

## The Swirl & The Swastika: Nutrasweet, The Nutrapoison

By Alex Constantine  
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I recognized my two selves: a crusading idealist and a cold, granitic believer in the law of the jungle. - Edgar [Monsanto](#) Queeny, Monsanto chairman, 1943-63, *The Spirit of Enterprise*, 1934.

The FDA is ever mindful to refer to aspartame, widely known as NutraSweet, as a "food additive" - never a "drug." A "drug" on the label of a Diet Coke might discourage the consumer. And because aspartame is classified a food additive, adverse reactions are not reported to a federal agency, nor is continued safety monitoring required by law.<sup>1</sup> NutraSweet is a non-nutritive sweetener. The brand name is a misnomer. Try Non-NutraSweet.

Food additives seldom cause brain lesions, headaches, mood alterations, skin polyps, blindness, brain tumors, insomnia and depression, or erode intelligence and short-term memory. Aspartame, according to some of the most capable scientists in the country, does. In 1991 the National Institutes of Health, a branch of the Department of Health and Human Services, published a bibliography, *Adverse Effects of Aspartame*, listing no less than 167 reasons to avoid it.<sup>2</sup>

Aspartame is an rDNA derivative, a combination of two amino acids (long supplied by a pair of Maryland biotechnology firms: Genex Corp. of Rockville and Purification Engineering in Baltimore.)<sup>3</sup> The [Pentagon](#) once listed it in an inventory of prospective biochemical warfare weapons submitted to Congress.<sup>4</sup> But instead of poisoning enemy populations, the "food additive" is currently marketed as a sweetening agent in some 1200 food products.

In light of the chemo-warfare implications, the pasts of G.D. Searle and aspartame are ominous. Established in 1888 on the north side of Chicago, G.D. Searle has long been a fixture of the medical establishment. The company manufactures everything from prescription drugs to nuclear imaging optical equipment.<sup>5</sup>

General Robert E. Wood, American Nazi collaborator

Directors of G.D. Searle include such geopolitical heavy-hitters as Andre M. de Staercke, [Reagan](#)'s ambassador to Belgium, and Reuben Richards, an executive vice president at Citibank. Also Arthur Wood, the retired CEO of [Sears](#), Roebuck & Co., disgorged by the clan of General Robert E. Wood, wartime chairman of the [America First](#) Committee.<sup>6</sup> America Firsters, organized by native Nazis cloaked as isolationists, were quietly financed by the likes of Sullivan & Cromwell's John Foster [Dulles](#) and Edwin Webster of Kidder, Peabody.<sup>7</sup>

Until the acquisition by [Monsanto](#) in 1985, the firm's chairman was William L. Searle, a Harvard graduate, Naval reservist and - a grim irony in view of aspartame's adverse effects - an officer in the Army Chemical Corps in the early 1950s, when the same division tested [LSD](#) on groups of human subjects in concert with the CIA.<sup>8</sup> The chief of the Chemical Warfare Division at this time was Dr. Laurence Laird Layton, whose son Larry was convicted for the murder of Congressman [Leo Ryan](#) at Jonestown ("Come to the pavilion! What a legacy!"). Jonestown, of course, bore a remarkable likeness to a concentration camp, and kept a full store of pharmaceutical drugs. (The Jonestown pharmacy was stocked with a variety of behavior control drugs: qualudes, valium, morphine, demerol and 11,000 doses of thiorazine - a better supply, in fact, than the Guyanese government's own, not to mention a surfeit of cyanide.<sup>9</sup>)

Dr. Layton was married to the daughter of Hugo Phillip, a German banker and stockbroker representing the likes of [Siemens](#) & Halske, the makers of cyanide for the Final Solution, and I.G. Farben, the manufacturer of a lethal nerve gas put to the same purpose.<sup>10</sup> Dr. Layton, a Quaker, developed a form of purified uranium used to set off the Manhattan Project's first self-sustaining chain reaction at the University of Chicago in 1942 by his wife's German-born Uncle, Dr. [James Franck](#). At Dugway Proving Ground in Utah, Dr. Layton concentrated his efforts, as did I.G. Farben, on the development of nerve gasses.<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Layton later defended his participation in the Army's chemical warfare section:

**..You can blow people to bits with bombs, you can shoot them with shells, you can atomize them with atomic bombs, but the same people think there's something terrible about poisoning the air and letting people breathe it. Anything having to do with gas warfare, chemical warfare, has this taint of horror on it, even if you only make people vomit.**

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Nazis and chemical warfare are recurring themes in the aspartame story. Currently, the chief patent holder of the sweetener is the [Monsanto](#) Co., based in St. Louis. In 1967, Monsanto entered into a joint venture with I.G. Farbenfabriken, the aforementioned financial core of the Hitler regime and the key supplier of poison gas to the Nazi racial extermination program. After the Holocaust, the German chemical firm joined with American counterparts in the development of chemical warfare agents and founded the "Chemagrow Corporation" in Kansas City, Missouri, a front that employed German and American specialists on behalf of the U.S. Army Chemical corps.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Otto [Bayer](#), I.G.'s research director, had a binding relationship with [Monsanto](#) chemists.<sup>14</sup> In the post-war period, Dr. Bayer developed and tested chemical warfare agents with Dr. [Gerhard Schrader](#), the Nazi concocter of Tabun, the preferred nerve gas of the SS. Schrader was also an organophosphate pioneer, and tested the poison on populated areas of West Germany under the guise of killing insects.<sup>15</sup> Schrader's experiments reek suspiciously of the ongoing aerial application of malathion - developed by Dr. Schrader, a recruit of the U.S. Chemical Warfare Service when Germany surrendered - in present-day Southern California.<sup>16</sup>

