

The “Accidental” Author

In the realm of popular espionage buffs, the name **Robert W. Morgan** never rang bells nor raised a single eyebrow. It was not meant to. However, for decades his undercover code names were linked to significant events in the history of American Intelligence.

As a contracted operative, never a “company” man – Morgan found it necessary to create a credible explanation for his habit of suddenly vanishing. On a sheer whim, he assumed a fictitious career of writing merely to enhance this “cover.” Ironically, he discovered that almost everyone seemed to have some secret story they were yearning to share. Incredibly notorious “bad boys” fairly leapt at the chance to brag about their nastiest deeds in the hopes they might someday be remembered in print or on film.

To enhance this pretend-writer’s image, Morgan deliberately chose abstract and somewhat bizarre projects. This allowed plausible explanations for his penchant of disappearing for months on end in the trackless swamps of the Everglades, the deserts of Arizona and Mexico, the mountains of the American West, or wandering about the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, Russia, and Africa. Thus his sudden movements became inscrutable yet easily explained when he would resurface to claim, “I was researching “X” and it’s a great story!”

As chance would have it, one of Morgan’s more outrageous cover projects caught the attention of the legitimate media, and he was astonished to be courted by Bill Grefe, the president of Miami’s Ivan Tors Studios. Unknowingly, Grefe added authenticity to his writer claim by optioning four of his screenplays plus a TV series concept that was promptly sold.¹ Sweetening the pot, Grefe hired him to work on the crew for the film *Impulse* starring William Shatner and Ruth Roman – and even to perform a stunt. Moreover, Grefe went on to produce Morgan’s screenplay *Mako: Jaws of Death* that starred Richard Jaeckle, John Chandler, Jennifer Bishop, and Harold “Odd Job” Sakata.

Shortly thereafter, Morgan was astonished to not only be featured in the Sunday newspaper supplement *Parade*, but he began receiving invitations to appear on national radio and TV talk shows – he would even lecture at several colleges and universities. Riding the wave, he organized wildlife research expeditions for *The National Wildlife Federation* that culminated into a feature-length docudrama starring ... him. Adding to

¹ Morgan’s original concept *In Search of the World’s Mysteries* became *In Search Of...* with Leonard Nimoy. *A Drink of Rum* became *Lucky Lady* with Burt Reynolds.

this unexpected “fame”, he was also featured in the award-winning Smithsonian Series production of *Monsters: Myth or Mystery?*

The sweetest icing on this “cover cake” came while consulting to Creative Film and Sound of Miami, Florida. Morgan was now legitimately writing, directing, co-producing, and he added an acting role to his credentials in *Bloodstalkers*, a feature film that remains a cult classic for the low-budget horror genre. Equally bewildering to him, he found his photograph dead center on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*. *Oiy!* This writing stuff was supposed to be a “cover,” not a bleedin’ career! It would prove to save his life more than once.

With his “cover” firmly etched in newsprint, film, and television clips, Morgan’s true career was poised to resume when the notorious counterspy and Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis barged into the offices of *Creative film & Sound* shortly after his release from prison. In blunt terms, he offered Morgan certain secrets behind Watergate, his own deep-cover activities with Fidel Castro, the KGB, the Mafia, and JFK’s assassination. He promised these revelations would fly in the face of everyone’s speculation and would stun the world.² Sturgis offered this “tell all” in exchange for a book and movie deal. The door had barely clicked shut behind the tough guy before Morgan was on the line to Miami’s CIA station chief, Bruce Mainwaring; they set a luncheon date within the hour. Morgan soon learned it had only been a routing security test set up by the wily CIA. They both had passed by following the rules. In result, Sturgis and Morgan became not only co-operatives for covert activities, they evolved into such trusting friends that Sturgis contracted all of his private files, papers, letters, notes, photographs, and his annotated library to be passed to Morgan upon his death, natural or otherwise.

