

And the U.S. Air Force has also publicly denied the existence of a chemtrails program. In the early aughts, the agency's website featured a notice declaring, "The Air Force is not conducting any weather modification experiments or programs and has no plans to do so in the future. The 'chemtrail' hoax has been investigated and refuted by many established and accredited universities, scientific organizations, and major media publications."

Nonetheless, Roddie has attracted a following of devout chemtrails believers in the Bay Area. Fifty-three-year-old Val Hall is one of them. A landscape gardener from Richmond, Hall first learned of chemtrails from a young man who'd joined her work crew at a job in Point Richmond in May 2006.

"While we were working, a jet put a persistent contrail all the way across the sky, and the kid showed me," Hall says. "I'd never seen a jet put a line like that all the way across the sky in my life. Some of my crewmembers looked at him and thought, 'This guy's crazy,' but I didn't think he was crazy."

The kid gave Hall a name for what she'd witnessed — chemtrails — and explained the various poisons strafing people in the Bay Area. Hall never saw the kid again after that day, but she began watching the sky closely, and in 2011 she went online to do her own research. That's when she found Roddie.

"I never wanted to be an activist in my life, but all of a sudden I *had* to be an activist," Hall says. She calls herself a "warrior for the deep blue sky," an allusion to her childhood in the Bay Area when the sky was a lush, cinematic blue instead of the "chalkboard" it is today. Hall now admins 15 different Facebook groups devoted to exposing chemtrails.

She's a valuable activist partly because she claims to suffer health effects as a result of chemtrails. Hall has Lyme Disease, for example, which she says worsens on heavy spray days. (A 2007 article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* disputed the existence of chronic Lyme Disease and concluded that such a diagnosis "is a misnomer, and the use of prolonged, dangerous, and expensive antibiotic treatments for it is not warranted.")

Hall says she protects herself as best she can, but as a gardener, she works outside every day and is vulnerable. She no longer drives with her windows down, she says, and she bought a water filter to sift out impurities. Occasionally, she detoxes from the heavy metals in her blood by taking supplements such as chlorella, zeolite powder, and bentonite clay. She also eats as much cilantro as she can, which assuages metallic contamination, she claims.

Rumors of sickness and bodily mutation run rampant through the chemtrails community. Hall mentions a fellow activist who tested her dog's blood for heavy metals and discovered thorium, a radioactive element that has been used as nuclear fuel.

She also mentions Morgellons, a controversial condition — classified by most physicians as a delusional parasitosis — in which people develop sores they believe to be caused by parasites, insects, or invasive synthetic fibers. In 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention investigated Morgellons among patients in Northern California, a hotbed of self-reported Morgellons diagnoses, and concluded there was "no infectious cause and no evidence of an environmental link."

Hall is unconvinced. "All of us have fibers in us because they spray them in the sky, and they're all over the ground, and they're in the soil, and they're in the water," she says. "These fibers are self-replicating nanotech-

nology. To me, those are the scariest words I've ever heard in my life."

Marsha Dawson, a North Bay activist who works with Roddie and Hall, agrees that chemtrails exact a disastrous human toll. She says she experiences "memory problems" and lung pain because of her exposure. Dawson drinks Fiji and Volvic water constantly because both contain silica that, she claims, loosens the aluminum particles in her body. She also finds relief in black cherry bark syrup from Whole Foods.

"I'll call my daughter to warn her, 'It's a heavy spray day, please don't go outside,'" Dawson says. "And she doesn't argue. She doesn't want to talk about it, but she'll say okay. She's

young, only 25, so it's hard to face this is your world."

Dawson first learned of chemtrails in February 2014. She had recently retired as an administrative assistant, and with spare time on her hands, began sitting on her deck in Marin County. One day she noticed contrails running across the sky. As Hall did three years before, Dawson turned to the Internet for answers.

"That opened a door that I wish many times I could close," Dawson says.

She joined Roddie's Facebook group. And later that month, during a trip to the San Joaquin Valley, she says she awoke in a little town to see planes spraying and chemtrails swelling like varicose veins across an ashen sky.

*Tribune*. On October 21, 2005, barely two months after his story appeared, Dalton was fired, and the notice in the *Tribune* announcing his termination indicated that his wife, who sometimes contributed business articles to the paper, had also "been asked not to write anymore." All mention of Dalton and his articles has since been scrubbed from the *Tribune's* website.

High Strangeness, a blog about mysterious phenomena, posted an email purportedly sent by Dalton on November 18, 2005, in which he confirmed his dismissal was unrelated to the chemtrails story. "I moved away from Las Vegas," he wrote. But that hasn't dissuaded chemtrails believers from anointing him a martyr to their cause. (As of press time, Dalton couldn't be located, and neither his ex-wife nor the *Las Vegas Tribune* returned requests for comment.)