Another bridge to I.G. Farben was [Monsanto](#) 's acquisition of American Viscose, long owned by the England's Courtauld family. As early as 1928, the U.S. Commerce Department issued a report critical of the Courtauld's ties to I.G. Farben and the Nazi party.<sup>17</sup> Incredibly, George Courtauld was handed an appointment as director of personnel for England's Special Operations Executive, the wartime intelligence service, in 1940.<sup>18</sup> A year later, with the exhaustion of British military financial reserves, American Viscose, worth \$120 million, was put on the block in New York. The desperate British treasury received less than half that amount from the sale, brokered by Siegmund Warburg, among others.<sup>19</sup> Monsanto acquired the company in 1949.<sup>20</sup>

The Nazi connection to [Monsanto](#) crops up again on the board of directors with [John Reed](#) , a former crony of "Putzi" Hanfstangl, a Harvard-bred emigre to Germany who talked Hitler out of committing suicide in 1924 and contributed to the financing of Mein Kampf.<sup>21</sup> Reed is also chairman of Citibank and long a confederate of the CIA. According to a lawsuit filed by San Francisco attorney [Melvin Belli](#) , Reed was an instigator, with [Ronald Reagan](#) , [James Baker](#) and [Margaret Thatcher](#) , of the "Purple Ink Document," a plan to finance CIA covert operations with wartime Japanese gold stolen from a buried Philippine hoard.<sup>22</sup>

Other covert military connections to [Monsanto](#) include Dr. [Charles Allen](#) Thomas, chairman of the Monsanto Board, 196-65. Dr. Thomas directed a group of scientists during [WW II](#) in the refinement of plutonium for use in the atomic bomb. In the postwar period Monsanto operated Tennessee's Oak Ridge National Laboratories for the Manhattan Project.<sup>23</sup> (Manhattan gestated with the Oak Ridge Institute for Nuclear Studies, where lethal doses of radiation were tested on 200 unwary cancer patients, turning them into "nuclear calibration devices" gratis the AEC and [NASA](#) , until 1974.<sup>24</sup>) Nazi scientists and a 7,000 ton stockpile of uranium were delivered to the Project by its security and counter-intelligence director, Col. Boris Pash, a G2 designate to the CIA's Bloodstone program - and the eminence grise of PB/7, a clandestine Nazi unit that, according to State Department records, conducted a regimen of political assassinations and kidnappings in Europe and the Eastern bloc.<sup>25</sup>

Monsanto Director [William Ruckelshaus](#) was an acting director of the FBI under [Richard Nixon](#) , a period in the Bureau's history marred by [COINTELPRO](#) outrages, including assassinations. Nixon subsequently appointed Ruckelshaus to the position of EPA director, a nagging irony given his ties to industry (Browning Ferris and [Cummins](#) Engine Co.). CIA counterintelligentsia on the Monsanto board include Stansfield Turner, a former Director of Central Intelligence, and Earle H. Harbison, an Agency information specialist for nineteen years.

Harbison is also a director of [Merrill Lynch](#) , and thus raises the spectre of CIA drug dealing. In 1984 President [Ronald Reagan](#) 's Commission on Organized Crime concluded that Merrill Lynch employed couriers

**...observed transferring enormous amounts of cash through investment houses and banks in New York City to Italy and Switzerland. Tens of millions of dollars in heroin sales in this country were transferred overseas.**

Merrill Lynch invested the drug proceeds in the New York bullion market before making the offshore transfers.<sup>26</sup>...

As might be expected in view of [Monsanto](#)'s Nazi, chemical warfare and CIA ties, NutraSweet is a can of worms unprecedented in the American food industry. The history of the product is laden with flawed and fabricated research findings and, when necessary to further the product along, blatant lies - the basis of FDA approval and the incredulity of independent medical researchers.

Senator Metzenbaum described the FDA as "the handmaiden" of the drug industry in 1985, but she comports under all regimes. In the Clinton administration, for example, [Mike Taylor](#) was graced with the position of deputy director of the FDA. Taylor is a cousin of Tipper Gore, Vice President [Albert Gore](#)'s wife, and once an outside counsel to [Monsanto](#). (Gore voted with Senate conservatives in 1985 against aspartame labelling.)

Under the tutelage of the Clinton administration, one Chicago reporter quipped, the FDA strictly enforces one "unwritten" violation of law - failure to bribe.

G.D. Searle, the pharmaceutical firm that introduced NutraSweet, worked symbiotically with federal and congressional officials, bribed investigators when violations of law were exposed, anything to move aspartame to market. As far back as 1969, an internal Searle "strategy memo" concluded the company must obtain FDA approval to outpace firms competing for the artificial sweetener market. Another memo in December 1970 urged that FDA officials were to be "brought into a subconscious spirit of participation" with Searle.<sup>27</sup> To that end, with enormous profits at stake, the pharmaceutical house set out on a long struggle to transform the [Pentagon](#)'s biochemical warfare agent into "the taste Mother Nature intended."

The official story is that aspartame was discovered in 1966 by a scientist developing an ulcer drug (not a "food additive"). Supposedly he discovered, upon carelessly licking his fingers, that they tasted sweet. Thus was the chemicals industry blessed with a successor to saccharine, the coal-tar derivative that foundered eight years later under the pressure of cancer concerns.

