

RobbReport

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FOR THE AFFLUENT LIFESTYLE™

LIFESTYLES



The tools of this clandestine trade can range from the gadgetry of 007 to the essentials of a theatrical makeup artist, and yes, these investigators do use people as decoys, or "plants."



For Private Investigators, No Mission Is Impossible

You can run, but you can't hide from a good PI.

When megamillionaire and deal maker Marvin Davis suspected an employee of embezzling tens of millions of dollars from him, he didn't contact the police or notify the FBI. Davis asked Denver private investigator R.W. "Pete" Peterson to look into the matter. Peterson followed the trail to an island in the Caribbean. The case is now in litigation.

Across the country, when a successful Wall Street investment banker became suspicious of his girlfriend's purported modeling career, he didn't call her agent. He hired Hill Street Security & Investigations in New York City to do a background check. She turned out to be a high-priced call girl and the former girlfriend of a gangster. The banker broke off the relationship.

When Erin Moran of the television program *Happy Days* had apparently disappeared, Paramount Pictures put their guy, Joseph J. Culligan, head of Research Investigative Services in Miami, on the case. Culligan "found" her in virtually a matter of minutes, simply by checking public records of her divorce and property holdings.

Cases that the police and FBI don't have the time to investigate come under close scrutiny by private eyes.

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Locating missing persons, finding hidden assets, and conducting personal background checks are among the routine procedures conducted by today's private detectives. These super sleuths do the jobs that, for a variety of reasons, don't merit the attention of local police and other law enforcement agencies.

"The FBI, the police, they don't have the time. Unless there's a serious crime, they won't investigate. Even if it's a misdemeanor, the cops won't get involved," says 46-year-old Tim Bartlett, who started Hill Street Security & Investigations with Jerry Palace in 1988, when both retired from the NYCPD.

"If it's a police matter, I shouldn't get involved. We're not supposed to be a police force. That's why we're licensed," adds Culligan, who notes that 13 of the 50 states do not require PIs to be licensed. (All of the investigators mentioned in this story are licensed.)

The PI's stock-in-trade is information. Their reputations and, ultimately, their careers rest on their ability to get the facts, as Culligan puts it, "swiftly, cleanly, and legally." Fax machines, telephones, and beepers are standard office equipment. Extensive computer databases of contacts and sources, as well as seemingly infinite public records, provide access to volumes of information and thus can save gumshoes a lot of footwork. "You should never have to go anywhere; if you're good, you don't have to," says the 47-year-old Peterson, who scoffs at the Hollywood portrayal of private detectives: "It makes me sick. Someone is constantly jumping on a plane."

Indeed, each of the PIs we talked to took issue with some of the various ways the entertainment media depicts detectives. "There's none of this Perry Mason stuff of pulling someone [a key witness] in at the eleventh hour [to win a case]," says Culligan. Adds Bartlett: "There's the boredom; in a stakeout, sometimes you just sit for hours. And it's not so easy to follow someone; on TV, there's always another car to jump into. In fact, it takes at least two [people] to tail someone, possibly three," he continues, "and

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you've got to have a car, a radio, tokens, change, and singles [dollar bills]."

The tools of this clandestine trade can range from the gadgetry of 007 to the essentials of a theatrical makeup artist, and yes, these investigators do use people as decoys, or "plants." The PI's bag of tricks usually includes high-tech night vision scopes, infrared surveillance cameras, and exotic listening and recording devices. When the whiz-bang gizmos fail or when he's videotaped a conversation from a distance (without benefit of audio), Peterson, for one, gets the lowdown by reading lips.

Guns, indispensable assets for investigators in films and on TV, rarely play in the real-life scenarios. Bartlett and Culligan both dismiss firearms as incompatible with their modus operandi. Peterson packs some serious heat—a 14-round, .40-caliber Glock; a .38-caliber Colt; and an Uzi submachine gun—"That's in the file cabinet. I got it for collateral"—but says he has never used the weapons—"Thank God."

As in any business, fashion makes the man. The right look can open doors, but the wrong outfit can bust a cover wide open. "You have to know the subject and dress like him," says Bartlett. For those times that call for a quick change or anonymity, Bartlett favors reversible clothes, while Peterson says that in a cap and glasses, "nobody recognizes me." Occasionally, a "put-on" front is all it takes: A smooth, ingratiating personality, aka the gift of gab, can open mouths—if you are making what Culligan terms "a pretext call."

When conditions warrant it and a disguise won't do, the investigators send in the decoys, but always with the utmost discretion. Such situations can put the masquerading agent in a dangerous position. As Peterson explains, "If you testify against someone, they don't get mad; if you send somebody undercover [and they find out], they can get real unhappy. They feel betrayed. But if you're doing the job right and keep a low enough profile, the problem doesn't arise."

In a domestic case, Bartlett used a female colleague to assess his client's husband's fidelity. "Instead of following him, we sent in a ringer to see if he would hit on her," he explains.

Citing a hypothetical situation, the 41-year-old Culligan describes the ease of infiltrating corporate ranks: "Let's say it's a major auto manufacturer. Nobody would suspect a woman of being a PI, so we send her into the bar where everybody goes after work, not for any sexual involvement, but to get to know people. She becomes one of them, gets to know where everyone works. She fits right in, plays darts, joins the bowling league.

"By the first night, we have the license plates of all of the cars in the lot. The next time she talks to the subject there, she knows he's an Aquarius [his birth sign], knows his wife's name, that he was raised in Albany and used to go to a certain hardware store. She can say she grew up in a small town nearby and used to go there, too. . . ." And that's only the beginning.