Unexpectedly, their teamwork took a pause when serendipity stepped in. One very unlucky Miami street dealer made the error of peddling drugs near the schoolyard where Morgan’s beloved daughter and her friends played. What began as a short-term and personal “cleanup of a neighborhood” would evolve into Morgan’s penetration of the most diabolical international drug profit-laundering machine in the history of American drug warfare. Initially acting alone and as a private “citizen spy” with no official sanctions or assistance, Morgan’s one-man campaign would mushroom into a major international joint-effort that would draw in both the DEA, the FBI, and, eventually, the entire Justice and State Departments plus the White House.

Morgan’s eerie luck remains legendary to those who know him. For instance, his initial attempt to trace the money path from the street dealer back to some unknown “main man” so he could also bust his gonads along with that hapless street dealer, took Morgan into a temporary job driving a taxicab. He bribed the dispatcher to give him the first call from a known Mafia “bag-lady” known only as “Olga.” Before this Olga could switch cabs – a common act en route to any hidden destination – Morgan loudly “confessed” to the startled courier that he was actually a film writer looking for a story ... about taxi drivers. This exotically attractive young lady became so intrigued with his banter and

² Revealed in Morgan’s proposal, *The Sturgis Files; Lies Our Father’s Told Us*.

stories that he was allowed to drive her straight to her “secret” drop off! However, Olga showed up bright-and-early the following morning at his office at Creative Film to breathe a sigh of relief to discover he was “for real.” It did not take Morgan long to discover that his newest fan was the trusted aide to both a local Mafia capo (John P.) and his crew. Even better, she was thick-as-thieves with the actual attorneys who were mysteriously funneling huge amounts of drug profits out of the country but also reinvesting it when it was returned as fully laundered capital.

Morgan’s next bit of bizarre luck came when Olga asked a special favor of him. Would he pretty-please take her and an unnamed friend to see Morgan’s film at the Coral Way Drive-In? Morgan’s alert system went berserk when he recognized the man who was hunched in the car’s rear seat. Michael C. was a notorious Mafia hit man who currently topped Miami’s Most Wanted list. The scene was bizarre: one self-appointed “citizen spy”, one beautiful bag lady, and one damned dangerous fugitive merrily munched popcorn and downed hotdogs while cops everywhere were beating empty bushes. The situation became even more ludicrous a few days later when Michael C. felt the dragnet tightening. Again, Olga called Morgan for a special favor. Would he immediately rush to her suite at Coral Gables’ luxurious David William Residence Hotel? He gulped to learn that his mission was to dispose of a cache of weapons (including a sniper rifle and a fully loaded Thompson submachine gun) plus a portable printing press.

In the months that followed Michael C’s arrest and trial, it became clear that Morgan was not going to rat on him. This earned him his stripes; the crew began trusting him as one of their own and Olga’s “movie guy” was asked to attend an interview at La Costa, a California haven for powerful mobsters. Following a lavish luncheon with Freddy K. a top mob attorney and facilitator – who showed up driving a Land Rover and ludicrously dressed in safari gear – Morgan was invited to join Olga at the operation’s epicenter in Tucson, Arizona. Morgan’s blood ran cold. It now became crystal clear that the true Boss – and thus his target – was none other than the organization ran by Mafioso Joseph Bonanno.

Recognizing the stakes were becoming too high for any citizen “without portfolio”, Morgan made a late night call to the local DEA office that proved providential. He made contact with veteran Special Agent Norman C.P. Jones, a rough-and-tumble investigator known equally well for both guts and honesty. The third musketeer to what became a perfect trio appeared when FBI Special Agent Frederick Coward reviewed one of Jones’s routine reports. Coward’s instincts leapt on full alert when he recognized elements that dovetailed with his own investigation on the Bonanno family.

It was fortunate too that Fred Coward was not the typical FBI Agent who is usually an attorney or an accountant by trade; Coward had been recruited because he was a street-smart ex-cop from Long Beach, California who had experience on the backstreets working undercover operations. He also recognized in a heartbeat that Morgan presented a huge conundrum to the Justice Department’s stodgy bureaucracy. In the first place, Morgan was irreplaceable because his “perfect cover” could not be duplicated by any professional agent. Secondly, Morgan was not the usual criminal working off a beef as a

Confidential Informant. How could they control him if there was no “twist”? Hell, they could not even classify him!

