

## Burned Butts

The laboratory, which was one of the largest operating clandestine "PCP" laboratories in the United States at the time, was in the desert and less than a mile from the DEA office on the Tucson International Airport property. Although "cooking" "PCP" laboratories emit obnoxious odors, its location coupled with the Arizona heat, which kept everybody indoors or in air conditioned automobiles, provided for its security. However, like death and taxes, it would only be a matter of time before it would be discovered.

The "caper" began in mid-1980, with the cross country surveillance of a truck containing the hard to come by chemicals necessary to produce the potent "horse tranquilizer." The difficulty of the prolonged surveillance was eased because one of the trucks two drivers was a DEA informant schooled in the art of how not to loose the agents that were paying him. And when the truck arrived in Tucson, it went straight to the small ranch style house near the airport

Later in the afternoon, the informant broke away from his driver companion and the four "chemists", who had been waiting at the house, to get some take out food and contacted his controlling agent. The "cook" would take place that night.

Late the next morning, when the volatile chemicals had been mingled and blended and the formula was complete, DEA Tucson Special Agents and a contingent of local officers prepared for the "raid." Unlike the well educated, trained and equipped "lab teams" of today's DEA, the Agents of DEA's earlier years had a paltry expertise in the precautions necessary for safety and little forethought was given. The raid would be carried out like any other narcotics raid.....fast and furious.

When the screeching Federal caravan came to a halt in front of the house, two "chemists" leapt through open windows and were pursued into the desert by hyped officers. A circling

Department of Public Safety (State Police) helicopter joined in the successful hunt.

Quickly storming the small ranch, the agent "raiders" swiftly subdued those that remained and secured the premises. However in the excitement and initial confusion, tables with beakers and bottles were overturned and foul smelling fluids formed puddles on the floor. Cuffing the prisoners hands behind their backs, the agents sat them in an out of the way corner and initiated the search for the product "cooked" the previous night. Almost immediately, the faces of two prisoners constricted with the surprise of pain, followed by a tormented howling and wiggling.

Perplexed by the unexpected screams, the guarding officers yanked them to their feet and saw that they had been sat in a light puddle of clear liquid. The seats of their trousers had been burned away and their "butts" were beat red. They had been sat in acid! The two "burned butts" were then transported, face down in G-Cars, to a nearby hospital emergency room where a rather young and attractive female physician, who the agents later called bleeding heart liberal, chastised the officers for DEA's "careless" actions.

Hours later, the Tucson Fire Department was called to the small ranch concerning numerous suspicious 55 Gallon drums. Identified to contain carcinogenic material, the drums were removed by the trained and properly equipped firemen for disposal in the desert. And the next day, agents that had handled the drums filled out forms documenting their exposure to the cancer causing material for use at a latter date, if necessary.

The young and pretty "bleeding heart" doctor was right; DEA was careless, out of ignorance, when it came to chemicals and clandestine laboratories in its formative years.