

Liddy and Leary return in bizarre film

By Paul Kaihla

For Canadian University Press

It has been said that Richard Nixon "was the weirdest man ever to live in the White House." True to the Nixon legacy, one of the disgraced President's former cronies is now starring in the weirdest road show ever seen in America.

For more than a year, G. Gordon Liddy, so-called "mastermid" of the bungled 1972 Watergate burglary, has been appearing with Sixties acid guru Dr. Timothy Leary in college campus debates. What's more, a film has been made about the two, and Liddy was present for the film's North America premiere at Toronto's Festival of Festivals in September.

"Return Engagement" gets its title from a strange quirk of history: Liddy, as an ambitious assistant district attorney in Dutchess County, New York during the Sixties, conducted several raids against Leary's experimental drug haven, the Millbrook Institute. Liddy was successful in chasing Leary and crew out of Dutchess County.

Since getting out of prison in the Seventies, Liddy and Leary have been lecturing for a living. Liddy says he's debated Abbie Hoffman and Daniel Ellsberg, "but the thing with Leary is what took off."

Return Engagement is a comical, and sometimes moving, look at what happens when you mix a spacey humanist philosopher, with an ultra-nationalistic, right-wing, ex-F.B.I. agent: the political odd couple are shown in debate, dining together, at a party, at lunche with their wives, and doing their own thing (for Liddy its target practice, for Leary its exploring video game arcades).

In the most memorable moment of the film, Leary is giving

a talk to blissed-out nudists on the sunny slopes of California's Big Sur, and the founder of the Esalen Institute is on hand, leering into the camera with a wide grin: "I know what travelling with Tim did to me. I have my suspicions about what it's doing to Gordon." The scene cuts to Liddy tearing along a coastal highway on a Harley Davidson with a gang of Hell's Angels.

"We were riding together," Liddy explained in an interview, "because they wanted to travel with me to see what I do."

ARTS

A very personal portrait of Liddy and Leary emerges from behind their stereotypes as kooks of the left and right. When Liddy went before the audience at the premiere to introduce the film, a wave of snickers passed through the crowd as many people asked, "Is this guy for real?" But afterwards several patrons made comments along the lines, "You kind of start to like the guy after seeing the film."

Liddy said in an interview that he's going to stay on the lecture circuit as long as the going's good. "One of my remaining ambitions," he says with a devious grin, "is to fly the German World War II Messerschmidt fighter." And if he didn't have to put five kids through college, on top

of that, he would seek a job teaching government and history at a university.

"What does he think of Leary as a debating opponent?"

"He's difficult for two reasons: he never comes to me with the same material twice, and he has this charm and elfin wit which allows him to say outrageous things and get away with it."

On the topic of whether Leary's circuits have been fried by acid, as Liddy suggests in the film, the fallen G-man acknowledges Leary's academic achievements of the early Sixties, but says he didn't know Leary back then, so it's hard to judge if he's deteriorated.

When it came to fielding questions from the Toronto audience at the end of the film, Liddy carried on with an authoritarian pomposity.

"Isn't it good that the Watergate burglary was discovered?" he was asked. "You wouldn't be standing here if it hadn't."

"No, but I'd be in a position of a lot more power."

"Does Canada have an equivalent of G. Gordon Liddy?"

"I would be surprised if you didn't, and if you don't you'd better get one fast."

Guess again Gordon.

Dramatist says industry run by business

By Sharon Leighton

Island dramatist Larry Leclair gave a workshop on scriptwriting Oct. 20 in the UPEI library.

Leclair, who earns his living as a dramatist, has sold both radio and TV dramas to CBC, as well as

writing successful stage plays and film scripts.

Ten aspiring playwrights listened to stories of CBC foibles and difficult directors.

At one time Leclair submitted a drama to CBC, which was accepted with the proviso that it be extensively rewritten. He rewrote it. They requested a second re-

write; he complied. The script was approved, a contract was signed, and he went to bed happy. At 3:00 am the telephone woke him. An irate director shouted at him, long distance from Toronto, "I can't work with this junk! I won't work with this junk!" In the morning another call came; they would use his first

script, as he had written originally, after all.

"Leclair advised would-be writers: "You do what works."

"Comedy," he said, "is irony. If you're going to have a red-hot lover, he's a shy little guy whose hands stink."

Leclair said "the most essential part of writing is the process of editing."

"Sometimes," he said "the unspoken word is more powerful than the 27 spoken words you didn't need."

Leclair stressed the difference between writing for stage and writing for the media, which he referred to as "the industry."

"Stage still has some sense of integrity," he said. "The industry is not run by writers or actors or directors; it is run by businessmen, and if you can make people sad by feeling them the subliminal sound of a baby crying, you do it."

Leclair's nicotine-stained fingers gave weight to his assertion that working full-time as a dramatist is a highly pressured way of life. Through a haze of smoke he offered encouragement; "writing drama is the most disciplined art. It is also the most saleable art."

Asked whether writers from the Maritimes were not at a disadvantage when trying to work in the Toronto-based industry, he nodded. "It's difficult." Then he smiled broadly. "But it can be done. I've done it."

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Holy Ghosters a sleeper

By Jonathan Orlowski

Nova Scotia in 1776 is the setting of the play *Holy Ghosters*. The British colony is caught in the middle of choosing sides — loyalty to the British sovereign, breaking away from the 14th colony of the American independence revolution, or going their own way.

The men breaking the middle ground were called "holy ghosters", a slang term used in that era meaning cowards.

Richard John Uniacke portrays such a coward in the play. He is the go-between for Delesderniers — the British loyalists that moved over from England and Mary Allan, wife of the American rebel leader, John Allan. He marries the daughter of Moses Delesdernier but is lured to the rebel side by Mary Allan. In the end Uniacke is still not sure which side he is on.

Parts of the play were comical and facial expressions were excellent, but the acting could not overcome a plot that dragged on and on.

Constantly throughout the play the audiences' attention drifted. You couldn't help but feel, "when will it end."

The characters were very dramatic, maybe too dramatic to captivate the full attention of the audience.

The monstrous flags that draped both sides of the stage were distracting and could have been limited in used to a few scenes.

The sound effects and music were clearly audible and lighting could have been better.

It is an old fashion type of play that does not seem to fit these modern times.



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