

# *El Jefe de los Jefes*

**A Life of Investigation**

Jerry Hall

The influence of my father and three uncles, who had been in the security and police officer businesses, led to my only clue about what career I should pursue. Pictured here is my uncle Cecil Hall (far right) who served with the Caldwell, Idaho Police Department.



My options in a small town in Washington State were to be a farmer or a logger in the woods or work in the only saw mill around. The saw mill closed in the late 60s, and the small town even today has only grown by 2000 or so residents.

Given those limited options, the military beckoned. In the late 50's, the Army offered training in any field the applicant chose. The Army was also the only branch of the services that offered training in Military Police. On December 2, 1957, I was on my way to Fort Ord, California, for eight weeks of basic training. Then it was off to Fort Gordon, Georgia, for the eight weeks of M.P. school.

This training proved to be a lot harder than basic training, as we ran everywhere, with daily inspections of everything you can imagine. We looked forward to our graduation with a lot of anticipation about our assignment for the future.



It was not our first choice—by any stretch of the imagination—as twelve of us were assigned to remain at Fort Gordon and join the post’s M.P. Company. Our only duty was being gate guards, making sure every vehicle and person entering the post had proper stickers and or identification.

The weather in the summer of 1958 was humid and hot, and volunteering for the night shifts to avoid the daytime heat became very competitive—to say the least—and Georgia was not a place to be. That fall, when the company Commander asked for two volunteers to clear “Top Secret” and two of us raised our arms without much thought—and waved frantically. We were chosen and then spent a couple of months waiting for the clearances by the F.B.I.

In the spring of 1960, we received our orders and were transferred to Fort Meyers, Virginia, across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. Our quarters were shared by

the honor guard for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. There were fifteen of us, and we spent most of our days in D.C. with countless interviews, physicals and lie detector tests, most of which were in the Pentagon. Our questions about this screening were useless, and the only information we received was that the assignment would be in civilian clothes, and only one of us would be chosen.

After about 3 months, the selection was made and the remainder of us received orders to be sent to Fort Lewis, Washington, then to Korea. After a very rough trip on the water, stopping overnight in Yokohama, Japan, we arrived in Seoul and were informed there were no openings for Military Police, so we were assigned to Tank and Infantry and other posts. I was sent to a small Tank Battalion in northern Korea, approximately 30 miles from the DMZ.

The 7th Division headquarters had the only open Military Police positions, and after applying to be transferred, I was interviewed and accepted in an "undercover" position. The bad news was that I had to remain in the small outfit where I was assigned to drive the jeep for the executive officer since I had no training in tanks. As there were no M.Ps on post, I reported things that needed attention. Troops were not allowed off the main supply route (M.S.R.), but there were many violations of this rule, and there was an active black market of items from the P.X., bringing in five to ten times to the cost when purchased by the locals. Prostitution on and off base was also a big problem. There were many things to report on.

As the thirteen-month tour was coming to an end, I received orders to Hunter Liggett, California. This was a destination known to all as a "You do not want to go there." It was described as a storage area for excess military vehicles and the only M.P. duty was gate duty and patrolling the storage area. Despite the fact that I only had ten months of service left on the three-year hitch, I reenlisted for three years from that date and chose Europe as the destination. After a brief vacation,

I arrived at Ft. Dix, New Jersey, where I missed a plane flight and assignment in Italy by two names. Instead, it was another boat ride—this time across the smooth Atlantic to Germany.

I was assigned to the 3rd Armored Division in Kirchgoens, just outside Butzbach, where a famous German prison is located. I soon learned there were no Military Police assigned here, but there was an attachment of Unit Police, whose duties were to protect the base and pull gate duty. I put in a transfer request and was accepted. This involved riding assignments with the M.P.'s in Butzbach, where there was a dependents' housing area. Although it was billed as an eighteen month assignment, due to the erection of the Berlin Wall, we were extended to our discharge dates.



I began to question my choice of career. Not only did I realize that I would be spending many years in uniform before I would “graduate” to a plain-clothes, undercover position,

but, in addition, something took place that was much more intolerable.