Aspartame found early opposition in consumer attorney [James Turner](#), author of *The Chemical Feast* and a former Nader's Raider. At his own expense, Turner fought approval for ten years, basing his argument on aspartame's potential side effects, particularly on children. His concern was shared by Dr. John [Olney](#), Professor of neuropathology and psychiatry at Washington School of Medicine in St. Louis. Dr. Olney found that aspartame, combined with MSG seasoning, increased the odds of brain damage in children.<sup>28</sup>

Other studies have found that children are especially vulnerable to its toxic effects, a measure of the relation between consumption and body weight. The FDA determined in 1981, when the sweetener was approved, that the maximum projected intake of Aspartame is 50 milligrams a day per kilogram of body weight. A child of 66 pounds would consume about 23 milligrams by imbibing four cans of Diet Coke. The child might also conceivably down an aspartame-flavored snack or two, nearing the FDA's projected maximum daily intake.<sup>29</sup> Dr. William Partridge, a

professor of neuroendocrine regulation at MIT, told Common Cause in August 1984 that it wouldn't be surprising if a child -

**...confronted with aspartame contained in iced tea, chocolate milk, milk shakes, chocolate pudding pie, Jello, ice cream and numerous other products**

– consumed 50 milligrams per kilogram in a day....

Internally, aspartame breaks down into its constituent amino acids and methanol, which degrades into formaldehyde. The FDA announced in 1984 that "no evidence" has been found to establish that the methanol byproduct reaches toxic levels, claiming that "many fruit juices contain higher levels of the natural compound."<sup>30</sup> But the Medical World News had already reported in 1978 that the methanol content of aspartame is 1,000 times greater than most foods under FDA control.<sup>31</sup>

NutraSweet, the "good stuff" of sentimental adverts, is a truly insidious product. According to independent trials, aspartame intake is shown by animal studies to alter brain chemicals affecting behavior. Aspartame's effects on the brain led [Richard Wurtman](#), an MIT neuroscientist, to the discovery, as recorded in The New England Journal of Medicine (No. 309, 1983), that the sweetener defeats its purpose as a diet aid, since high doses may instill a craving for calorie-laden carbohydrates. One of his pilot studies found that the NutraSweet-carbohydrate combination increases the "sweetener's effect on brain composition." Searle officials denigrated Wurtman's findings, but the American Cancer Society has since confirmed the irony - after tracking 80,000 women for six years - that "among women who gained weight, artificial sweetener users gained more than those who didn't use the products," as reported in Medical Self-Care (387). (Since his battle with G.D. Searle, Wurtman founded Interneuron Pharmaceuticals, Inc., the producer of a sports drink that enhances athletic performance, and a weight-loss drug marketed in over 40 countries. Wurtman's share of the company, established in 1989, was worth \$10 million by 1992.<sup>32</sup>)

Even more daunting are the findings of Dr. Paul Spiers, a neuropsychologist at Boston's [Beth Israel Hospital](#), that aspartame use can depress intelligence. For this reason, he selected experimental subjects with a history of consuming it but unaware that they might be suffering ill effects. The subjects were given NutraSweet in capsules of the FDA's allowable limit. Spiers was alarmed to discover that they developed "cognitive deficits." One of the tests required recall of square patterns and alphabetical sequences, becoming increasingly more difficult. The test is challenging, but most people improve as they learn how it is done. The aspartame users, however, did not improve. "Some frankly showed a reverse pattern," said Spiers.<sup>33</sup>

Aspartame has been shown to erode short-term memory. At the May, 1985 hearings on NutraSweet, Louisiana Senator [Russell Long](#) related a bizarre anecdote:

SENATOR LONG: I have received a letter recently from a person who is well known to me and whose word is impeccable, as far as I am concerned.

This person told me that she had been dieting and she had been using diet drinks with aspartame in it.

She said she found her memory was going. She seemed to be completely losing her memory. When she would meet people whom she knew intimately, she could not recall what their name was, or even who they were.

She could not recall a good bit of that which was going on about her to the extent that she was afraid she was losing her mind. . . In due course, someone suggested that it might be this NutraSweet, so she stopped using it and her memory came back and her mind was restored.

Senator Howard Metzenbaum replied that he had received

**...a number of letters from doctors reporting similar developments. . . There have been hundreds of incidents of people who have suffered loss of memory, headaches, dizziness, and other neurological symptoms which they feel are related to aspartame.**

34 Senator Orrin Hatch, a hidebound archconservative and NutraSweet advocate, downplayed criticism of the sugar substitute. "Some people have lost their memory after drinking a variety of things," he argued. "The bottom line is this: The studies supporting aspartame's approval have been examined and reexamined. More than enough sound, valid studies exist to demonstrate aspartame's safety."...

Hatch of Utah, reports the Wall Street Journal, has "given his strong support of the pharmaceutical industries."<sup>35</sup> So have the "Hatchlings." David Kessler, FDA Commissioner under presidents Bush and Clinton, was once an aide to Orrin Hatch. Hatch's former campaign manager and aide, C. McClain Haddow, was sentenced to prison for conflict-of-interest charges arising from his work as a [Reagan](#) administration health official. And Thomas Parry, Hatch's former chief of staff, has carved a sumptuous life for himself as a Republican fund-raiser and lobbyist with clients in the pharmaceutical industry. All told, Parry represents 30 clients, including [Eli Lilly](#) , Warner-Lambert, and [Johnson & Johnson](#) , not to mention ranking defense firms and the Bahamas government. Parry's pharmaceutical clients have enriched Senator Hatch's campaign coffers, and in turn Hatch lavishes his attentions on them.

By the time Orrin Hatch was stumping for NutraSweet in the U.S. Senate, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta had received 600 letters complaining of NutraSweet's adverse effects. The National Soft Drink Association (NSDA) had them too:

**...There have been hundreds of reports from around the country suggesting a possible relationship between their consumption of NutraSweet and subsequent symptoms including headaches, aberrational behavior, slurred speech, etc.**

FDA Commissioner Arthur Hull Hayes, appointed by Ronald Reagan in April, 1981 (moving the New York Times to observe that "some industry officials consider Dr. Hayes more sympathetic to their viewpoints than past holders of the office"), considered such complaints "anecdotal."...

