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Project Monarch: The Tangled Web

by Martin Cannon

Since 1991, Mark Phillips and Cathy O'Brien have alternately appalled and enthralled their growing audience with tales of mind control, programmed prostitution, ritual abuse, and worse. The handsome couple from Tennessee initially told their story to a select group of writers and journalists. Now, they spread the word via right-wing periodicals and outside-the-mainstream radio programs. They've also written a book: *Trance-formation of America*.

Cathy claims to be a victim of the Monarch Project, an insidious CIA/military/Satanist plan to use ritual abuse victims as mind-controlled guinea pigs. Victims of the plot, almost always female, grew up within multi-generational Satanic families. Sold by their parents to government brainwashers, Monarch kids are intentionally "split" into directed multiple personalities, useful for various criminal purposes - as spies, as drug mules, as prostitutes, and so forth. The well-developed primary personality never realizes what was done by, or to, the alter personalities. Powerful individuals with a taste for sexual excess choose their playmates from the ranks of Monarch graduates, the better to avoid after-the-fact blackmailers and tattle-talers, a la Vicki Morgan and (if you believe certain writers) Marilyn Monroe. For example, O'Brien describes in detail how one important aide to Ronald Reagan enjoyed raping her anally while using a stun device to prod her body with electric convulsions. This is the sort of fetish that might cause some concern among the voters, if ever they learned the truth. Hence, Monarch.

Little about the basic Monarch theory struck me as technically implausible - indeed, this putative project seems, in many ways, the logical extension of MKULTRA. I therefore initially found the O'Brien/Phillips story quite intriguing. But I also found Mark and Cathy exceptionally frustrating to deal with.

Mark Phillips has offered varying descriptions of how he first learned about Monarch programming. At one point, he said he had worked for an unnamed "DIA contractor," in which position he came across various materials detailing the government's mind control projects. But in a letter to me (June 1, 1991), he

claimed to have discovered the operation during his "tenure in the '60s and '70s at NASA (Huntsville, Alabama) and Woodland Hills R&D (Woodland Hills, California)" I have lived near Woodland Hills most of my life, yet have never heard of any such corporation, which remains a mystery to everyone else I have consulted. (A call to Directory Assistance came up goose eggs.) Phillips seems rather too young to have worked in a sensitive position at NASA in the 1960s. He supposedly "retained" copies of classified documents detailing "harmonics, electroshock, hypnotic programming, mind/body conditioning (torture), (limited) drug applications for programming and deprogramming, and the names and backgrounds of the expendables (victims)." Peculiarly, he has never produced any of this confirming documentation. Nor has he produced any evidence that he ever worked for any government contractor. Independent background checks have revealed only that he has held far less impressive jobs, such as selling recreational vehicles.

He also briefly joined forces with a Tennessee businessman named Alex Houston. Houston, in a telephone interview with researcher Mike Knight, claims that he was married to Cathy O'Brien in 1988. Oddly, she never mentioned this marriage in her voluminous autobiographical writings, although she has frequently labeled Houston an operator within Project Monarch - an accusation he strongly denies. Houston reports that he and Phillips once traveled to China to sell capacitors, and were briefly detained on suspicion of espionage by the Chinese government. After returning to the United States, Houston found that Cathy had gone off with Mark.

Mark Phillips claims that his "inside knowledge" allowed him immediately to spot Cathy's status as a Monarch victim. He therefore whisked her away and embarked on a deprogramming operation - although his description of "how to deprogram" seems unnervingly similar to descriptions I have read of how to instill programming. The couple traveled to Alaska, where, Cathy claims, they gave the FBI testimony concerning various entertainment figures involved in the Monarch drug conspiracy. In 1991, the couple began distributing "documented proof" of the scheme to their network of journalists, researchers, and interested parties - including myself.

Unfortunately, the only "documentation" I ever saw consisted of unsworn testimony written by Cathy O'Brien, in which she accused various political and entertainment figures of participation in the plot. Her two-to-ten page short-stories-from-hell detailed the horrific deeds (mostly involving sex and drugs) perpetrated by the likes of Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Cathy's *bête noir*, Senator Robert Byrd. The entire program, she averred, was commanded by the

occultist I have already labeled "Mr. A." Cathy also identified other putative Monarch victims, such as Country singer Loretta Lynn and Dodger pitcher Fernando Valenzuela, who, we are told, owed his baseball prowess to hypnosis. (Apparently the trance wore off.) Even comedian Jack Benny fell afoul of the Monarch conspiracy.

On one occasion (or so Cathy claims), she was taken to a rural retreat, where she serviced the eldritch sexual needs of then-vice president George Bush and one of his chief aides. This story's high point depicts Bush "kissing the sky" while strung out on heroin, as he repeatedly gurgles to his comrade: "You look just like Elmer Fudd!" (A wicked part of me almost wishes it were true)

I once told Mark that found impressive Cathy's willingness to name names, thereby placing the couple at some legal risk. Mark became nervous, and, rather less-than-gallantly, observed that his name didn't appear as author on any of the accusatory writings, leaving him in a position protected from libel action.

A number of journalists, such as freelance writer Civia Tomarkin (who has followed the ritual abuse controversy), quietly studied the O'Brien/Phillips "paperwork." But, as Tomarkin observes, "there's a difference between testimony and proof," and Mark and Cathy refuse to provide the proof they have promised. Cathy has frequently asserted that her body bears many marks, wounds, and "cancerous moles" corroborating her tales of torture - yet she never makes available probative photographs or other medical evidence. Nor will she provide documentation that she has had cancer. Everyone who meets her notices that her fashion-model good looks remain unflawed by any visible scars. Cathy often describes the genitalia of the famous politicians she has serviced - but no journalist could hope to validate these descriptions, unless he possesses a talent for furtive glances in the Senate restroom.

