much as his position allowed. It helped him understand the case if he was present to see what was found where and who was found with what. Most of all he liked being a prosecutor. Since then prosecutors have been asked to act more like lawyers and less like avengers, so now they stay in the office.

Jerry was a hot dog, but he sure didn't look like one. He was portly, wore glasses, and most of the time careless in dress. Even though he was an Army Reservist he always needed a haircut. Once, during a series of particularly notorious cases, Jerry convinced his boss to convince my boss that the prosecutors should carry guns and this is not unheard of in when lawyers are threatened by defendants. Dr. No, wanted to accommodate the United States Attorney, but was leery about giving them guns. What the hell, give them the junkers that don't work, when they find out what a pain it is to fix them, they will drop the issue. As one of the firearms officers I got out two or three old revolvers and signed them over to the U.S. Attorney's Office. Wouldn't you know it, the lawyers went and got them fixed. Jerry started showing up with a thirty-eight at his side. His love handles, accustomed to hanging freely over his belt, pushed the butt out at a ludicrous angle. But Jerry was a tiger and you forgive many things in exchange for an enthusiastic prosecutor. Who cares if they have political ambitions or aspire to be partner? Just take my case!

Hollywood would have you believe that "getting a warrant" is pretty simple. Well, it's not. A warrant is a document filed in court and no document filed in court is simple. Next, you need a lawyer and having a lawyer is never simple. Some lawyers can make the process easy, especially if they believe in their job, but it is still not simple. It is a pretty serious matter when the cops want to go in and rifle someone's home. The courts were real worried about searches, even searches with warrants, so we had to go to a lot of trouble to make sure that we did everything right. You had to have probable cause and it has to be articulated in just the right way. In those days, even if we had convinced a judge let us kick in a door, some other judge might think differently so any warrant tended to be something of a crap shoot.

Usually an agent familiar with the case would meet the AUSA at his office and they would type out the pages and pages of affidavits, applications and orders necessary to kick one door. Then the AUSA would call the U.S. Magistrate on duty and make an appointment for the agent to swear to the affidavit and have the warrant signed. But we were all in Bellingham, I was the only one familiar with the case and we had to do things differently. Jerry met me in the Sheriff's Office, downstairs from the jail, he began interviewing me and drafting out the language of the affidavit. But the guy who really knew was Mike and he was out on the island. If I couldn't answer a question, I would radio Mike. We had little walkie-talkie portables that didn't reach very far, but in the right spot, you could hit the repeater on the mountain and get some range. The portable would get out of the building, so I walked up some stairs, propping doors open on the way out and find the right place in the parking lot. I keyed the microphone and if I heard the relay on the repeater close, I was in business. Jerry drafted pages on a yellow legal tablet and handed them to me for typing. I can type, but at this rate it was going to take hours. At one point, waiting for another page, I just nodded off. Returning from one trip to the parking lot I found myself replaced by the Sheriff's dispatcher. She was fast and accurate and I certainly hope that she got a better job than graveyard radio.

The documents were done by dawn. The Magistrate in the area was an attorney who had

an office thirty miles away. A call to him insured that he would be in his office at 8. Another cup of coffee and a half hour drive and I stood before him in his little office. Do you swear? I do. Sign, stamp, copy, go.

From the car I radioed Mike on the island and the others at the farm that they could start searching. I was given a ride back to the Coast Guard Station where I bummed a ride out to the island from some new Coasties. They obliged. I took that opportunity to take another nap.

As we neared the island, I saw Mike and Walt in the Skipjack testing it out. On the beach I found that more bales had been found as well as some receipts and other evidence. All the "Items to be Seized" were inventoried on a piece of cardboard, because they didn't have any paper.

Other agents searched a farm in the woods where two more guys were picked up along with a truck and more dope. Checks of marinas turned up another truck and trailer just like the one for the Lady Hamilton. It was a real jackpot.

The Lady Hamilton was found by a Coast Guard helicopter, abandoned and empty on a deserted beach forty miles to the south. Red jacket and orange jacket had eluded the Cessna and the Uniflite in the darkness. The suspects had thrown overboard the fifteen or sixteen bales I had seen loaded the evening before. They beached the boat and disappeared. Agents at the Seattle airport looked for anyone in hip waders, but there were no sightings.

The whole affair hit the press. "Shots fired." "High speed chase at sea." "Contraband thrown overboard!" That last report ignited a gold rush. Long haired men began combing beaches all over Puget Sound in hopes of claiming for themselves fifty pounds of the most potent weed then available. The retail value was at least \$50,000 and maybe more, if only the water hadn't damaged it. We despaired of ever seeing much of it, if any at all. But, the calls began to come in from property owners and local police departments. One bale here, one there. One call came from a Norwegian fisherman.