## [Arthur Hull](#) Hayes

Of course, like scores of other conservatives roaming the executive branch in the 1980s, the ethics of [Arthur Hull](#) Hayes were entirely malleable - not only did he approve a product based on studies that were "scientifically lacking in design and execution," according to a report issued by Science Times in February 1985, but upon leaving the FDA he took the post of senior medical consultant for Burson-Marsteller, the public relations firm retained by G.D. Searle.<sup>37</sup>

Burson-Marsteller, a huge public relations conglomerate, swelled in the 1980s by leveraging smaller competitors - including Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelley, a lobbying firm best known for influence peddling along the Beltway - presently outsizing even the [Hill & Knowlton](#) empire. Typical in the aspartame story are Burson-Marsteller's links to the intelligence community and rightwing operatives of the GOP. Thomas Devereaux Bell, Jr., an executive officer of the firm, is the former chairman of the Center for Naval Analysis in Alexandria, Virginia. Bell was also the executive director of [Ronald Reagan](#)'s Inaugural Ball Committee (in which capacity he ushered in the likes of [Licio Gelli](#), head of [P2](#), the notorious Italian secret society). Bell's career in Washington began in 1971 as a deputy director of [Richard Nixon](#)'s Committee to ReElect the President. He went on to serve as an administrative aide to Senator William Brock and the Reagan transition team.<sup>38</sup>

At the FDA, Hayes used aspartame as a political statement that the [Reagan](#) administration was embarking on a grand voyage of conservative "regulatory reform," sluicing through treasonous liberal constraints on "free enterprise." Despite what one FDA scientist described as 'very serious' questions concerning pivotal brain tumor tests, Hayes eagerly approved aspartame for use in dry foods in July 1981.<sup>39</sup> Three FDA scientists advised against the approval of aspartame, citing G.D. Searle's own brain tumor tests, because there was no proof that "aspartame is safe for use as a food additive under its intended conditions of use."<sup>40</sup>

Ajinomoto's corporate headquarters

Hayes has since declined to answer any questions about his decision, which ignored the recommendations of the FDA's own board of inquiry. He relied instead on a study conducted by Japan's Ajinomoto, Inc. - a licensee of G.D. Searle. Hayes acknowledged in his 1981 decision that he had only consulted a preliminary report of the Japanese evaluation, and only skimmed it. More serious, Hayes violated federal law by basing approval on the test, as it had not been reviewed by the FDA board.<sup>41</sup>

Who is [Arthur Hull](#) Hayes? He was no disinterested bureaucrat. True to the biochemical theme of the aspartame story, Dr. Hayes served in the Army Medical Corps in the 1960s. According to the Washington Post, Hayes was assigned to Edgewood Arsenal at Fort Detrick, Maryland, the Army's chemical warfare base of operations,

**...one of a number of doctors who conducted drug tests for the Army on volunteers . . . to determine the effect of a mind-disorienting drug called CAR 301,060.**

According to a declassified 1976 report prepared by the Army Inspector General, Hayes had planned a research study to develop the mind-altering CAR 301,060 as a crowd control agent. In 1972, Hayes left Edgewood Arsenal, and a new plan for the experiments was drawn up by Edgewood physicians. The 1976 report notes that similar tests had been conducted before Hayes took charge.<sup>42</sup>...

Also at the center of the effort to land FDA approval of NutraSweet stood [Donald Rumsfeld](#) - "Rummy" to his friends - chairman of G.D. Searle upon leaving the [Ford](#) administration in 1977. Rumsfeld, the product of a wealthy Chicago suburb, was a Princeton graduate and a Navy pilot during the Korean conflict. He entered politics as a Congressional House aide attending night classes at Georgetown University Law School, which is closely aligned with the CIA.<sup>43</sup>

Rumsfeld campaigned ambitiously for [Richard Nixon](#), who drafted him to direct the Office of Equal Opportunity on May 26, 1969. He quickly established an office to spy on his employees in a holy crusade to flush out "revolutionaries" said to be granting federal funds to politically subversive organizations - a throwback to McCarthy's tantrums.<sup>44</sup> Rumsfeld also figured in Nixon's notorious Power Control Group, spearheaded by [Charles Colson](#) and [John Ehrlichman](#).<sup>45</sup> [Gerald Ford](#) named Rumsfeld executive chief of staff upon the resignation of [Al Haig](#). In 1986 he was named chairman of the Institute for Contemporary Studies, a neoconservative "think tank" (read: propaganda mill) established in 1972 by [Edwin Meese](#) and [Caspar Weinberger](#). ICS has sponsored such opinion-shaping projects as a study of expansions in "entitlement programs" and their erosive effects on the economy, and a book on the uses of coercion by Communist regimes.<sup>46</sup> Rumsfeld, at 43, became the country's youngest secretary of defense. For many years he has been a vocal proponent of chemical weapons.<sup>47</sup> He is chairman of the Rand Corp.<sup>48</sup> In 1988, he dropped a presidential bid, and was named a v.p. of Westmark Systems, led by past NSA Director [Bobby Ray](#) Inman. Rumsfeld was one of Westmark's founding directors, sharing the board with Joseph Amato, a former vice president at TRW (and a colleague of Inman's at the National Security Agency), and Dale Frey, chairman of the General Electric Investment Corp.<sup>49</sup>

Rumsfeld, a veteran political operative, was an adept at the vulgar art of public relations. He was recruited by G.D. Searle because he had "a Boy Scout image," according to one company official.<sup>50</sup> A house politician was precisely what Searle needed to compensate for the damage done by independent researchers concerned about the toxic effects of aspartame. In March 1976, an FDA task force brought into question all of the company's testing procedures between 1967 and 1975. The task force described "serious deficiencies in Searle's operations and practices which undermine the basis for reliance on Searle's integrity." The final report of the FDA task force noted faulty and fraudulent product testing, knowingly misrepresented findings, and instances of "irrelevant or unproductive animal research where experiments have been poorly conceived, carelessly executed or inaccurately analyzed."<sup>51</sup>

