The Original Captain Trips

by Todd Brendan Fahey

Before Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band...before Timothy Leary...before Ken Kesey's band of Merry Pranksters and their Electric Kool-Aid Acid Tests...before the dawn of the Grateful Dead, there was Alfred M. Hubbard: the Original Captain Trips.

You will not read about him in the history books. He left no diary, nor chatty relatives to memorialize him in print. And if a cadre of associates had not recently agreed to open its files, Captain Alfred M. Hubbard might exist in death as he did in life--a man of mirrors and shadows, revealing himself to even his closest friends only on a need-to-know basis.

They called him "the Johnny Appleseed of LSD." He was to the psychedelic movement nothing less than the membrane through which all passed to enter into the Mysteries. Beverly Hills psychiatrist Oscar Janiger once said of Hubbard, "We waited for him like a little old lady for the Sears-Roebuck catalog." Waited for him to unlock his ever-present leather satchel loaded with pharmaceutically-pure psilocybin, mescaline or his personal favorite, Sandoz LSD-25.

Those who will talk about Al Hubbard are few. Oscar Janiger told this writer that "nothing of substance has been written about Al Hubbard, and probably nothing ever should."

He is treated like a demigod by some, as a lunatic uncle by others. But nobody is ambivalent about the Captain: He was as brilliant as the noonday sun, mysterious as the rarest virus, and friendly like a golden retriever.

The first visage of Hubbard was beheld by Dr. Humphrey Osmond, now senior psychiatrist at Alabama's Bryce Hospital. He and Dr. John Smythies were researching the correlation between schizophrenia and the hallucinogens mescaline and adrenochrome at Weyburn Hospital in Saskatchewan, Canada, when an A.M. Hubbard requested the pleasure of Osmond's company for lunch at the swank Vancouver Yacht Club. Dr. Osmond later recalled, "It was a very dignified place, and I was rather awed by it. [Hubbard] was a powerfully-built man...with a broad face and a firm hand-grip. He was also very genial, an excellent host."

Captain Hubbard was interested in obtaining some mescaline, and, as it was still legal, Dr. Osmond supplied him with some. "He was interested in all sorts of odd things," Osmond laughs. Among Hubbard's passions was motion. His identity as "captain" came from his master of sea vessels certification and a stint in the US Merchant Marine.

At the time of their meeting in 1953, Al Hubbard owned secluded Daymen Island off the coast of Vancouver--a former Indian colony surrounded by a huge wall of oyster shells. To access his 24-acre estate, Hubbard built a hangar for his aircraft and a slip for his yacht from a fallen redwood. But it was the *inner* voyage that drove the Captain until his death in 1982. Fueled by psychedelics, he set sail and rode the great wave as a neuronaut, with only the white noise in his ears and a fever in his brain.

His head shorn to a crew and wearing a paramilitary uniform with a holstered long-barrel Colt .45, Captain Al Hubbard showed up one day in '63 on the doorstep of a young Harvard psychologist named Timothy Leary.

"He blew in with that uniform...laying down the most incredible atmosphere of mystery and flamboyance, and really impressive bullshit!" Leary recalls. "He was pissed off. His Rolls Royce had broken down on the freeway, so he went to a pay phone and called the company in London. That's what kind of guy he was. He started name-dropping like you wouldn't believe...claimed he was friends with the Pope."

Did Leary believe him?

"Well, yeah, no question."

The captain had come bearing gifts of LSD, which he wanted to swap for psilocybin, the synthetic magic mushroom produced by Switzerland's Sandoz Laboratories. "The thing that impressed me," Leary remembers, "is on one hand he looked like a carpetbagger con man, and on the other he had these most-impressive people in the world on his lap, basically backing him."

Among Hubbard's heavyweight cheerleaders was Aldous Huxley, author of the sardonic novel *Brave New World*. Huxley had been turned on to mescaline by Osmond in '53, an experience that spawned the seminal psychedelic handbook *The Doors of Perception*. Huxley became an unabashed sponsor for the chemicals then known as "psychotomimetic"--literally, "madness mimicking."

