

NUTTY NEW RECIPES | SHIPROCK NAVAJO FAIR

NEW MEXICO

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MAGAZINE

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OCCASION:

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3 NEW CLUES:
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INTRIGUING
MYSTERIES

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A LEGEND
TAKES THE STAGE

GO UNDERCOVER:
TRAIL FAMOUS
SPIES

The background design seen here is based on a sketch of the atomic bomb drawn by Soviet informer and Albuquerque resident David Greenglass. The real sketch was used as evidence in the 1951 espionage trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

CROSS-SECTION OF BOMB. NOT TO SCALE

SPYING TINKER US

NEW MEXICO HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HOTBED OF ESPIONAGE AND INTRIGUE—FROM THE MANHATTAN PROJECT IN LOS ALAMOS TO DOUBLE AGENTS IN SANTA FE PASSING SECRETS TO THE SOVIETS. NOW, ALBUQUERQUE MYSTERY WRITER **CHRISTINE BARBER** TAKES YOU ON A TOUR OF OUR STATE'S SPY HISTORY.

HIS CODE NAME WAS PERSEUS.

No one is sure of his real name. The only whisper of his existence came from intelligence files of the former KGB opened briefly in the 1990s. The files mentioned that Perseus was supposedly working as a spy at Los Alamos National Laboratory during World War II. Did he really exist? We may never know.

We do know that Perseus was just one shadowy figure among many in the international spy game still playing out in

New Mexico. The state has unique ties to the first atomic bomb, and is currently home to Los Alamos National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories, which are both, in part, still in the weapons business. Since the nuclear age and the spy game grew up together, New Mexico's history seethes with family betrayals, secret Jell-O box-top puzzles, elaborate disguises, dummies, defections, and assassinations.

On the Hill

"There were all these layers of secrecy," says Ellen Bradbury Reid of the nuclear-age plots involving Los Alamos National Laboratory. Reid, a Manhattan Project historian who grew up in Los Alamos, now conducts tours of famous sites associated with the era. "There were secrets upon secrets. There are large parts of this we do not know."

Even if Perseus didn't exist, the government caught three other spies who

worked for the U.S.S.R. during the design and construction of the first atomic bombs, in the mid-1940s. Their stories, as told to a grand jury and found today online at the National Archives, are still compelling.

One of the most famous stories involves David Greenglass, a Manhattan Project machinist who lived with his wife in a downtown Albuquerque apartment—and who passed classified information to Julius



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U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
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Above—Prosecutors introduced this Jell-O box top as evidence during Julius and Ethel Rosenberg's trial. In a plan orchestrated by the Rosenbergs, David Greenglass (below) said he matched his half of the box top with that of a courier before passing over sketches of the atomic bomb. The information was soon in Soviet hands.



Clockwise from left—In 1953, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were put to death for espionage; testimony from Ethel's brother and Manhattan Project employee David Greenglass was instrumental in their conviction. The event was widely reported in the media of the day, as demonstrated by this New York Daily News front page. A theoretical physicist on the Manhattan Project, Klaus Fuchs, also known as K. Fuchs and Karl Fuchs, gave detailed information about the bomb to the Soviets; below a report excerpt details his involvement.

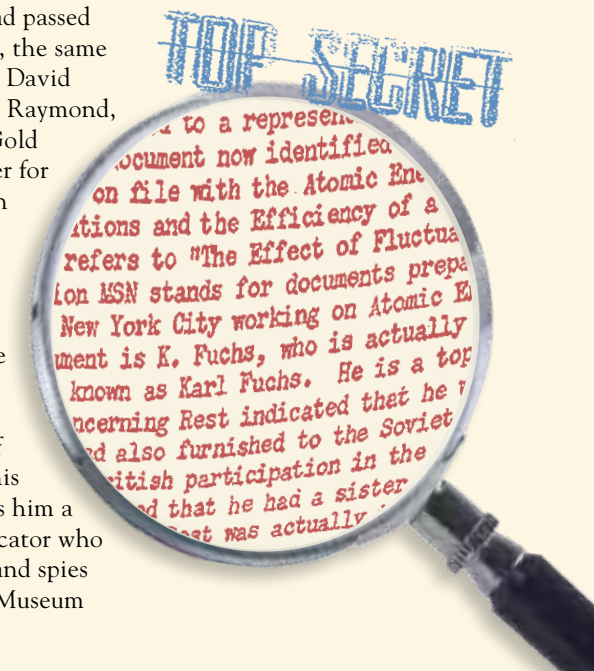
and Ethel Rosenberg. On the morning of June 3, 1945, Greenglass answered a knock at his door to find a man, code-named "Raymond," who simply said, "Julius sent me." The man held half of a Jell-O box top. Greenglass found his half of the box top, given to him by his brother-in-law, Julius Rosenberg. When the halves matched, Greenglass handed Raymond sketches of the atomic bomb and the names of individuals working on the Manhattan Project. Within 24 hours, that information was in the hands of a Soviet agent. Just six years later, in 1951, Greenglass provided the key evidence that sent his sister, Ethel Rosenberg, and her husband to the electric chair for espionage, both on June 19, 1953.