Richard Merrill, the FDA's chief counsel, petitioned Samuel K. Skinner, U.S. attorney for the northern district of Illinois, for a grand jury investigation of Searle's "willful and knowing failure" to submit required test reports, and for "concealing material facts and making false statements" in reports on aspartame submitted to the agency.<sup>52</sup> Yet industry analysts, interviewed by the



Wall Street Journal six months after [Rumsfeld](#) 's appointment as chairman, noted a rapid turnabout in Searle's fortunes as a result of his direction.<sup>53</sup>

Searle denies that Chairman [Rumsfeld](#) ever had any contact with the FDA, or the Carter and [Reagan](#) administrations, to lobby for aspartame.<sup>54</sup> But the Wall Street Journal article reported in 1977 that Rumsfeld

**...keenly understands the importance of a public image. So he has been mending fences with the FDA by personally asking top agency officials what Searle should do to straighten out its reputation.**

Westley M. Dixon, Searle's vice chairman, told the Journal that without Rumsfeld "we wouldn't have gotten approval for Norpace," a drug investigated by the FDA in 1975.<sup>55</sup>...

The grand jury investigation of Searle disintegrated in January, 1977 when the FDA formally requested that [Samuel Skinner](#) , U.S. attorney and a protege of Illinois Governor James Thompson, investigate the firm for falsifying and withholding aspartame test data. A month later, Skinner met with attorneys from Searle's Chicago law firm, Sidley & Austin. [Jimmy Carter](#) ascended to the presidency a few weeks later. He announced that Skinner would not be asked to remain in office, but the outgoing Republican wasn't found wanting for employment. He informed reporters that he had already begun "preliminary discussions" with Sidley & Austin.<sup>56</sup>

G.D. Searle and Sidley & Austin are Siamese Twins. Edwin Austin, a senior partner in the law firm, was appointed to the Illinois Supreme Court in 1969. The Searle family drew upon his services extensively, and he taught Sunday school in Wilmette, a Chicago suburb, as did Dr. Claude Howard Searle, whose father cofounded the pharmaceutical house.

The firm is grafted to the beating heart of the Republican Party. Morris Leibman of Sidley & Austin was for many years chairman of the American Bar Association's "Standing Committee on Law and National Security," a position that won him [Reagan](#) 's Medal of Freedom in 1981.<sup>57</sup>

John E. Robson, head of Sidley & Austin's Washington office, was appointed executive vice-president of Searle & Co. in 1977, the same year Skinner was named a partner in the law firm. Robson, too, was active in Republican politics. He was the first General Counsel of the Department of Transportation, and at the behest of [Gerald Ford](#) in 1975, chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Board.<sup>58</sup> He moved on to Searle, and stayed with the company until it was bought outright by [Monsanto](#) in 1985. Howard Trienens, a law clerk to the late chief Justice Vinson in the early 1950s, was a G.D. Searle director and worked for Sidley & Austin since 1949.<sup>59</sup>

Archconservative California Governor [George Deukmejian](#) joined Sidley & Austin's Los Angeles branch upon leaving office in 1991, and is reportedly making a "very comfortable" living. He has a keen "sense" for bringing in corporate clients, a partner in the firm told the Los Angeles Times, many of them past contributors to his campaign fund. Deukmejian's business connections have given him a reputation as a Sidley & Austin "rainmaker," but the L.A. City Council has questioned his ethics in promoting a contract with Sumitomo Corp. on a metropolitan railway project.<sup>60</sup>

Searle aside, Sidley & Austin has served some of the most notorious special interests in the country. The firm lobbied overtime, for instance, on behalf of [Charles Keating](#) 's [Lincoln Savings](#) &

Loan, and provided counsel on tax issues and dealing with federal authorities. The firm assisted Keating when Lincoln was foundering, and curried political favor to keep the S&L operating despite massive debts. As a result, the firm was forced to settle with Lincoln depositors in 1991, agreeing to cover an excess of \$40 million in claims.<sup>61</sup> Sidley & Austin also represented the AMA when a group of drugstore chains sued seven drug makers - including Searle - for price fixing and antitrust violations. The lawsuit, filed in October 1993, amounts to billions of dollars in compensation.<sup>62</sup>

Skinner recused himself from the Searle prosecution four months before leaving office - asking, in a memo to subordinates, that the matter be kept "confidential to avoid any undue embarrassment" - a stall that nearly allowed the statute of limitations to expire. William Conlon, a senior U.S. attorney, inherited the case. He eased off, citing case load pressures, and gave a deaf ear to complaints of delays from the Justice Department, which urged that a grand jury be convened to prosecute Searle for falsifying NutraSweet test data. In January, 1979, Conlon too joined Sidley & Austin.<sup>63</sup>

The 33-page letter from Merrill to Skinner charged Searle with criminal fraud in its animal test results. In 1984 Common Cause asked Dan Reidy of the U.S. attorney's office how the investigation had stalled. Reidy replied that because it was a grand jury investigation, he was "bound by law to secrecy." A Searle spokesman exploited the demise of the grand jury to claim that there was "no validity to the charges," that the company had been "exonerated." Philip Brodsky, an investigator for the FDA, expressed surprise that Searle hadn't been indicted. "I thought surely they would prosecute them," he said.<sup>64</sup>

Eleven years later Senator Metzenbaum issued a press release charging Skinner with stalling the criminal investigation as he prepared to decamp from office. Metzenbaum and his staff demanded an FBI investigation of Skinner's mishandling of the case. In December, 1988, the conflict-of-interest bombshell blew up in the face of newly-elected George Bush, who was about to appoint Skinner to the position of Transportation Secretary.<sup>65</sup>