But neither Huxley nor Hubbard nor Osmond experienced madness, and Dr. Osmond wrote a rhyme to Huxley one day in the early 1950s, coining a new word for the English language, and a credo for the next generation:

To fathom hell or soar angelic,

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Just take a pinch of psychedelic.

* * *

Those who knew Al Hubbard would describe him as just a "barefoot boy from Kentucky," who never got past third grade. But as a young man, the shoeless hillbilly was purportedly visited by a pair of angels, who told him to build something. He had

absolutely no training, "but he had these *visions*, and he learned to trust them early on," says Willis Harman, director of the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Sausalito, CA.

In 1919, guided by other-worldly forces, Hubbard invented the Hubbard Energy Transformer, a radioactive battery that could not be explained by the technology of the day. The *Seattle Post- Intelligencer* reported that Hubbard's invention, hidden in an 11" x 14" box, had powered a ferry- sized vessel around Seattle's Portico Bay nonstop for three days. Fifty percent rights to the patent were eventually bought by the Radium Corporation of Pittsburgh for \$75,000, and nothing more was heard of the Hubbard Energy Transformer.

Hubbard stifled his talents briefly as an engineer in the early 1920s, but an unquenchable streak of mischief burned in the boy inventor. *Vancouver* magazine's Ben Metcalfe reports that Hubbard soon took a job as a Seattle taxi driver during Prohibition. With a sophisticated ship-to-shore communications system hidden in the trunk of his cab, Hubbard helped rum-runners to successfully ferry booze past the US and Canadian Coast Guards. He was, however, caught by the FBI and went to prison for 18 months.

After his release, Hubbard's natural talent for electronic communications attracted scouts from Allen Dulles's Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Also according to Metcalfe, Hubbard was at least peripherally involved in the Manhattan Project.

The captain was pardoned of any and all wrongdoing by Harry S. Truman under Presidential Pardon #2676, and subsequently became *agent* Captain Al Hubbard of the OSS. As a maritime specialist, Hubbard was enjoined to ship heavy armaments from San Diego to Canada at night, without lights, in the waning hours of World War II--an operations of dubious legality, which had him facing a Congressional investigation. To escape federal indictment, Hubbard moved to Vancouver and became a Canadian citizen.

Parlaying connections and cash, Hubbard founded Marine Manufacturing, a Vancouver charter-boat concern, and in his early 40s realized his lifelong ambition of becoming a millionaire. By 1950 he was scientific director of the Uranium Corporation of Vancouver, owned his own fleet of aircraft, a 100-foot yacht, and a Canadian island. And he was miserable.

"Al was desperately searching for meaning in his life," says Willis Harman. Seeking enlightenment, Hubbard returned to an area near Spokane, WA, where he'd spent summers during his youth. He hiked into the woods and an angel purportedly appeared to him in a clearing. "She told Al that something tremendously important to the future of mankind would be coming soon, and that he could play a role in it if he wanted to," says Harman. "But he hadn't the faintest clue what he was supposed to be looking for."

In 1951, reading *The Hibberd Journal*, a scientific paper of the time, Hubbard stumbled across an article about the behavior of rats given LSD. "He knew that was it," says Harman. Hubbard went and found the person conduction the experiment, and came back

with some LSD for himself. After his very first acid experience, he became a True Believer.

"Hubbard discovered psychedelics as a boon and a sacrament," recalls Leary.

A 1968 *resume* states that Hubbard was at various times employed by the Canadian Special Services, the US Justice Department and, ironically, what is now the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Whether he was part of the CIA mind-control project known as MK-ULTRA, might never be known: all paperwork generated in connection with that diabolical experiment was destroyed in '73 by MK-ULTRA chief Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, on orders from then-CIA Director Richard Helms, citing a "paper crisis."

Under the auspices of MK-ULTRA the CIA regularly dosed its agents and associates with powerful hallucinogens as a preemptive measure against the Soviets' own alleged chemical technology, often with disastrous results. The secret project would see at least two deaths: tennis pro Harold Blauer died after a massive injection of MDA; and the army's own Frank Olson, a biological-warfare specialist, crashed through a closed window in the 12th floor of New York's Statler Hotel, after drinking cognac laced with LSD during a CIA symposium. Dr. Osmond doubts that Hubbard would have been associated with such a project "not particularly on humanitarian grounds, but on the grounds that it was *bad technique*."

