



PCP Nightmare Over for Narcotics Officers

by Robert Warner

It was to have been a routine marijuana bust. Previous reconnaissance had already located the thriving plants in the back yard of a small Selma, California house in the San Joaquin Valley. On May 29th, 1980 Michael Del Puppo arrived with several other officers to serve a search warrant. The suspect, who was outside at the time, immediately bolted for the front door, closely pursued by the now shouting Del Puppo and his partner who were commanding him to halt. The suspect entered the house, slamming and locking the door behind him. Del Puppo and his partner put their shoulders to the door and tore it off the frame. Michael Del Puppo's three-year ordeal with PCP contamination was about to begin.

At the back of the house the suspect pulled two baby bottles filled with a clear yellowish liquid out of a kitchen refrigerator. Sustaining a momentum of sheer panic, he kicked open the back door and burst into the yard in a single motion, easily brushing aside an officer who had been placed at the door should an effort have been made to dispose of the marijuana. Sighting two other officers at the back of the yard, he stopped abruptly and was immediately hit from behind by the two trailing officers. One of the bottles had already been tossed into a flower bed. As the officers struggled to wrestle the suspect to the ground, he quickly removed the top of the second bottle and dispatched the contents over his shoulder, not on to the ground as he had hoped, but into the face of detective Del Puppo.

As Del Puppo describes it, his face was instantly "on fire" and his mouth was filled with a "horribly bitter" taste. Several other officers then tore the suspect away and hand-cuffed him. Queries as to the contents of the bottle brought a derisive reply: "Water, man, water. "

For Leonard Villahermosa, PCP represented a far less dramatic, but far more insidious turn of events. Having worked in law enforcement since 1958, "Villa", as his friends called him, became a narcotics detective with the City of Inglewood (California) Police Department in 1977. Between 1977 and late 1980 he was involved in the dismantling of nearly a dozen PCP labs.

In taking down the labs. the officers spent an average of four to five hours moving in and out of a laboratory. They regularly got PCP and other chemicals on their hands and breathed in the vapors through the air.

By the end of 1980 his physical and mental health had deteriorated significantly. He began to have daily headaches, felt "sick and worn out" all the time and became extremely irritable. Del Puppo's symptoms were almost identical. His sense of balance and his memory were seriously impaired. An important communication to a colleague would be forgotten - and embarrassingly repeated - only hours later.

The three years following their PCP exposures were quite disappointing for Del Puppo and Villahermosa. Hospital treatments failed and psychiatric and psychological evaluations seemed to ignore the PCP element entirely, asserting that their difficulties stemmed from other factors, such as work stress or, in Del Puppo's case, the trauma of the incident itself.

In November of 1982 Del Puppo received a call from Jack Dirmann, Vice President of the Foundation for Advancements in Science and Education (FASE) in Los Angeles. Dirmann had seen a newspaper article on Del

Puppo's experience. FASE scientists had recently completed a study of a detoxification program which had been developed in the 1970's by American writer and researcher, L. Ron Hubbard. His writings on the adverse effects of drugs and how to deal with them have been used for over a decade by various drug abuse programs. But only in recent years have scientists and physicians turned to his detoxification technique as a means of dealing with the many chemically related environmental health problems now facing modern society. FASE researchers found the Hubbard method to be highly effective in reducing bodily accumulations of even the most persistent environmental chemicals, which had been found to store in human fat tissues.

On the recommendation of one of his physicians, Dr. Orm Analine of the University of Southern California Medical Center, and with the agreement of the state's Workmen's Compensation insurance program to pick up the tab, Del Puppo decided to undergo the Hubbard program. The treatment was being offered at the HealthMed Clinic, a medical clinic in Los Angeles specializing in human detoxification. The Hubbard method consists of a precise integration of several components, including exercise, sauna, polyunsaturated oils and nutritional supplements, centered around gradually increasing doses of Niacin (Vitamin B3), which promotes the release of toxins from tissues.

Del Puppo and Villahermosa (who arrived at the Detox center through the referral of a psychologist) had a variety of experiences while going through the purification process. Del Puppo experienced a "cloudy" feeling for several days and then, after nine days on the program, had a full blown "flashback". As he was sitting in the sauna he began to "float".

"The walls started moving in on me," stated Del Puppo. And then the horrible, bitter taste started to come into my mouth - something I had never experienced with any other treatment. I felt certain the chemical was finally coming out of my body."

After 19 days on the program Del Puppo stated that "-for the first time I felt like I had three years ago." Tests conducted upon his completion of the program revealed that his eyesight, memory, IQ and reaction time had all significantly improved.

According to Villahermosa, he was sick every day for about a week after starting the program and then began to smell the PCP and taste it in his mouth. The next day he suddenly became aware of the fact that he didn't have a headache. The feeling took him by surprise as he had suffered headaches daily for years. After that, explained Villahermosa, "things just kept getting better and better.

Both Del Puppo and Villahermosa say they believe there are a number of other officers who probably have had similar problems but are attributing their headaches or fatigue or irritability to other factors, such as work stress or family upsets.

"The police officers and firemen who have to deal with PCP exposures, lab explosions and fires are doing their communities a tremendous service," says Del Puppo. "Their reward shouldn't be chronic health problems. Toxic contamination problems can be addressed effectively and hopefully those who have problems similar to mine will seek out the help which is now available. "