Like most of the Machiavellians in the NutraSweet story, Samuel Knox Skinner kept company with hardright Republicans. He entered politics as a campaign volunteer for Barry Goldwater.<sup>66</sup> In 1975, he was appointed to Federal Prosecutor in Chicago by President [Ford](#). Sidley & Austin promoted him to senior partner after only one year with the firm. Skinner was the director of George Bush's presidential campaign in Illinois. On occasion he was berated for his involvement with the state's Republican apparatus: In 1987, for instance, the Chicago Sun-Times linked him with a clutch of lawyers close to Governor Thompson, who were awarded lucrative assignments handling the affairs of financially crippled insurance companies. Skinner was a leading light of the Illinois Fraud Prevention Commission - he targeted welfare cheats (as opposed to white-collar criminals in the drug industry) - and President [Reagan](#)'s Commission on Organized Crime. In December 1991, he left Transportation to take the position of President Bush's Chief of Staff.<sup>67</sup>

Had Skinner pressed on with the investigation, aspartame's manufacturer would have been forced to explain a long history of fabricated laboratory tests and slippery dealings with federal regulators, not to mention the public.

Dr. [Alexander Schmidt](#) , a former FDA commissioner, said of the original Aspartame Task Force investigation: "What was discovered was reprehensible. . .incredibly sloppy science." A 1980 public board of inquiry opined that the company's testing procedures were "bizarre."<sup>68</sup>

Searle's decision to market aspartame culminated with the falsification of test results to obtain FDA approval. In November 1969, officials of the firm hired Dr. Harry Waisman, a researcher for the University of Wisconsin, to test for brain damage in rhesus monkeys. Seven monkeys were fed aspartame for periods up to one year. In the end, though, the evaluation flopped because the technicians failed to perform the intelligence tests and autopsies required to determine brain damage. When questioned about the false data by the FDA, Searle officials claimed to have had no direct control over the study. But the protocol for the study was written by a Searle pathologist after it had begun. And, according to Dr. Gross,

**...Frequent high-level communications took place between Searle executives and Dr. Waisman prior to and during the study.**

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To make matters worse, Dr. Waisman died in March, 1971, in mid-study.

Searle submitted the toxicity test to the FDA on October 12, 1972. It bore Dr. Waisman's name as coauthor. [Richard Merrill](#) noted:

**...Dr. Waisman was the expert in the field and his name would carry great weight,**

but complained to Skinner that Searle took "great literary license" in drafting the report, "which covers up the admitted inadequacy of the design, control and documentation of this study."<sup>70</sup>...

Searle submitted some 150 test reports, yet Dr. Martha Freeman of the FDA Bureau of Drugs noted in a 1973 memo,

**...the information provided is inadequate to permit an evaluation of the potential toxicity of aspartame.**

<sup>71</sup> The FDA task force set up by Dr. Schmidt in 1975 reviewed 25 studies on seven products manufactured by G.D. Searle, a total of 500 pages and 15,000 exhibits.<sup>72</sup> Searle was held to be the author of "reports that the FDA believes contain false information" and "concealed facts resulting from having drafted Dr. Waisman's 'pilot' monkey study so that it would appear to be a valid, thorough scientific study," and not a forgery....

In 1975, Searle submitted a battery of cancer test results entitled The Willigan Report, which contained a statistical table that excluded four malignant mammary tumors detected by Dr. Willigan and incorporated in his data. The malignancies were made to appear benign. Searle dismissed the misrepresentation as a computer "programming error" undetected by supervising

statisticians. Dr. Gross interviewed all concerned with the tests. He concluded in a statement to Metzenbaum's committee in August, 1985, that "to accept the Searle explanation is to believe that the unfavorable mammary malignancy data were innocently omitted from the summary table four separate times by three different individuals."<sup>74</sup>

The Waisman and Willigan Reports were prepared by Searle Labs, as were 88% of the safety evaluations conducted by 1981.<sup>75</sup> They are typical of the shoddy documentation upon which FDA Commissioner Hayes based his decision that aspartame does not constitute a public health risk. Although two members of the 1975 task force considered the tests to be criminal frauds, Hayes and Searle declared the results valid. In an appeal to Hayes' decision, [James Turner](#) said:

**...The entire argument that since the studies are no longer considered fraudulent by FDA they are therefore scientifically valid is an example of a rhetorical shell game that, if successful, can only bring discredit and ridicule on the FDA.**

76...

Dr. Gross, the chief scientist on the FDA task force, told the CBS Nightly News staff in January, 1984, that Searle made "deliberate decisions" to cloak the toxic effects of aspartame. "They took great pains to camouflage these shortcomings of the study," Gross said, "as I say, filter and just present to the FDA what they wished the FDA to know. And they did other terrible things. For instance, animals would develop tumors while they were under study - well, G.D. Searle would remove these tumors from the animals," surgically masking the cancerous effects of aspartame.<sup>77</sup> Yet one 1986 New England Journal of Medicine article claimed that noncompulsive aspartame intake has "no sinister effects."

Dr. Woodrow Monte told CBS,

**...Every time a truly impartial team of scientists have looked at NutraSweet, it has been turned down.**

Dr. Monte, director of the nutrition laboratory at Arizona State University, held that these studies "show extreme dangers over the long term."<sup>78</sup>...

Dr. Monte was rewarded for his comments by a fusillade from the press. On February 23, Dan Dorfman, a business news reporter for WCBS in New York, broke a story that several CBS employees had invested in options on NutraSweet that pay off if the stock price drops.<sup>79</sup> Dr. Monte and his attorney had purchased the options as well. It emerged that the CBS staffers had purchased the options on the advice of stock market newsletters printed prior to the nightly news report. The investments were not illegal, nor did they reap a profit. Searle's stock was not affected by the publicity, and the investors took a loss.