[Note: Recently, a researcher for *WorldNetDaily* and author of a forthcoming book based on the Frank Olson "murder," revealed to this writer that he has received, via a FOIA request of CIA declassified materials, documents which indicate that Al Hubbard was, indeed, in contact with Dr. Sidney Gottlieb and George Hunter White--an FBI narcotics official who managed Operation Midnight Climax, a joint CIA/FBI blackmail project in which unwitting "johns" were given drinks spiked with LSD by CIA-managed prostitutes, and whose exploits were videotaped from behind two-way mirrors at posh hotels in both New York and San Francisco. The researcher would reveal only that Al Hubbard's name "appeared in connection with Gottlieb and White, but the material is heavily redacted."]

Hubbard's secret connections allowed him to expose over 6,000 people to LSD before it was effectively banned in '66. He shared the sacrament with a prominent Monsignor of the Catholic Church in North America, explored the roots of alcoholism with AA founder Bill Wilson, and stormed the pearly gates with Aldus Huxley (in a session that resulted in the psychedelic tome *Heaven and Hell*), as well as supplying most of the Beverly Hills psychiatrists, who, in turn, turned on actors Cary Grant, James Coburn, Jack Nicholson, novelist Anais Nin, and filmmaker Stanley Kubrick.

Laura Huxley met Captain Hubbard for the first time at her and her husband's Hollywood Hills home in the early 1960s. "He showed up for lunch one afternoon, and he brought with him a portable tank filled with a gas of some kind. He offered some to us," she recalls, "but we said we didn't care for any, so he put it down and we all had lunch. He went into the bathroom with the tank after lunch, and breathed into it for about ten

seconds. It must have been very concentrated, because he came out revitalized and very jubilant, talking about a vision he had seen of the Virgin Mary."

"I was convinced that he was the man to bring LSD to planet Earth," remarks, Myron Stolaroff, who was assistant to the president of long-range planning at Ampex Corporation when he met the captain. Stolaroff learned of Hubbard through philosopher Gerald Heard, a friend and spiritual mentor to Huxley. "Gerald had reached tremendous levels of contemplative prayer, and I didn't know what in the world he was doing fooling around with drugs."

Heard had written a letter to Stolaroff, describing the beauty of his psychedelic experience with Al Hubbard. "That letter would be priceless--but Hubbard, I'm sure, arranged to have it stolen.... He was a sonofabitch: God and the Devil, both there in full force."

Stolaroff was so moved by Heard's letter that, in '56, he agreed to take LSD with Hubbard in Vancouver. "After that first LSD experience, I said 'this is the greatest discovery man has ever made."

He was not alone.

Through his interest in aircraft, Hubbard had become friends with a prominent Canadian businessman. The businessman eventually found himself taking LSD with Hubbard and, after coming down, told Hubbard never to worry about money again: He had seen the future, and Al Hubbard was its Acid Messiah.

Hubbard abandoned his uranium empire and, for the next decade, traveled the globe as a psychedelic missionary. "Al's dream was to open up a worldwide chain of clinics as training grounds for other LSD researchers," says Stolaroff. His first pilgrimage was to Switzerland, home of Sandoz Laboratories, producers of both Delysid (trade name for LSD) and psilocybin. He procured a gram of LSD (roughly 10,000 doses) and set up shop in a safe-deposit vault in the Zurich airport's duty-free section. From there he was able to ship quantities of his booty without a tariff to a waiting world.

Swiss officials quickly detained Hubbard for violating the nation's drug laws, which provided no exemption from the duty-free provision. Myron Stolaroff petitioned Washington for the Captain's release, but the State Department wanted nothing to do with Al Hubbard. Oddly, when a hearing was held, blue-suited officials from the department were in attendance. The Swiss tribunal declared Hubbard's passport invalid for five years, and he was deported. Undeterred, Hubbard traveled to Czechoslovakia, where he had another gram of LSD put into tablet form by Chemapol--a division of the pharmaceutical giant Spofa--and then flew west.