## Beer Hall Rumble Way Out

**BUTZBACH**—A necktie that wasn't there started a GI rumble that involved 20 soldiers and ended with an Army UP nursing a broken nose.

It also ended in dismay for two of the other soldiers involved last week when a V Corps general court kicked one out of the service and jailed the other for six months and fined him \$300.

Unit policeman Pfc Heyward T. Drucker said he was checking Annie's Bar here just before midnight and looking for soldiers from the 3d Armd Rifle Bn, 51st Inf, who are banned from the beer hall.

He spotted Pfc Sam Lucarelli, D Co, sitting in the bar without a necktie and decided to check out the GI's identification. Lucarelli, he said, tried to pose as a German but admitted he was a GI when the UP said he would call in German police.

**As the UPs took Lucarelli out of the bar a group of protesting GIs gathered in the street shouting, "Let him go." The crowd of irate GIs gathered around the jeep and the burly MPs and UPs, averaging six feet in height, who were taking Lucarelli to the station for being "without a pass."**

Pfc Paul Pennypacker, a tall, good-looking MP, said he was holding onto one soldier, Pfc Blase Sava, who was trying to interfere with the arrest. The MP said another GI grabbed him from behind and Sava slipped away. UP Drucker let go of his prisoner to aid his fellow policeman.

Drucker said a soldier clubbed him with an MP nightstick and he fell on the ground. He told investigators that Ret Jeremiah J. McCarthy, also of D Co, kicked him twice while he lay on the ground.

The felled UP, who glared at

**McCarthy countered the UP's allegation by claiming he had been "worked over" by the policemen after his arrest.**

The blond, bulky soldier said that UP Sp4 Wladimiro Piniek had also kicked him twice. "Once he woke me up by throwing water into my face and said, 'I'm not finished with you yet.'"

McCarthy alleged that after the beating his face was bruised, his hand was injured and his stomach was black and blue.

Piniek denied the charge and said he had never laid a hand (or foot) on the soldier.

In court, prosecutor Maj Philip F. Thorne needed only a one-sentence argument to appeal for a conviction.

Philip Alexander, the civilian attorney for McCarthy and Lucarelli, viewed the incident from another angle.

**"You are dealing with immature young boys, full of vim, vigor and vitality. Whatever they did to each other was soon forgotten. They get in and out of fights."**

The court recessed and returned sentences against the GIs:

**Lucarelli:** six months confinement, \$300 forfeiture and a bust to E-1 for escaping custody.

**McCarthy:** a BCD, one year in jail, total pay loss for assault and breach of the peace.

**Sava** (who was tried a week earlier): a BCD, total forfeiture, one year in jail and bust to E-1 for resisting arrest and breach of the peace.

**Other soldiers yet to face trial in the incident are Pfc Kenneth E. Watkins, Pfc Lewis R. Prior, and Pfc David Villasenor.**

The extreme violence of the situation and the subsequent handling of those detained in the holding rooms made me “think again.” The mistreatment of those arrested was severe and uncalled-for. I had become fond of the investigative nature of police work, but this incident was a definite wake-up call!

I started corresponding with the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. I had taken psychology, sociology and criminology correspondence courses from the University of Maryland. I had brushed up on Pinkerton’s history before I corresponded with the Detroit, Michigan office. I had chosen Detroit because my sister had married while I was in Germany and was living in nearby Pontiac.

With honorable discharge in hand, once again in Ft. Dix, N.J. after another slow boat ride from Hamburg, I was exhilarated to be finished with my 5 years 2 months and 4 days of military service. While the military had not been a good career starting choice, it had allowed me to travel extensively in Europe: Germany, Brussels, Holland, France, Spain, Italy and Austria. In 1961 I proudly coached a Little League Baseball team at the Butzbach Dependents Recreation Center. If we could have won the last 5 games in the playoffs, we would have traveled to Williamsport World Series.





My interview in the Detroit office took place about two weeks after my discharge on February 4, 1963. I submitted several copies of reports I had written while a unit police officer as well as letters or recommendation.