"You better talk to Ole Johansen down dere. He got one a dem bags and I don't tink he going to turn 'em in." An interview of Ole Johansen revealed that he had in fact fished one of the bales out of the water and just hadn't gotten around to calling in. The soggy bag leaked green gooey liquid all over the trunk of the car of the agent unlucky enough to catch the call.

I was certain I had counted no more than sixteen bags loaded on the Lady Hamilton. I didn't take pictures or notes, but I was pretty sure. A week after the chase, the last known bale, number nineteen, floated ashore out on the Pacific Coast, having drifted over a hundred miles. No stories reached us about a freak who picked up a burlap bag on the beach and was treating his friends or making lots of money, so as far as we knew we had all the bales.

Yes, we had bales, something like sixty or eighty of them, a fairly small haul. The case before and the one after netted more than six hundred bales each. Now what do we do? Most of the drugs we hunted was in quantities that could be held in a hand or a suitcase and they could be stored in no more than a few evidence bags in our vault in the office. But these weed cases presented formidable logistical problems. First, you have to move the stuff. Sometimes you could use the crooks' own vehicles, but only if you got the vehicles. In boat cases, the boats either were unsuitable for safe use or they were gone. Our dope here was in a barn or out on the beach, so it was up to us to figure out how to haul it.

Once hauled, it had to be stored securely. Moving a shipment of that size secretly was a

snap for the crooks, but we couldn't do without the world knowing and every time we had to move evidence, the press and hopeful bystanders were there. Somehow, this particular load ended up in a locked room in the basement of the Federal Building in Seattle, but we had two days and then it had to go someplace else. The bales had to be moved one at a time and each time it was to be moved, the number of agents available to help decreased, but those closest to the case were always expected to be there.

But this was just until we could destroy it. Jerry applied for the court order, and the bosses worked out some deal with a local paper mill to incinerate the stuff there. More schlepping, more work, more itchy, smelly burlap bales. And the wet stuff didn't burn so good.

After that one, I figured it out. When I got a call to go seize a bunch of bales on the beach, I got the measurements to our locked, alarmed, secret workshop. I then rented trucks small enough to fit inside. We loaded the trucks once, locked them once and then parked them once in the warehouse. The next stop after that was the incinerator. Paying several more days' rent was easier than all that work. This case, though, we did it the hard way.

Boats and trucks seized, defendants processed and charged, dope secured and paper paper paper. Mike, the case agent, was, however, real weak on paper. In fact he had no interest in the investigation after that night. It was Jim that had to insure that the forms were filled out and reports written etc. The big mystery was where did the stuff come from? It had to get to the island somehow. And where were red jacket and orange jacket? Who were they? Some of the guys in custody had names, but there was nothing else to go on. Mike was not good at this kind of a mystery.

Bit by bit though, the pieces came together, mostly because of Jim's persistence and his patience with other DEA offices which were not always disposed to do work that didn't directly benefit them. The names of the men on the Lady Hamilton finally came out and we got addresses. A man suspected as being orange jacket was subpoenaed for a handwriting exemplar and Jerry asked me to meet with him, coincidentally while he was giving the exemplar. I was able to identify him as the man on the boat and his handwriting sealed his fate. Once indicted, he pleaded guilty. All the people arrested that night got six months for their trouble. Red jacket eluded us, and he was a main player.

The Skipjacks were placed into service by DEA, as were the trucks to pull them and the radio scanners and anything else of value. Island Owner looked in a law book and filed a claim under an old statute which granted tipsters a portion of the value of smuggled goods seized. Since the boats and vehicles added up to over \$100,000, he got a nice check.

A mother ship and a financier were identified, but the matter was never pursued and I never found out why. We all had other cases and no one had time to press the prosecutors for just one more indictment. There was lower hanging fruit to be picked and the bosses lost interest.

A Coast Guard Officer who helped in the investigation recognized the name that Jim developed for Red Jacket as an Academy classmate. The year book picture showed a lean, clean-cut young man, different from the fleshy, mustachioed pirate in the boat. He never graduated, having been asked to leave over some integrity issue. Red was indicted too and his real name was placed in the great computer.

Years later, after I left the narks, Jerry told me that Red Jacket was spotted in Maryland

by a marine patrolman. His boat registration was fishy and when the boat turned up stolen, Red ran again, this time on a motorcycle. The chase ended with Red's brains smeared along a wet highway. I guess he really was a pirate.

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