But Greenglass was hardly the only snoop working at Los Alamos during WWII. Klaus Fuchs, for one, had much more dangerous information to share. A theoretical physicist, Fuchs stood at the Trinity Site, near Alamogordo, on July 16, 1945, and watched the experimental detonation of the first atomic bomb. The explosion would soon stun the world, but it came as no surprise to the

Soviets—a month before, Fuchs had passed along to them every shred of information he knew, including exact sketches of the bomb, the types of material used, the estimated force of the explosion, and specifics of the planned Trinity test.

On June 2, 1945, Fuchs had passed this information to Raymond, the same courier who would meet with David Greenglass the very next day. Raymond, whose real name was Harry Gold and who was a Russian courier for almost 15 years, also met with Fuchs several times in Santa Fe, once at the now-gone Castillo Street Bridge, and again at what historian Reid believes was the Scottish Rite Temple, at 463 Paseo de Peralta.

It's the staggering depth of Fuchs's betrayal, along with his colorful character, that makes him a favorite of Sarah Fair, an educator who teaches a class about secrets and spies to teenagers at the National Museum





of Nuclear Science and History, in Albuquerque. “He was one of the masterminds of getting information to the Russians,” says Fair.

But while many of New Mexico’s spy stories are now more than 60 years old, don’t think for a second that there aren’t spies at work here today. There have been far more recent cases, such as the arrest in 1997 of Peter H. Lee, a nuclear physicist at LANL who admitted selling secrets to China in 1985 (and not to be confused with Wen Ho Lee, who was accused of passing secrets to the Chinese in 1999 but later acquitted). Then, in 2005, there was Noshir Gowadia, a LANL contract engineer who didn’t discriminate when handing over classified information, admitting that he passed on facts about the B-2 bomber’s stealth technology to eight countries, including China.

Behind the Iron Curtain

Although most of New Mexico’s high-drama spy sagas are connected to the national labs, there are some notable exceptions. One tale of intrigue is based more on rumor than fact, says Reid. Supposedly, before WWII, the KGB used a drugstore near the Santa Fe Plaza as an operations base for the assassination of Leon Trotsky,

Clockwise from top left—In 1945, Manhattan Project scientist Klaus Fuchs passed vital information on the atomic bomb to the Soviets. This report on Fuchs’s service describes his conduct as “Excellent.” Fuchs supposedly met his courier at the Castillo Street Bridge in Santa Fe. The Manhattan Project’s “cover” office, where workers were first briefed about the project, was located at 109 E. Palace in Santa Fe; you can visit this location today. This receipt from the Hilton Hotel is evidence of Harry Gold’s presence in Albuquerque, where he gathered secrets to transport to the Soviets. Gold, a.k.a. “Raymond,” collected information from the likes of Klaus Fuchs and David Greenglass and acted as a Russian courier for nearly 15 years.

the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution. Joseph Stalin had ordered Trotsky deported to Mexico, where, in 1940, he was assassinated by a KGB agent.

Another story—this one offering more fact than fiction—is that of Edward Lee Howard, an Alamogordo native and CIA officer who, in 1985, used a disguise and a dummy to slink away from the agents tailing him and defect to the Soviet Union, only to die there under suspicious circumstances.

Howard had trained with the CIA for special duty in Russia, but was fired after failing a polygraph test regarding past drug use and petty theft. He then moved to Santa Fe, worked for the state of New Mexico, got into drunken brawls—and passed along secrets to Moscow. The Soviets gave him the exceptionally boring codename “Robert.”