The couple use familiar tactics to counter their critics: After Tomarkin's interest turned to skepticism, Mark Phillips asserted that the journalist was herself part of the Great Monarch Conspiracy.

It is a very powerful conspiracy, indeed. We are told that Hollywood animators deliberately place hypnotic cue images into children's television shows, such as Disney's Duck Tales. Rock-and-roll Monarchists deliberately include hypnotic cue words in the lyrics of many popular songs. When asked why they don't bring civil charges against the Monarchians, Mark and Cathy explain that the Satanic plot controls the entire court system - just as it also controls the presidency, much of Congress, the entertainment industry, and large sectors of both the Mormon

and Catholic churches. The Vatican looms large in the Phillips/O'Brien demonology. In their 1996 book "Trance-formation of America," the couple describe World Vision as a "Jesuit" conspiratorial group intent on bringing about a socialistic "New World Order." (World Vision is actually a conservative Protestant missionary group.) Ever since our intrepid anti-Monarch crusaders discovered that their primary audience leans far to the Right, they have heavily emphasized the "New World Order" bugaboo and Mark takes pains to hide his atheism.

I backed away from this story in September of 1991, when Cathy sent a letter begging me to "rally the troops" in support of Mark Phillips after a Federal Grand Jury in Tennessee had called him in for testimony. "We nervously anticipate a set-up," Cathy wrote, apparently hoping her network would start a "Free Mark" movement. I didn't bite. Soon thereafter, Mark Phillips explained to me that the Grand Jury had falsely accused him of threatening President George Bush. This assertion made no sense: Anyone accused (even falsely) of posing a presidential threat would first confront the Secret Service, not a Grand Jury. Later still, I discovered that the Grand Jury had merely called in Mark Phillips as a potential witness in a matter unrelated to either Bush or Monarch. Why, then, the call-to-arms?

Throughout 1991, O'Brien and Phillips inundated their network with "paperwork" outlining the crimes of numerous American political figures, especially those hailing from the south. Yet they never mentioned Arkansas governor Bill Clinton, either in writing or in telephone interviews. That situation changed after the 1992 Democratic convention, which chose Bill Clinton as the party's presidential candidate: Cathy then distributed a two-page report titled "Clinton Coke Lines" - allegedly "compiled 3/89." (Why, then, didn't we see it earlier?)

In this paper, Cathy claims to have met then-governor Clinton in 1984, at a contributor's mountain retreat. All parties did mounds of cocaine while they discussed using a fleet of trucks, jestingly labeled "Clinton's Coke Lines," to run CIA drugs through Arkansas. Thus spake Bill, as per O'Brien: "Bottom line is, we've got control of the drug industry, therefore we've got control of them (suppliers). You control the guy underneath ya, and Uncle has ya covered - what have ya got to lose?" Soon after making this observation, Clinton insisted that Cathy (apparently brought in to supply "entertainment") had to leave the room, even though she was a "presidential model" capable of keeping state secrets.

Cathy O'Brien claims that Arkansas entertainment director H.B. Gibson was present at this meeting. In 1993, investigator Mike Knight telephoned Gibson.

Knight, no fan of the president he will always call "Slick Willie," undoubtedly wanted to prove this story true. But Gibson seemed genuinely bewildered when he heard the names Alex Houston and Cathy O'Brien. After lengthy, carefully-phrased questioning, Knight reluctantly decided that Cathy had witnessed no such meeting involving Bill Clinton.

And that's the bottom line: Mark-and-Cathy stories never come backed by hard evidence. When Cathy claimed on the radio that a Vermont Senator had sexually abused her in an L.L. Bean store located in that state, a caller pointed out that the L.L. Bean company maintains no stores in Vermont. Cathy rationalized the problem away. There's always a rationalization.

Just to make matters pluperfectly surreal: Mark Phillips has privately admitted to at least one researcher that he (Phillips) concocted the name "Project Monarch," just to see who would pick it up.

At this point, an honest investigator can only feel aggravated and dispirited - which may be the entire point of this charade. In fact, ritual abuse claimants throughout the country had spoken darkly of a "Project Monarch" well before Mark and Cathy came on the scene. Now, skeptics can posit that Mark Phillips contaminated the testimony of others, even though the chronology argues against this scenario.

As mentioned previously, the essential idea behind the Monarch theory seems "do-able." And to be fair, Mark and Cathy never seemed to be "in it for the money" - in fact, they spent a tremendous amount on their mailings, while the potential for libel suits placed them at some financial risk. I doubt that sales of their book (published by a small firm, and undistributed, so far, in the larger stores) will fetch them much monetary benefit.

How, then, do we assess their claims? Some believe that Cathy's testimony is essentially true, while others damn it as a pack of lies. Still others suspect that Mark and Cathy have played out a clever disinformation gambit, mixing fact and fiction in order to discredit any genuine victims who "break program." Worth noting: "Mr. A" has never attempted to sue the couple, even though they have accused him publicly of numerous crimes, and even though he is notorious for having his lawyers write intimidating letters to anyone he perceives as injuring his reputation.

At the end of the day, we can only contemplate Shakespeare's famous phrase: "Oh, what a tangled web we weave" The sentiment has never seemed more

appropriate.

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