Joe Blow Citizen just doesn't do these things, right? Moreover, the DEA and the FBI had a notorious history of keeping secrets from one another as to their methods, sources, leads, and mostly their confidential files. Not this time around. This case became the first in either of their histories wherein they would share not only a single source but also offices *and* its confidential files.

The true test for Morgan's dedication came when he was flown to Houston to meet Jeffrey B. This “accidental author” was informed that Jeff represents a special client whose vast profits were vegetating in offshore banks and they needed a legitimate path home. As the attorney in charge, he was authorized to finance a string of Morgan films IF they could be done outside the USA – preferably in Panama. The scheme was simple yet brilliant: the finished negatives would be imported into the USA as a foreign product. Naturally, the resulting profits generated through American distribution would be legally declared as income in the U.S. In effect, drug money that went out dirty is now spiffy clean and ready for domestic reinvestment. Morgan took a deep breath; this offer could firmly set him on a path to fame and riches as a real “movie guy.” He only had to make the choice.

While Jeff commenced serious negotiations with selected Hollywood luminaries³, Morgan was invited to the Occidental, California horse ranch owned by Freddy K. Morgan's hidden tape recorder spun wildly as his host bragged on and on about being kept so very busy jetting about purchasing vineyards, banks, housing projects, and shopping malls all over the western states while his Lebanese wife Hedy dealt in arms and munitions destined for the Middle East. Once again, Morgan's luck hit gold in the form of a drenching rain storm that flooded the ranch's sumptuous guesthouse. He was asked if he would mind bunking up in Freddy's detached office where a foldout bed was made cozy beside a roaring fire. Freddy-boy apologized for the mess; he was preparing for his accountant's preview the following morning and all of his file cabinets were standing wide-open and his desk was buried beneath bundles of accounting sheets, bank statements, and international transfer memos – say *what?*

The moment the lights in the main house go out, Morgan began snapping through every roll of Minox film in his arsenal. Hours later, after all had become dark and still, he inched his rental car down the twisting lane and onto the main road. Safely out of sight-and-sound, he roared away to nearby Santa Rosa to roust his handlers – he was amazed to find more back-up agents there than he could count. Everyone gaped at his booty of film, receipts, bank statements, checks, and faxes. Each begged to be copied. The hour before dawn found Morgan pushing his car inch-by-inch back up that lane. He barely had time to replace everything before chubby Freddy came to feed his horses.

Morgan's spy scorecard got fatter over breakfast. Bleary-eyed and yawning, he staggered up to the main house to join his hosts for morning coffee just as their only

³ Legitimate producer Josef Shafitel and famed Hollywood director Richard Fleischer came within a hair's breadth of being sucked into this operation.

neighbor happened by. This crotchety character was not at all pleased to meet a stranger and he rudely turned away while beckoning Hedy to follow him outside. Their conversation was brief but animated before he roared back up the lane in his big black Mercedes. That was a fatal mistake for Mr. Rude. Had he acted neighborly, perhaps Morgan would have taken little or no notice. Instead, using the excuse that he needed a change of clothing before the accountant settled in, he had ghosted up through the thick brush to photograph that same Mercedes – license plate in plain view – as it squatted beside a bungalow made mysterious by the veritable forest of *camouflaged* short-wave radio antennas that surrounded it. This would later prove to be the site of unexplained coded data that had been eluding discovery for years.⁴

It was early afternoon when Hedy summoned her husband for a hurried telephone conversation. Soon a sweaty and distracted Freddy reappeared to insist that Morgan accompany him for a “relaxing” drive up the lonely Pacific Coastal Highway. Sensing evil, Morgan made another excuse to return to his car to get his Canon 35 mm camera that contained that single shot of the antenna farm. He deliberately left the car and his luggage unlocked and his pocket cassette player in plain sight; it was pre-armed with rambling “writer’s notes” about fictitious story ideas for Panama. He also slipped a loaded .22 magnum derringer into his hip pocket. Neither Jones nor Coward was ever aware that he was always armed.