I was hired at the conclusion of the interview and spent the next two weeks reading manuals and sample reports, as well as Pinkerton history and protocol. I was then placed in the training hands of two different investigators, and my first training was in the art of surveillance. I met the up with the trainer at 5:30 in the morning and the first day of training was a very long day. The trainer who guided me through all of the techniques and principles—or, should I say, the art of surveillance—was an excellent guide. The next stage of training was subterfuge interviews with claimants in workman's compensation claims.

We also canvased neighbors of the subject, utilizing yet another ruse, in order to track the activities of the individual for potential surveillance and to document film evidence countering their claim of disability. My first new car, which was excellent for surveillance was a 1963 1/2 Ford Falcon Sprint.



The hardest part of the job was spending several hours each night preparing the necessary reports. In any case, I progressed rapidly and by the end of my first year, I was written up in Pinkerton's quarterly newspaper as having obtained motion picture evidence on 11 out of 12 assignments. It was pointed out that I failed to get film on the 12th assignment because the claimant had passed away 2 weeks before the surveillance had begun.

I recall this assignment because at approximately 10:00 a.m. on the first day of surveillance a man emerged from the house and proceeded to mow and edge the lawn, bending over repeatedly and performing numerous tasks, which he should not have been able to do. It was all I could do not to photograph that activity, but he appeared to be in his forties, not sixties. After about an hour, he entered the house and after waiting an hour or so, with no further activity, I approached the house and the man I had seen. It was then I learned, using a ruse, that he was the son of the claimant and his father had passed away.

The second part of being a Pinkerton agent was undercover assignments. A company would hire an employee who was in fact an investigator and this fact was only known to management of the company. I was hired in a grocery warehouse and then a hospital. These assignments usually last 30 to 60 days and all of the reports were written in the third person. According to management, there were agents who had been on undercover assignments for years, the longest for 21 years. The identity of these were known only to management.

After approximately 18 months and two miserably hot summers and a horrible winter, my supervisor transferred to the Los Angeles office. Determined not to spend another winter or summer in Detroit, he authorized my transfer to his office. My mother lived in Long Beach, and in late October 1964, I moved there and immediately went to work on undercover assignments, including a major hospital, music record warehouse, appliance warehouse and a sailboat builder.

I was also assigned the security and delivery truck safety for the Herald Examiner newspaper when they went on strike in Los Angeles. This allowed me to also supply personal protection to the owners and their family, as there had been two hired workers shot and killed while they were transported to their hotel. This assignment lasted for over a year and involved 90 to 100 hours a week.

After approximately ten years and a slow-down of work, I was hired by a private Investigator in Orange County whose main work was once again sub rosa investigations. The cameras used had advanced from 16 mm to super eights, and we were then able to use a lot more powerful lens.

California had passed legislation prohibiting the contacting of claimants by investigators as we had done in Detroit. The claimant's attorney had to be contacted first, which prohibited the use of subterfuge, of course. It was now almost pure surveillance and then of course appearances at the workman's compensation board to show film evidence. The penalty in those days for the fraud that was being committed was not considered a crime and the referees would usually take a small percentage of awards to compensate the insurance companies for the cost of the investigation.

It became obvious after about three years that I needed to change my field of investigation when a referee actually fell asleep during my film showing a claimant who was diagnosed at 100% disability performing every movement he supposedly could not do. His disability was reduced by 20% as I recall, and he should have gone to jail and been stripped of his disability award.

During this period, a supervisor from the L.A. office of Pinkerton's had moved to San Diego and opened his own P.I. business in El Cajon. In October of 1973, I phoned and asked about business and inquired whether he might need an investigator. He replied that I could not get there fast enough, and I packed the U-haul truck and moved there. At the time, my favorite places to fish were in San Diego and Estero Beach, 75 miles south of San Diego, and I considered the move the best for both worlds.

I found my investigative experience valuable in yet another field of investigation. The criminal defense assignments were handled by private firms. At first I handled mostly misdemeanors and low grade felonies. It was not long,

however, that the serious felonies came in, and I received one of my first homicide cases in late 1976. There had been a gang shooting in Southeast San Diego on November 21 and a subsequent arrest of our client who professed his innocence. As it turned out, the District Attorney's star witness was the shooter and a notorious gang member.