After a newly defected Russian spy reported that a disgruntled American was selling secrets to the Soviets, the FBI, reluctantly notified by the CIA about Howard, put the state employee under surveillance.

On September 21, 1985, the agents watching Howard suspected nothing when he and his wife went out for dinner. But 24 hours later, after being fooled by pre-recorded telephone conversations and a dummy in a wig, the agents realized that Howard had bailed out of the car and escaped into the desert the night before.

Howard ended up writing a book about his adventures: *Safe House: The Compelling Memoirs of the Only CIA Spy to Seek Asylum in Russia* (National Press Books, 1995). While he talked of returning to the U.S. to face charges, including his New Mexico probation violations, Howard died in 2002 in Moscow, at the age 50, of a broken neck. Official Russian explanation: He fell down some stairs.

But Robert Eringer, who was sent by FBI counterintelligence to spy on Howard, and eventually wrote of his exploits in his own book, *Ruse: Undercover with FBI Counterintelligence* (Potomac Books, 2008), believes Howard met his end as so many spies do: murdered in a double cross.

Christine Barber is featured in “Storytellers” on page 5.

GO UNDERCOVER: SPY DESTINATIONS REVEALED!

ALAMOGORDO
When the first atomic bomb was detonated at the **Trinity Site** in 1945, New Mexico burst onto the scene of the international spy game. The site, now a National Historic Landmark, is within White Sands Missile Range, near Carrizozo, and is open to the public only twice a year. The next open house is October 3, 2009, when the gate will be open from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. During those hours you can visit the site on your own, or go with the Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce, which sponsors a convoy for visitors. For info, including directions: (575) 678-1134, www.wsmr.army.mil/wsmr.asp

ALBUQUERQUE
Stay at **The Spy House**, where David Greenglass matched his Jell-O box top with a courier’s and passed secrets to the Soviets. Greenglass’s 1912 Arts and Crafts bungalow is now a bed-and-breakfast run by Steve and Kara Grant. When they restored the building, the Grants paid special attention to its history. The Greenglass rooms contain some original pieces, including a table where the drawings of the atomic bomb’s trigger were sketched. The table, now in a room decorated in blues and butterscotch, was sent to New York City, where it was used as evidence during the trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. 209 High St. NE, Albuquerque. Rooms from \$119. For info: (505) 842-0223, www.albuquerquebandb.com

The National Museum of Nuclear Science and History: The museum, which opened at its new location in April, is a treasure trove of information about the atomic age. It also has one of the best museum slogans: “Reactions welcome.” The staff runs educational programs for kids, including one for grades 7–12 called “Secrets and Spies: The Manhattan Project.” The program

looks at life at LANL, goes through a mockup of a 1940s security handbook, and teaches code-breaking. 601 Eubank Blvd. SE, Albuquerque. Open daily, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. For info: (505) 245-2137, www.nuclearmuseum.org

LOS ALAMOS
The city is home to the high-security Los Alamos National Laboratory, where Manhattan Project scientists carried out their secret mission in the 1940s, and where a new generation of visionaries carries out their own today. For no admission charge, you can visit two museums that focus on the area’s history and the science of the atomic bomb. **The Bradbury Science Museum**, at 15th and Central in downtown Los Alamos, is open Tuesday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m., and Sunday–Monday, 1–5 p.m. For info: (505) 667-4444; www.lanl.gov/museum. **The Los Alamos Historical Society Museum**, at 1921 Juniper St., is open Monday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., and Sunday, 1–4 p.m. For info: (505) 662-4493, www.losalamoshistory.org/Museum.htm

SANTA FE
Klaus Fuchs, the physicist who passed on to the U.S.S.R. what was arguably the most damaging information about the bomb, met with his courier at several places around the City Different. You can see some of the spots on your own; if you’re traveling with a bigger group, custom tours are offered by Royal Road Tours, owned by historian Ellen Bradbury Reid. These feature the location of the **Castillo Street Bridge**, where Fuchs passed on his secrets, and the **Manhattan Project “cover” office**, at 109 E. Palace, where all workers reporting to jobs at Los Alamos were briefed about the project. 826 Camino del Monte Rey, Ste. A-3, Santa Fe. For info: (505) 982-4512, www.royalroadtours.com

—Christine Barber