The road that links Bodega Bay to Fort Ross is long, narrow, twisting, and often skirts the edges of high cliffs; a close tail by agents Jones and Coward was impossible. Morgan never looked back; instead, he kept the conversation with Freddy-boy light and funny. When they reached old Fort Ross, the chubby attorney hustled off to make yet another telephone call while Morgan refueled the Land Rover. Whatever was said, Freddy returned as his jovial self. Morgan surmised that the suspicious neighbor had “tossed” his car and his belongings in his absence and came up empty. Had anything been amiss it is probable that Freddy had been ordered to kill him.

These are but a few examples of the bizarre incidents that took place over a period of five years. The most dangerous situation was when Morgan’s daughter Natalie asked to come to live with him. This placed her directly into the danger zone. While he had weapons stashed in every room of their home, Morgan daily searched his soul for the best solution. He knew that if he abandoned his work then it would not halt the investigation nor would it protect him from having to testify in open court. He also knew that hiding was no option. His decision became the greatest gamble of his life; he boldly introduced Natalie to Olga and to the other players as if he was unaware of any possible danger. At night, he would sweat blood; in the waking hours, he had terrible dreams. He loved his beautiful child beyond words, but her best defense was total exposure and deliberate vulnerability. Rightly or wrongly, they both lived through it, although his sometimes strained and erratic behavior and his sudden bursts of anger would drive a permanent wedge between them. She never understood because she never knew the situation; he could not explain it – until now.

⁴ It had been an incredible coincidence: these signals were intended for Fidel Castro’s Communist Cuba.

However, without warning or explanation, Morgan's services were abruptly terminated and all official communications were ordered severed. Years would pass before he would learn that it had not been due to any failure on their behalf. Instead, this trio had been too damned successful. The incriminating data this single "citizen spy" provided had enabled the FBI to establish an irrefutable link between the American Mafia and the respected Italian Banco Ambrosiano – the bank used by the Vatican – and the president of Republic of Panama. *The recovery operation against this criminal operation yielded over \$500,000,000 in cash and confiscated assets in the U.S. and billions more were targeted.* So who had ordered a halt to such an astoundingly successful operation? The answers are startling and sobering.

***“The effects and the insidious tentacles of this single landmark
Investigation continue to be felt within America’s present
War on Middle Eastern terrorism.”***

Retired FBI Special Agent F. Coward to Robert W. Morgan
Phoenix, Arizona 2003

Puzzled and disheartened at being suddenly shut out, Morgan took a breather before returning to work with Frank Sturgis in roles to assist the anti-Castro movement. Again capitalizing on his façade as a screenwriter, Morgan acted as consultant to PSYWAR (psychological warfare) missions against Cuba and its troops in Angola.⁵ Morgan would be asked to penetrate the Soviet Iron Curtain in an attempt to locate two ex-CIA defectors who had proved to be Castro sympathizers. Morgan's cover for this mission would be the most outrageous of his career. Although he had no background in art whatsoever – he thought fountains were best suited as bidets for giants – he was legitimately contracted by Japan's *Hasagawa Komoten* to conduct an international search for the "world's most beautiful fountain." This highly subjective *objet d'art* was to be purchased as the centerpiece to an exclusive hotel intended for Maui. With *Hotel Intercontinental, Inc.* and *Pan-American Airways* acting as travel sponsors, he easily gained press coverage in London. Once again, he gained a coveted shield of provable authenticity – no matter how strange.

Despite picking up KGB shadows in Munich who tracked him through the back streets of Vienna and into Communist Hungary, Morgan managed to toss them a giant curve ball the precise moment he arrived at the Budapest Intercontinental Hotel. By sheer chance (luck?), he spied noted British film actor John Rhys-Davies (James Clavell's *Shogun*, *Noble House*, Spielberg's *Indiana Jones* series, and *King Solomon's Mines*, etc.) strolling through the lobby. Morgan literally threw his bags down into the actor's path and stuck out his hand.

"*Kee-rist*, man!" he yelped. "Do I have a script for you! I came half-way around the world to catch up with you, old boy!" Morgan could only imagine the reactions among his KGB tails when he later met the curious actor for supper on the banks of the Danube.