As the trial started, he was called to the stand, testified and was released to go home. We had uncovered witnesses who claimed that the individual was the shooter, and after noon-time conferences with the new found evidence, he was brought back into court and arrested. Subsequent to this arrest, further witnesses came forward, and he was later convicted of two more homicides, one of which was over two years old.

On March 4, 1977, I was surprised to pick up the morning newspaper with the headline "Killing Suspect Free, Star Witness Seized." It was not long before my partner and I were interviewed by the magazine Master Detective, and in November 1977, the story was published.



It had been in October 1976 that I decided to obtain my own P.I. license from the State of California, so I took the examinations. The requirement at the time was to have at least 4,000 hours of paid experience. I qualified to take the test with over 34,000 hours of documented investigative experience. My employer, because of slow payments by the county, decided to terminate criminal defense work, unless it was retained. I did not want to eliminate this type of work, as it was challenging and such an education in human nature. With the benefit of several courses in determining whether a person was being truthful and all of the exposure in the field, I found myself a natural for this line of investigation. It was in late 1976 that I decided to launch Gerald Hall Investigations.

I expanded Gerald Hall investigations, incorporated, and became known as Specter, Inc. By the fall of 1980 I had six investigators and two support staff. We had amassed an impressive record of successful investigations on behalf of accused defendants. These investigations led to acquittals in cases which involved fraud, rape, and murder and/or manslaughter.

It was in the fall of 1980, I was needed in another state to conduct an undercover investigation in a law enforcement agency. Since it would be impossible to manage and see to the day to day operations of Specter, I chose to sell to my partner and signed a non-competition agreement for one year. The operation lasted for eight months and was very successful, and since my former partner had gone out of business by that time, I returned to the San Diego area and went back to the investigative field, as a lone operator. I realized that the hiring/firing of employees in addition to working in the field was more than I wanted to undertake again.

In 1984 the County decided to form a Public Defenders office, which turned out to be nothing more than a system to see if a government agency would save money. Instead of calling it the Office of the Public Defender, they called it "Defenders' Services" and within a few months, the employees did not know whether their jobs were secure. I applied to be the Chief Investigator and was hired in this position.



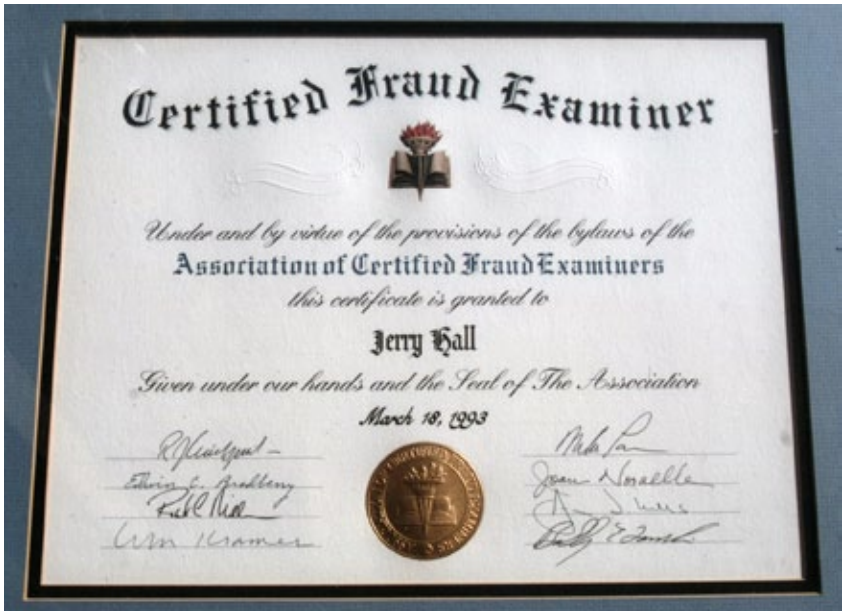
Instead of expanding the office and the investigators, once again I was supervising eight investigators and carrying a full case load.