The personal data on the subject, says Culligan, could all be obtained from public records ranging from speeding tickets to hunting or fishing licenses, military records to workers' compensation files. "We know exactly what we're looking for," he says. What's more, according to the detective, there is no law requiring that the subject be informed of the release of information in his public records.

Culligan ought to know about perusing public files; he wrote a book about it. His manual, *You, Too, Can Find Anybody* (Hallmark Press/\$19.95), outlines the procedures step-by-step, state-by-state, for finding virtually anybody through public records. "Technically, it [the method] isn't sophisticated, but it works," he says.

Most PIs, like other professionals, specialize. Some do background, some do titles, some do surveillance, says Culligan, who is currently under contract with Paramount Studios and lists governments, corporations, foreign businessmen, and attorneys among his clients. He rarely deals with the public at large, though he maintains high visibility through his involvement with talk and issue-oriented TV shows, such as *A Current Affair* and *Unsolved Mysteries*.

In addition to addressing a variety of corporate concerns, Bartlett's company, Hill Street, houses a special division called Check-A-Mate. Originally created to conduct in-depth background checks of single clients' romantic partners' characters and status, the service has developed a steady clientele among married people.

In 19 years in the business, Peterson has been involved in cases that range from investigating "ponzi" or phony pyramid marketing schemes, to finding the daughter Roseanne Barr gave up to adoption. In conversation, he drops names like Elizabeth Taylor, Adnan Khashoggi, and H. Ross Perot. Clients? One of them has been, he says, with the aplomb of a poker player. Reunions of adopted children and their birth parents bring him tremendous gratification; those searches and debugging are regular requests, but perhaps Peterson's most notable assignment is uncovering assets hidden by participants in the savings and loan debacle.

These investigators claim they'll do whatever it takes to get the job done—as long as it's legal and allows them to sleep at night. "I have a moral liability. I could be sued," says Peterson, adding that he turns down "unethical cases or anything that would [result in bodily] harm [to anyone]."

Still, that leaves an unfathomable array of falsehoods, frauds, and forgeries to be uncovered by private eyes.

To take a case, Hill Street Security & Investigations charges \$50 per hour, with a \$250 minimum. Pete Peterson's straight fee is \$100 per hour, but flat rates and contingency fees can be arranged.

For more information, contact the individual sources: Hill Street Security & Investigations, 158-18 Riverside Drive, Suite 1H, New York, NY 10032, telephone (212) 927-2660, fax (212) 927-2765; R.W. Peterson Investigative Agency, Grant Street Mansion, 1115 Grant St., Denver, CO 80203, telephone (303) 830-1900. To purchase Joseph Culligan's book, telephone (800) 831-8900 or contact Research Investigative Services, 9739 N.W. 41st St., Miami, FL 33178. Include the cover price (\$19.95) plus \$4 for shipping and handling.

BOOKS

Of Families and Fortunes

For entrepreneurs and MBA aspirants who enjoy tales about contemporary kings of industry building vast and profitable empires as much as children love stories of dragon-slaying princes, Jan Pottker has written an appropriate anthology. *Born to Power, Heirs to America's Leading Businesses* (Barron's/ \$12.95) profiles 50 of the

largest companies in the United States, with particular emphasis on their futures, through conversations with the men and women who have inherited them.

Many of these documented dynasties are household names. Campbell's, Gerber, Marriott, Coors, Playboy, Barneys New York, Lillian Vernon, Wendy's International, and Hasbro are among them. But it's the personalities—the people behind the logos and brand packaging, from the ancestors to the reigning generations—that turn sales-and-earnings ratios into the stuff of high drama.

Pottker's true tales contain all of the elements of the lore and legend: heroes who risk all to conquer new territories or competitors; insecure siblings whose internal rivalries and bickerings threaten the family—not to mention the family fortunes; timeless morals; and, of course, pots of gold.

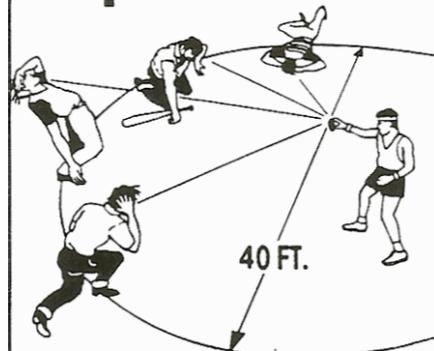
"There's something inherently fascinating about the rich, who are, after all, the only aristocracy this country knows," Pottker writes in the foreword.

A sociologist who specializes in organizational dynamics, Pottker differentiates the 50 companies' heirs by assigning them "value-neutral" management styles that demonstrate their approaches to their businesses. The principals are classified as innovators (who "seek change and often change the direction of an already successful company"); replicators (who "model their parents' business traits and stick to the tried and true"); conservators (who see themselves "as standard-bearers"); benchwarmers ("young executives whose parents still play a dominant and highly visible role in the business"); stewards ("younger family members who do not play a daily role in the management of their companies"); family feuders (who "fight over money and company control"); and rebels (who are "strong-minded heirs who seek their own way in life, usually in contradiction to what their parents had planned").

Within that framework, Pottker reveals intriguing, informative histories in concise, encapsulated form. Like fairy tales, these accounts tend to be brief; only a few of the profiles are more than 10 pages long. Unlike their fictional counterparts, however, Pottker's stories follow no formula. There are no happily-ever-after scenarios because these are never-ending stories.

Department editor Janice Stillman.

MEN — Drop attackers safely with new 'Liquid Bullet.'



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- Up to 80 times more effective than MACE*
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