Nevertheless, the Wall Street Journal ran a front-page story condemning the "inside trading." [Reed Irvine](#)'s Accuracy in Media picked up the cudgel against Dr. Monte and the CBS employees as if they'd committed a shocking Wall Street swindle.<sup>80</sup>

Accuracy in Media, formed in 1969, is an intelligence operation abetted by the CIA. The rabidly right-wing organization was co-founded by Bernard Yoh, a counter-insurgency adviser under the notorious Edward Lansdale in Vietnam, and a fount of CIA funds to military intelligence units in the [Delta](#) region. Board member Elbridge Durbrow was once a foreign service "diplomat," and advised commanders of [Maxwell Air](#) Force Base in Alabama. Another AIM board member, Frank Trager, has conducted research for the [Pentagon](#) and CIA, and churns out pamphlets on international business and intelligence operations. Major financial contributors to AIM include [Richard Nixon](#), "Bebe" Rebozo, Edward Scripps, the wretched Dr. [Edward Teller](#) and former Treasury Secretary William E. Simon.<sup>81</sup>

Accuracy in Media is a strident advocate of the chemical industry, which provides it with generous funding. The media "watchdog" has long waged a campaign on behalf of dioxin, denouncing the "Agent Orange scare" as the creation of delirious, anti-business liberals. Among the leading manufacturers of Agent Orange for the Vietnam war effort was [Monsanto](#), preparing - at the very moment AIM took aim at detractors of NutraSweet™ - to buy G.D. Searle.

Dr. Monte cautioned in 1987 that he didn't want to sound like a "conspiracy theory" hound, but the aspartame chronology clarifies its commercial emergence. The FDA Board of Inquiry advised against the sweetener on September 30, 1980. On January 21, 1981 - the day after [Reagan](#)'s inauguration - Searle submitted "ten new studies." Dr. Monte was skeptical. "It is impossible that they could have conducted those studies in four months," he said. "Obviously they'd previously done those studies but hadn't officially submitted them, although much of the information in those studies was informally presented to the board of inquiry." With the "new tests" in hand, Hayes acted as though critical, overriding evidence had proven the safety of aspartame.<sup>82</sup>

James Turner, representing the Community Nutrition Institute in Washington, D.C., said that [Arthur Hull](#) Hayes, to arrive at his decision that aspartame is safe, firewalked a path

**...through a mass of scientific mismanagement, improper procedures, wrong conclusions and general scientific inexactness.**

Two FDA officials declared in 1985 that Hayes was determined to clear all obstacles to NutraSweet approval. One FDA bureaucrat reported that "people at the top" were closed to questions concerning the quality of the tests submitted by Searle.<sup>83</sup>...

In July, 1984 a broad investigation of NutraSweet's adverse effects was conducted by the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control. Federal health officials said at the outset that they believed no harm would emerge from the data to indict aspartame. Robert McQuate, Ph.D., science director of the National Soft Drink Association, predicted with mystical confidence that the study would "provide further evidence that aspartame is a safe ingredient."<sup>84</sup>

Dr. McQuate didn't fret the going of his biochemical ox. In November the CDC announced that no "serious, widespread" side effects had been found.<sup>85</sup> It was "unlikely," said CDC officials, that "complainers" could establish a link between NutraSweet and their maladies - the same bromide once tossed to victims of radiation experiments. The reported side-effects of aspartame fell into two distinct categories: central nervous system (65%) and gastrointestinal disorders (24%).<sup>86</sup> Yet

the CDC claimed erroneously that no consistent reaction pattern had been found.<sup>87</sup> [Robert Shapiro](#), then president of Nutrasweet, used the occasion to enthuse that the survey "clearly established the safety" of the sugar substitute.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, the CDC recommended a new set of studies because aspartame users continued to complain of ill effects.

Based on the ersatz assurances of the CDC report, [Pepsi](#) Co announced that it would drop saccharine and begin sweetening its diet drinks entirely with aspartame. The decision would have been approved by Wayne Calloway, then CEO of PepsiCo and director of the multinationals Citicorp, General Electric and a Exxon. In 1983 soda bottlers, organized around Pepsi, had petitioned the FDA for a delay in approval of NutraSweet for soft drinks until further evaluation verified its safety - interpreted by market analysts as a ploy to drive down the price of the sweetener. They soon abandoned the effort to block approval (and all health concerns they might have had). "We believe saccharine is safe," Pepsi USA President Roger Enrico lied, but "we wanted the taste improvement." PepsiCo, already drawing on a tenth of Searle's 7.5 million pound annual production of aspartame, signed an agreement with G.D. Searle to boost purchases 500 percent.<sup>89</sup> (Like other corporate pushers of aspartame, Pepsi has long maintained ties to the intelligence community. One product of the relationship was a Pepsi plant in Vientiane, Laos with a laboratory outfitted for heroin production. [Alfred McCoy](#), in [The Politics of Heroin](#) in Southeast Asia, documents the efforts of [Richard Nixon](#) to promote the plant's construction in 1965, and the CIA's continuing subsidization of the plant. McCoy complained to Pepsi officials that the facilities were but a cover for the importation and refinement of morphine, but it continued to operate unhindered.)

Yet another report was filed by [Reagan](#)'s General Accounting Office in July 1987, this one on the FDA's handling of aspartame. The GAO concluded that the agency had followed proper procedures and conducted valid studies. But the report noted that the FDA had followed guidelines for food - not drug - testing, despite the recommendation of the agency's own biologists favoring drug tests, which are considerably more stringent. This recommendation was overruled by FDA officials.<sup>90</sup>

Another blemish in the study was bared by Dr. Louis Elsas, director of medical genetics at [Emory University](#) in Atlanta.