⁵ See **The Sturgis Files: Lies Our Fathers Told Us.**

Stuffed to the gills with goulash and awash in Hungarian green wine, the pair made quite a loud show of it. While Morgan did an imitation of Blackbeard the pirate, growling the opening lines to his script, *The Legend of the Black Madonna*: “Aye, do ye like virrrgins, Mister Hands?” The equally potted Rhys-Davies bellowed in counterpoint from *Othello*, “O, what noise is this? Not dead? Not quite yet dead ... “

In 1990, Robert W. Morgan was tapped to write and direct what was intended to be the first Soviet-American co-production in feature films. Against Frank Sturgis’s dire warnings not to take such a stupid risk, he indeed accompanied the *Save the Children Foundation* to Moscow and on to Leningrad to promote his newest script for kids, *Misha: the Lost Son of Grizzly Adams*⁶.

Morgan’s reward for venturing so boldly into the clutches of the KGB easily could have been a one-way trip to the infamous killing grounds of Yasenevo Woods or years of gruesome torture within the stinking cells of Lubyanka Prison. Instead – and in their typical cat-and-mouse fashion - , the Russians elected to play games of intimidation. First, Morgan was “accidentally” rammed by a car while standing only yards from the newly elected U.S. Senator James Jeffords from Vermont and Entertainment Tonight’s Leeza Gibbons. Next, he was set up as if to be killed by a MosFilm Studio guard as a midnight trespasser, and lastly he found himself kidnapped (albeit briefly) to Lavrenti Beria’s former dacha. Morgan obviously met their standards for guts (or stupidity) because, on his sojourn to Leningrad he was treated to a full hour to wander about unsupervised in the fabled Hermitage Museum on a day it was normally closed. Moreover, a special chair was placed for him in the aisle of the Male’ Ballet so he might enjoy the first act of Giselle before the night train returned to Moscow.

Despite the sudden niceties, Morgan was baffled when a contingent of black-jacketed KGB agents marched into the formal farewell party at Moscow’s Foreign Legation Hall. In full view of everyone, he was awarded a purported “*Soviet People’s Award* for outstanding achievements in his field” before they clapped a Russian submarine officer’s cap atop his head and made him pose for pictures. The KGB made certain they had the last laugh. Morgan failed to notice that his “award” was dated 1976, a fact that triggered hours of embarrassing explanations to the suspicious CIA at New York’s JFK airport. Worse, Morgan’s luggage containing all his Christmas presents for his daughter went missing for 10 days.

Months later, and while shunting with his producer Tom Spalding between Universal Studios in Orlando and Moscow for casting, locations, and financing *Misha*, Morgan paused in London for a week of rest. That same afternoon – on the street and only blocks from Harrods – Morgan came face-to-face with a thin and quite wan Freddy K. The two former associates disguised their shared astonishment by agreeing to meet for dinner that same evening at Freddy-boy’s favorite restaurant.

Armed with only a tiny steel blade he concealed in his money clip, Morgan was more than wary when the taxi dropped him on the steps leading up to a second-floor Chinese

⁶ This production was cancelled during the chaos of the Gorbachev coup.

restaurant in the sleaziest part of the East End. There he found sweaty-Freddy waiting at a table in its darkest corner. Midway through dinner and past the usual friendly banter, the attorney's façade dissolved as he began ticking off the most damning items the government had revealed during his trial's discovery phase. He wasted no time in demanding to know if Morgan had been "that fucking government mole that had nailed us." First off, Morgan snapped back, had he not also lost his grand plans for fame and fortune in the film business? Then Morgan reviewed Freddy's list. One by one, he shunted suspicion onto those whom he knew had equal or better access to that same information. Sweating profusely, groaning, and totally deflated, Freddy backed off. He admitted with a whimpering sigh that Olga, Tom W., Rick W., or perhaps even Mikey C. could have been the culprit; after all, had not their capo John P. wangled his way out of prison on the government's snitch protection program? Worse, Freddy whined, did Morgan know that his Hedy had turned state's witness against him to save her own sorry ass? Indeed, the little man whispered, he too had given testimony that helped send Mafioso Joseph Bonanno to prison for life. In return, Freddy's plea bargain reduced his sentence to time served, he paid a huge fine that left him broke, his license to practice law had been revoked, he was permanently banished from the USA, and now his son by a previous marriage was refusing to visit him. As bad, should he try to return stateside without permission, he would face charges left pending with the IRS.