Roddie believes that whatever dark bureaucracy is behind the spraying program conditioned the public to accept chemtrails by foreshadowing them in pop culture. He calls this "the revelation of the method," a term popularized by the revisionist historian (and Holocaust denier) Michael A. Hoffmann. Roddie considers the body scanners in *Total Recall* an example of how the government introduces provocative technology under the guise of commercial entertainment.

"We're living in a script," Roddie says. Hall echoes him, noting, "Life seems to be like a scary science fiction movie now."

## PART II: SPECIAL REPORT NO. 142

The chemtrails conspiracy sounds like an extravagant *X-Files* episode, but so does the government's history of civilian defense experiments. The most haunting local example is the Army's biological warfare trials in San Francisco in September 1950.

According to the Army's Special Report No. 142, drafted in 1951 but unpublished until the mid-1970s, the Army unleashed six "experimental biological warfare attacks" upon the Bay Area during one week in late September 1950.

As Leonard A. Cole writes in *Clouds of Secrecy: The Army's Germ Warfare Tests Over Populated Areas*, the tests consisted of "generating bacterial aerosols from a ship located at various distances offshore." The two bacterial aerosols deployed — *Bacillus globigii* and *Serratia marcescens* — were considered nonpathogenic, so the Army didn't bother to notify San Franciscans that their city was being treated as a Petri dish in the name of national security.

Cole notes that everybody in San Francisco during that week in September 1950 inhaled 5,000 airborne particles per minute. In the days after the tests, 11 people came down with mysterious infections at the Stanford Hospital in San Francisco. One of them was 75-year-old Edward J. >>p16



James Hosking



(Top) Patrick Roddie on the roof of his building in Lower Pac Heights. (Left) Roddie holds satellite imagery of contrails.

To make matters worse, Dawson believes there's a media blackout around chemtrails. The Weather Channel, she says, is owned by the same corporation that holds patents for weather control. (In reality, The Weather Channel is owned by a consortium that is itself owned by NBCUniversal, The Blackstone Group, and Mitt Romney's Bain Capital.) She notes that the *Marin Independent Journal* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* never publish stories about chemtrails.

Many activists contend that journalists who investigate the spraying program risk being blacklisted. A case in point is Marcus K. Dalton, who in August 2005 published a two-part story about chemtrails in the *Las Vegas*

Nevin, a pipefitter retired from PG&E. Nevin had been in the hospital to have his prostate removed, but in the first week of October, he developed a sudden fever. Doctors discovered *Serratia marcescens* in his urine culture.

A month later, Nevin was dead.

An autopsy concluded that he'd died of bacterial endocarditis, or inflammation of the heart. And while Nevin's infection was never conclusively traced back to the Army's tests, the fact that *serratia* infections had never been reported at the hospital before raised suspicions.

The Army kept mum about its experiment, and it wasn't until a *Newsday* reporter uncovered Army memos in 1976 that the public learned of the secret germ tests. Nevin's family sued the U.S. government for \$11 million in 1977, arguing the Army's test was unlawful and caused Nevin's death. The family lost the trial. Judge Samuel Conti (an appointee of Richard Nixon) ruled that the Army tests were part of national planning and thus exempt from prosecution. Further, the Army had exercised caution in selecting which aerosols to disperse, Conti declared.

The legacy of the 1950 germ test — and the Nevin family's trial — resonates among contemporary chemtrails activists. Wanttoknow.info, a website that documents alleged cover-ups, features a prominent link to a 2001 *Wall Street Journal* article discussing the Nevin case. And imagery from the Army's 1950 test is recycled in new fears of government malfeasance. Val Hall, for example, claims that ships trawl the ocean between Japan and the West Coast, pumping deadly aerosols into the clouds.

"I grew up in the Bay Area, and we always had fog," Hall says, "but it's not the same fog anymore. The stuff that comes in now is gray and not very drizzly. It seems full of chemicals."

The 1950 San Francisco experiment is only one of the secret civilian tests the government conducted. In a 1977 Senate subcommittee hearing, the Army disclosed that 239 biological field tests occurred in 66 locations between 1941 and 1969. That most of these tests were top secret only strengthens activists' conviction that Washington experiments on innocent people with impunity. If the government treated us like guinea pigs before, the thinking goes, who's to say they're not doing the same now?

"We could hire a helicopter, fill it full of nerve gas, fly over wherever the Giants are playing, and gas everybody," Roddie says. "As long as we call it research, it's legal."

Roddie is referring to U.S. Code 50, which outlines war and national security protocol. Specifically, Section 2791 defines acceptable laboratory-directed research and development as "work of a creative and innovative nature" that's undertaken "for the purpose of maintaining the vitality of the laboratory in defense-related scientific disciplines."