**...They never asked the right questions about what it does to brain function in humans,**

he told the Washington Post. Half of the scientists polled expressed reservations about the safety of NutraSweet. One-fifth reported "major concerns." Monsanto quibbled in a press release that these critics had themselves never conducted aspartame research. A score of independent scientists have. They found side effects....

Senator Metzenbaum berated Searle's flawed and fabricated tests at the August 1, 1985 Senate hearings. "The FDA," he said, "is content to have the manufacturer of aspartame, G.D. Searle, conduct these studies. How absurd."

The Journal of the American Medical Association recently published a report on aspartame which, with some significant disclaimers, stated it was safe for most people. I wish that this

report could ease my concerns. It does not. It merely restates the FDA position which relies solely on the tests conducted by G.D. Searle. As I have indicated these tests are under a cloud. In addition, the concerns raised recently by the scientists were not even included in the report.

In defense of the tests, executives of G.D. Searle argued that the sweetener has been approved by foreign regulatory agencies and the World Health Organization. But H.J. Roberts, an internal medicine specialist in West Palm Beach, Florida, reviewed the foreign studies and found that

**...the vast majority of these agencies accepted company-sponsored research without ever having done independent confirmatory studies.**

91...

Deficiencies in testing were aggravated by a lack of laboratory training at Searle. One of the pivotal safety studies involved fetal damage, but the FDA task force found that the medical researcher in charge was

**...inexperienced in conducting studies of this nature and yet given full responsibility.**

They were appalled to discover that his sole credential was a field study of the cottontail rabbit for the Illinois Wildlife Service, yet at Searle he'd been assigned to laboratory training and supervision. When asked about his curriculum vitae in fetal research, he replied that he'd once attended a seminar on the subject, and the company had provided him with a stack of reference works.<sup>92</sup> (Yet J.D. Searle, in its 1981 Annual Report, billed itself as "a research-based pharmaceutical company.")...

Corporate control of NutraSweet testing continues at [Monsanto](#), torturing the ethics of academic medicine. In August 1987 the [University of Illinois](#), a recipient of Monsanto's largess, issued a study exonerating aspartame of causing seizures in laboratory animals. Dave Hattan, a safety regulator for the FDA, responded that the study only confirmed the need for testing on humans. At independent labs, he insisted, aspartame provoked seizures.<sup>93</sup>

Industrial support tends to contaminate test data. Dr. Elsas, in a 1988 letter to the New England Journal of Medicine, advocates unbiased review of clinical research. "The NutraSweet Co.," he said, "may have had an interest in protocols that would find that their product had no untoward effects."<sup>94</sup> [Monsanto](#) reportedly granted one NutraSweet researcher a \$1.3 million honorarium.<sup>95</sup> The same hired gun willing to manipulate lab results will have no qualms publicly defending a tainted pharmaceutical, like the diabetic specialist who objected that a Senate hearing on aspartame, which called him as a witness, might arouse groundless public anxiety.<sup>96</sup>

Victims and health activists have attempted in the courts to put a stop to the marketing of NutraSweet, to no avail. In 1985 a coalition of consumer groups were handed a ruling by the federal Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia that the FDA had followed proper procedures in approving aspartame for soft drinks. A year later the Washington Post reported that the Supreme Court again refused to consider the case

...despite critics' arguments that the product, sold under the brand name NutraSweet, may cause brain damage.

97...

Likewise, the medical establishment has thrown up an impenetrable wall to aspartame critics. Dr. Roberts, author of a brief study,

**...Aspartame-Associated Confusion and Memory Loss: A Possible Human Model for Early Alzheimer's Disease,**

found it impossible to publish the article in a peer review medical journal. This was peculiar, he thought, "considering the increasing magnitude of Alzheimer's disease, and the relevance of my observations to newer biochemical findings and avenues of research." He can "personally vouch for the enormous difficulty in getting published articles concerning reactions to aspartame products," a trend in censorship with "ominous overtones." The options, Dr. Roberts says, are "generally limited to 'burying' the findings in a small-circulation journal (such as the bulletin of a county medical society), reporting the results as a letter to the editor, or (unfortunately, most often) discarding the project."98...

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19. Jaques Attali, A Man of Influence: The Extraordinary Career of S.G. Warburg, Adler & Adler (Bethesda, Maryland: 1987), p. 167.
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24. "Radiation and the Guinea Pigs," Guardian, March 3, 1994, p. 3. Also see, "Nuclear Scientists Irradiated People in Secret Research," New York Times, December 17, 1993, p. A1.
25. [Christopher Simpson](#) , Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects On the Cold War, Wiedenfeld & Nicholson (New York: 1988), pp. 26, 152-53. Col. Pash, a former high school gym teacher, was an officer of the Office of Policy coordination under [Frank Wisner](#) . His unit, writes Simpson,

**...known as PB/7, was given a written charter that read in part that `PB/7 will be responsible for assassinations, kidnapping, and such other functions as from time to time may be given it by higher authority.'**

Pash was a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, a veteran of the Russian Civil War. Monsanto's Clinton Engineering Works in Oak Ridge became the Manhattan Project's headquarters in 1943, and was "manned almost entirely by experienced officers and agents of

the CIC." See Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting, *America's Secret Army: The Untold Story of the Counter Intelligence Corps*, Franklin Watts (New York: 1989), pp. 71ff., 346....

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35.

**...Lobbyist's Cozy Ties with Ex-Boss Sen. Hatch Include Client Referrals, Political Fund-Raising,**

*Wall Street Journal*, February 18, 1993. Eli Lilly contributed \$17,500 to Hatch's campaign chest between 1985 and 1988. Sen. Hatch filed a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of Eli Lilly in a 1989 patent case. Other pharmaceutical houses enjoy his political favors. Lobbyist Thomas Parry remains a key adviser to Sen. Hatch: "Nobody gets better care than his former chief of staff," reports the *Journal*....

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