By 1988, the office was officially formed and expanded to a full scale office. The new head of the department hired a new Chief Investigator, and I was soon back in the field. By 2001 my knees totally gave out, necessitating the total replacement of both knees. I guess the thousands of hours driving and sitting behind the wheel took its toll. Because unqualified investigators were hired, the division was soon troubled with negative news articles and eventually several were fired, including one who had committed a felony. The head of the department and the Chief Investigator did not last 5 years and parted ways.

Their successors were nothing more than political appointments and nothing changed as to the investigative section.

Despite the bad experiences of this period and because of my reputation, I was appointed as the district governor of The California Association of Licensed Investigators. On November 7, 1992, I was presented with a large plaque highlighting my accomplishments and those of my employees. The plaque, which highlighted seventeen cases which were dismissed or whose defendants were found "not guilty," read, "Recognizing 20 years of Excellence in Criminal Defense. Your continuous leadership and knowledge have been instrumental to our successes. Your amigos and students salute you, "El Jefe De Los Jefes" (Chief of Chiefs).





On March 18, 1993, I was recognized as a Certified Fraud Examiner.

I should have known better, but despite all the bad experiences of serving and the lack of real training in the Military, I had hoped the County experience would have been professional and rewarding. One would hope the government would be operated as if were a business. We would all be better off—that is for sure. In my 40+ years of investigation, the practice of attorneys supervising investigators without any oversight or control of a supervisor of investigations, without any review of their reports or the manner in which investigations were handled was ludicrous and not practiced by any other investigative organization I had ever seen or been a part of. Investigative assignments were simply passed out to next in line, without review by a supervisor. Unqualified personnel became glorified runners or attorney assistants—not investigators in the field of criminal defense.



It has taken a few years for me to re-live what could have been and what should have happened. It is with a lot of pride that I point to a few of highlights which reflect my own professionalism and that of few experienced, excellent fellow investigators whom I had the pleasure of supervising. The following cases were highlighted in the San Diego Union-Tribune and are jury verdicts or actions taken by the judges assigned to the cases:

3/14/1977 - Pv Hector Cortinias – Murder - Acquitted

3/9/1978 - Pv Don Jones - Murder - Acquitted

3/9/1978 - Pv Paul Watkins - Rape & Kidnapping - Acquitted

8/6/ 1978 - Pv Virginia Tierce - Manslaughter – Dismissed

12/4/1979 - Pv Michael Woods - Rape – Acquitted

2/7/1980 - Pv Thoung Doung - Rape – Acquitted

2/16/1980 - Pv Castella Brown - Murder – Dismissed

12/3/1980 - Pv Marvin Percel - Robbery – Dismissed

3/25/1983 - Pv Edward Childs - Murder – Dismissed

8/11/1984 - Pv Chester Holiday - Murder – Acquitted

11/14/1985 - Pv Jesse Turks - Murder – Acquitted

1/15/86 - Pv Ralph Moritz - Manslaughter – Acquitted

2/14/1986 - Pv Bernard Moss - Murder – Dismissed

12/4/1986 - Pv Kenneth Hawkins - Murder – Acquitted

4/4/1987 - Pv Larry Schneider - Murder – Acquitted

1/18/1991 - Pv Gary Thies - Manslaughter – Dismissed

I was able to remain professional and keep a sense of accomplishment by keeping my Private Investigator license in effect until my retirement on April 4, 1973. I also possessed one of the few concealed weapon permits issued in the County, good for the entire state, since 1974. I could not engage in any criminal defense outside of the County of San Diego, and instead I engaged in several body guard jobs, including a candidate for Mayor of San Diego and other clients in the area. This has kept me in touch with professional investigators both in private practice and law enforcement personnel.

That covers forty years of my chosen field of work, and with the new age of technology, Facebook, email and the rest, I would like to hear from anyone I have had the pleasure of meeting, and if any of you are working cases, I would be happy to apply my experience and skills to those cases.