Following long and pensive moments as if tugged by some invisible string, Freddy motioned him closer and closer until they were nose-to-nose. Morgan had already palmed his tiny knife blade and was measuring both the distance to Freddy's left eyeball and the shortest path to the steps. However, the sad little man only wanted to fill in the most serious blanks. He whispered, "When the heat got too bad, they murdered Pope John-Paul I ..."

Morgan gasped and nearly choked. "That's not possible! W-Why? How in the hell was he involved? I heard he died in his sleep!"

Freddy hissed explanations beyond the Pope to explain the rationale that had forced the murders of Roberto Caldi, a director of Banco Ambrosiano, and the assassination of both the sitting president of Panama and his brother.\

The two former comrades parted that evening not as friends but as men who shared an extremely burden. Despite promises to one day reunite in Either England or Spain, each knew it was unlikely. However, the unwelcome information Morgan gained that night continues to haunt him. Although not a Catholic, Morgan mightily regrets any part he may have played, no matter how small, in the martyrdom of John Paul I. This man of God had been endowed with extraordinary courage. His demand to have those Vatican banking records delivered to his apartment so he might determine the truth behind all those whispered allegations could have logically cost him his life.

As fate would again have it, Morgan's film co-production between America and Russia did not materialize. The 1991 coup that had unseated Mikhail Gorbachev also had

shaken the confidence of the film's investors, it had lost its completion bond, and the project had been shelved.

On New Year's Eve, 1992, Frank Sturgis again called upon his trusted *Commandante Beto* to help him develop an innovative concept to force Cuban Premier Fidel Castro out of power using PSYWAR techniques and minimal force. In that capacity, Morgan visited Sturgis's training camp in the Florida Everglades where hundreds of anti-Castro *agent provocateurs* and guerilla fighters were secretly training. Morgan's resulting proposal would be reviewed at the highest levels on two continents. If adopted, it could have provided the first "bloodless" coup in Latin American history. Then the Clintons were elected. Nothing more is to be said ... that is until *The Sturgis Files: Lies Our Fathers Told Us* finds a gutsy publisher.

Agents of Fidel Castro succeeded in assassinating Frank Sturgis in early December 1993. Over time, Morgan had come to recognize that for all his outward gruffness and deliberate show of lacking in social polish, Frank Sturgis had been a true patriot in its rawest form. Slipping quite easily into his alter ego, Morgan's *Beto* remains furious that his pal did not see the fruits of his labor to free the Cuban people. *Beto* intends to wreak revenge by publishing the rawest truth at any cost and let them all be damned! One thing is certain: certain surviving members of the Kennedy clan will not be pleased in many respects. Too bad. Truth sometimes heals, and sometimes hurts.

Frank's Little Havana funeral brought thousands of grateful Cubans to mourn their loss. Morgan was singled out to act as one of Frank's honor guards and became the only non-family member to ride to the cemetery with Frank's widow. Permanently – and defiantly – blowing his cover before the massed television cameras, Robert W. Morgan was the only non-Cuban pallbearer amid Frank's fiercest and most loyal amigos.

As fate would have it yet again, Frank had demonstrated uncanny foresight by contracting to Morgan all his personal and secret papers, pictures, files, and even his annotated library to use as he sees fit. Well, Morgan sees fit, indeed! It is true that when Frank Sturgis was buried that day in Miami, Florida, a part of Morgan was buried with him. To make matters better or worse, he went on to uncover the sinister method of Frank's assassination. It involved Castro's agents to be sure, but it also required the cooperation of American agencies. Morgan would also become a target; he managed to dodge death not once but twice. He then decided it was wise to spread the rumor that *Commandante Beto* had succumbed.

Note: As of May 2014, RWM is living in the Pittsburgh area and working with his partner at *California Avenue Productions, LLC* to get *The Sturgis Files* and many more of his "accidental" stories to market. His book *Citizen Spy* was published in 2010, but as per their agreement, due to inactivity by the small publishing house in Wisconsin, the rights have reverted back to the author, all rights are reserved.

The End
(...well, not quite yet ...)