Procuring a Ph.D. in biopsychology from a less-than-esteemed academic outlet called Taylor University, the captain became Dr. Alfred M. Hubbard, clinical therapist. In '57, he met Ross MacLean, medical superintendent of the Hollywood Hospital in New

Westminster, Canada. MacLean was so impressed with Hubbard's knowledge of the human condition that he devoted an entire wing of the hospital to the study of psychedelic therapy for chronic alcoholics.

According to Metcalfe, MacLean was also attracted to the fact that Hubbard was Canada's sole licensed importer of Sandoz LSD. "I remember seeing Al on the phone in his living room one day. He was elated because the FDA had just given him IND#1," says one Hubbard confidante upon condition of anonymity.

His Investigational New Drug permit also allowed Hubbard to experiment with LSD in the USA. For the next few years, Hubbard--together with Canadian psychiatrist Abram Hoffer and Dr. Humphry Osmond--pioneered a psychedelic regimen with a recovery rate of between 60% and 70%--far above that of AA or Schick Hospital's so-called "aversion therapy." Hubbard would lift mentally-disturbed lifelong alcoholics out of psychosis with a mammoth dose of liquid LSD, letting them view their destructive habits from a completely new vantage point. "As a therapist, he was one of the best," says Stolaroff, who worked with Hubbard until 1965 at the International Federation for Advanced Study in Menlo Park, California, which he founded after leaving Ampex.

Whereas many LSD practitioners were content to strap their patients onto a 3' x 6' cot and have them attempt to perform a battery of mathematical formulae with a head full of LSD, Hubbard believed in a comfortable couch and throw pillows. He also employed icons and symbols to send the experience into a variety of different directions: someone uptight may be asked to look at a photo of a glacier, which would soon melt into blissful relaxation; a person seeking the spiritual would be directed to a picture of Jesus, and enter into a one-on-one relationship with the Savior.

But Hubbard's days at Hollywood Hospital ended in 1957, not long after they had begun, after a philosophical dispute with Ross MacLean. The suave hospital administrator was getting fat from the \$1,000/dose fees charged to Hollywood's elite patients, who included members of the Canadian Parliament and the American film community. Hubbard, who believed in freely distributing LSD for the world good, felt pressured by MacLean to share in the profits, and ultimately resigned rather than accept an honorarium for his services.

His departure came as the Canadian Medical Association was becoming increasingly suspicious of Hollywood Hospital in the wake of publicity surrounding MK-ULTRA. The Canadian Citizen's Commission on Human Rights had already discovered one Dr. Harold Abramson, a CIA contract psychiatrist, on the board of MacLean's International Association for Psychedelic Therapy, and external pressure was weighing on MacLean to release Al Hubbard, the former OSS officer with suspected CIA links. Compounding Hubbard's plight was the death of his Canadian benefactor, leaving Hubbard with neither an income nor the financial cushion upon which he had become dependent.

His services were eventually recruited by Willis Harman, then-Director of the Educational Policy Research Center within the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) of

Stanford University. Harman employed Hubbard as a security guard for SRI, "although," Harman admits, "Al never did anything resembling security work."

Hubbard was specifically assigned to the Alternative Futures Project, which performed future-oriented strategic planning for corporations and government agencies. Harman and Hubbard shared a goal "to provide the [LSD] experience to political and intellectual leaders around the world." Harman acknowledges that "Al's job was to run the special [LSD] sessions for us."

According to Dr. Abram Hoffer, "Al had a grandiose idea that if he could give the psychedelic experience to the major executives of the Fortune 500 companies, he would change the whole of society."

Hubbard's tenure at SRI was uneasy. The political bent of the Stanford think-tank was decidedly left-wing, clashing sharply with Hubbard's own world-perspective. "Al was really an arch-conservative," says the confidential source. "He really didn't like what the hippies were doing with LSD, and he held Timothy Leary in great contempt."