Photographs by James Hosking



**(Top) Marsha Dawson watches the sky in San Francisco. (Left) Dawson holds a chemtrails flyer.**

Herndon was a postdoctoral student at UC San Diego from 1975 through 1978, studying under chemist and Nobel laureate Harold Urey. Herndon claims that around the time he published his paper, the government grants funding his research dried up without explanation.

"I realized then I had to make a decision," Herndon says, "whether to stay in the academic business and howl with the wolves, or do it on my own."

Herndon went rogue, and since his self-described "excommunication" from academia, he's lurked on the fringes of accepted science. In 1993, he published a paper that theorized a giant nuclear fission reactor at the center of the earth. And last year, he self-published *Herndon's Earth and the Dark Side of Science*, a textbook-cum-manifesto revealing the "malevolent political agenda" that has hijacked science.

"Virtually every scientist thinks [Herndon's] theory is nonsense," geophysicist Gillian Foulger told the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 2004, referring to the idea of a nuclear reactor inside the earth.

A year and a half ago, Herndon noticed contrails above his house in San Diego. "They shouldn't have sprayed that crap over my head," he says, his drawl dropping an octave into John Wayne parody.

Herndon emailed city officials in San Diego for answers, but the only response he got was from a lieutenant in SDPD internal affairs who called to see if Herndon was "a nutcase." Herndon also contacted the *San Diego Union-Tri-*

Whether that extends to spraying nerve gas over ballparks is debatable.

Roddie, weaned on the cynicism of Jello Biafra and the Dead Kennedys, has a stark view of society's food chain: "The people who are most powerful will collaborate to screw everybody else over. I can't imagine another system that would work at a global level."

### PART III: VIGILANTE SCIENCE

J. Marvin Herndon speaks with a crunchy Southern drawl, perhaps a relic from South Carolina where he

was born, or from his days as a Ph.D. student in nuclear chemistry at Texas A&M University. Scarcely five minutes into our phone call, he says he can't name the journal due to publish his latest chemtrails research because "there are people who listen, if you understand my drift."

In 1979, Herndon published a paper in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London* in which he argued that the earth's inner core is composed of nickel silicide (most geologists believe the inner core to be an iron-nickel alloy). According to Herndon, the idea was so heretical that the scientific community wouldn't acknowledge it.

*bune* and the *San Diego Reader* to no avail. Like Roddie and his followers, Herndon is convinced the media is collaborating on a chemtrails cover-up.

In June, Herndon published a chemtrails paper in a minor Indian journal called *Current Science*. In it, he argued that chemtrails are coal fly ash, the toxic waste from coal-burning power plants. Planes spray this into the troposphere, Herndon wrote, hoping metallic particles in the ash will deflect sunlight and reduce global warming.

"It's all a beautiful idea if, number one, this stuff wasn't toxic, and number two, they're weren't spraying it into the troposphere," he says.

The scope of the program Herndon envisions is mind-boggling. According to him, the fly ash is transported on railways that connect coal plants to military and civilian airports across the country. The ash is loaded onto a fleet of 1,000 or more planes, he estimates, all of which fly off-the-radar, often at night, without transponders or flight plans. These ghost planes, Herndon says, have poisoned the country and induced California's drought. He alleges that certain leafy plants in the Golden State now exhibit high concentrations of thallium — Saddam Hussein's favorite poison for political assassinations.

"It'll end up destroying the agriculture or make a lot of people sick. There'll be a lot of neurological diseases," Herndon says.

He adds, "It's also destroying something else: It's destroying democracy."

Herndon bristles at being labeled a "conspiracy theorist." Like many believers, he's wary of what he calls "the shills," secret agents on the government payroll tasked with infiltrating and undermining activist groups.

He quotes from "Countering Criticism of the Warren Commission Report," a 1967 CIA dispatch that explains how to disarm conspiracy theorists:

...our ploy should point out, as applicable, that the critics are (I) wedded to theories adopted before the evidence was in, (II) politically interested, (III) financially interested, (IV) hasty and inaccurate in their research, or (V) infatuated with their own theories.

Roddie, too, is vigilant about outing shills. His website links to a purported "shill handbook," part of which adapts COINTELPRO techniques for the Internet. (The FBI launched COINTELPRO in 1956 to subvert Communists in the U.S.; the program later expanded to include the KKK, the Socialist Workers Party, and the Black Panther Party.)

Per the handbook, one classic shill technique is topic dilution.

"By implementing continual and non-related postings that distract and disrupt (trolling) the forum readers they are more effectively stopped from anything of any real productivity," the handbook states. In other words, Reddit flame wars could actually be Big Brother trying to put the kibosh on citizen action.

Roddie claims that during >>p18