Humphry Osmond recalls a particular psilocybin session in which "Al got greatly preoccupied with the idea that he ought to *shoot* Timothy, and when I began to reason with him that this would be a very bad idea...I became much concerned that he might shoot *me*..."

"To Al," says Myron Stolaroff, "LSD enabled man to see his true self, his true nature and the true order of things." But, to Hubbard, the true order of things had little to do with the antics of the American Left.

Recognizing its potential psychic hazards, Hubbard believed that LSD should be administered and monitored by trained professionals. He claimed that he had stockpiled more LSD than anyone on the planet besides Sandoz--including the US government--and he clearly wanted a firm hand in influencing the way it was used. However, Hubbard refused all opportunities to become the LSD Philosopher-King. Whereas Leary would naturally gravitate toward any microphone available, Hubbard preferred the role of the silent *curandero*, providing the means for the experience, and letting voyagers decipher its meaning for themselves. When cornered by a video camera shortly before this death, and asked to say something to the future, Hubbard replied simply, "You're the future."

In March of 1966, the cold winds of Congress blew out all hope for Al Hubbard's enlightened Mother Earth. Facing a storm of protest brought on by Leary's reckless antics and the "LSD-related suicide" of Diane Linkletter, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Drug Abuse Control Amendment, which declared lysergic acid diethylamide a Schedule I substance; simple possession was deemed a felony, punishable by 15 years in prison. According to Humphry Osmond, Hubbard lobbied Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, who reportedly took the cause of LSD into the Senate chambers, and emerged un-victorious.

"[The government] had a deep fear of having their picture of reality challenged," mourns Harman. "It had nothing to do with people harming their lives with chemicals--because if you took all the people who had ever had any harmful effects from psychedelics, it's minuscule compared to those associated with alcohol and tobacco."

FDA chief James L. Goddard ordered agents to seize all remaining psychedelics not accounted for by Sandoz. "It was scary," recalls Dr. Oscar Janiger, whose Beverly Hills office was raided and years' worth of clinical research confiscated.

Hubbard begged Abram Hoffer to let him hide his supply in Hoffer's Canadian Psychiatric Facility. But the doctor refused, and it is believed that Hubbard buried most of his LSD in a sacred parcel in Death Valley, California, claiming that it had been used, rather than risk prosecution. When the panic subsided, only five government-approved scientists were allowed to continue LSD research--none using humans, and *none* of them associated with Al Hubbard. In 1968, his finances in ruins, Hubbard was forced to sell his private island sanctuary for what one close friend termed "a pittance." He filled a number of boats with the antiquated electronics used in his eccentric nuclear experiments, and left Daymen Island for California. Hubbard's efforts in his last decade were effectively wasted, according to most of his friends. Lack of both finances and government permit to resume research crippled all remaining projects he may have had in the hopper.

After SRI canceled his contract in 1974 Hubbard went into semiretirement, splitting his time between a 5-acre ranch in Vancouver and an apartment in Menlo Park. But in 1978, battling an enlarged heart and never far away from a bottle of pure oxygen, Hubbard make one last run at the FDA. He applied for an IND to use LSD-25 on terminal cancer patients, furnishing the FDA with two decades of clinical documentation. The FDA set the application aside, pending the addition to Hubbard's team of a medical doctor, a supervised medical regimen, and an AMA-accredited hospital. Hubbard secured the help of Oscar Janiger, but the two could not agree on methodology, and Janiger bowed out, leaving Al Hubbard, in his late 70s, without the strength to carry on alone.

Says Willis Harman: "He knew that his work was done."

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The Captain lived out his last days nearly broke, having exhausted his resources trying to harness a dream. Like in the final fleeting hour of an acid trip--when the edge softens and a man realizes that he will *not* solve the secrets of the Universe, despite what the mind had said earlier--Hubbard smiled gracefully, laid down his six-shooter, and retired to a mobile home in Casa Grande, Arizona.

On August 31, 1982, at the age of 81, Al Hubbard was called home, having ridden the dream like a rodeo cowboy. On very quiet nights, with the right kind of ears, you can hear him giving God hell.