

The Man Behind The...
World's Most Dangerous Website
- Secrets and Lies -

by John Cook
from [RadarOnLine](#) Website



SHADOW FIGURE

**Over the years, John Young claims to have exposed
276 British MI6 agents, 400 secret Japanese intelligence officers, and 2,619 CIA sources**

Click here to see John Young's [most controversial Cryptome posts](#)

"Why should I believe you?"

John L. Young asks that question a lot. When he poses it to me, leveling his intense, glassy blue eyes at mine across a barroom table on a muggy evening in late May, it is less a direct attack on my credibility than a cruel epistemological riddle.

Over the previous week, I had exchanged e-mails and spoken on the telephone with Young, a 71-year-old architect, spy buff, and proprietor of a strange and engrossing website called [Cryptome](#), to set up an interview.

In doing so, I supplied him with certain data: my name [John Cook], occupation [reporter], employer [Radar magazine], location [216 E. 45th St.], e-mail address [redacted], telephone number [redacted]. Young craves data. He covets it, collects it, triangulates it, and uploads it to Cryptome - an online repository of forbidden information - where it collides with more data, gig after gig sloshing around in chaotic digital clouds.

There are high-resolution satellite photos of [President Bush's Crawford ranch](#), technical documents detailing how the National Security Agency [spies on computer traffic](#), even the home addresses and telephone numbers of government officials, including former Director of National Intelligence [John Negroponte](#).

But Young knows that raw data is suspect.

Before it is loosed on the Internet, scrubbed, cross-referenced, and interrogated by the hive mind for inconsistencies and cracks, it can be used to deceive. People lie. Misinformation is everywhere. People will use you; they will try to get you to believe things that aren't true in order to advance their own agendas.

It is, as Young likes to say, "standard tradecraft."

I could hand him a business card, show him a magazine, look him firmly and earnestly in the eye, and swear up and down that I am who I say I am.

"But," he'll reply with a caustic smile, "that's how liars talk."

There is no way out of this for John Young. He has a very good reason to suspect me, but he has good reasons to suspect everyone. Inquisitive reporters could have ulterior motives. Even the most casual of social interactions could be an attempt to shake him down for information.

Every smiling stranger could be a Trojan horse; each friendly e-mail the beginning of a sting. It must be exhausting.

Cryptome is, in the words of [washingtonpost.com](#) columnist and NBC News military analyst William Arkin, "the Google of national security." It is a meticulously maintained online compendium of information - some previously available to the public, some not - devoted to plumbing and exposing the secrets of the intelligence world. With a clean, crisp design, it presents, in no discernible order, simple red links to documents and text files against a white background.

Much of the material Young collects is stultifyingly dull - "RFC Keyed-Hash Message Authentication Code" will take the reader to an announcement in the Federal Register concerning a "mechanism for message authentication using cryptographic hash functions and shared secret keys" from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, for instance - but some of it is dangerous and even breathtaking.



WHO'S LOOKING OUT?

Bill O'Reilly's home in Manhasset, NY, published on Cryptome last year

During the past few years, Young has published detailed overhead satellite imagery of Site R, a military installation in Pennsylvania that he claims is Vice President Dick Cheney's undisclosed location.

Hours after the FBI announced charges in June against four men for plotting to blow up jet-fuel tanks at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, Cryptome ran photos of the airport tank farms, pointing out the exact route of a jet-fuel pipeline buried beneath nearby residential neighborhoods. He regularly publishes satellite photos of the homes of intelligence officials, including CIA Director Michael Hayden's Washington, D.C., residence.

He has exposed the names of what he claims are 276 British agents covertly working for MI6, the names of 400 secret Japanese intelligence agents, and the names and home addresses of what he claims are 2,619 CIA sources.

Young is a mad scientist of secrecy, working with little more than monomaniacal focus and an Internet connection to turn the tables on the spooks and expose what he regards as a worldwide criminal network of intelligence operatives.

And the spies don't like it. After he posted the MI6 list in 1999, the British government reportedly asked his Internet service provider at the time to shut the site down. The company refused, but in May of this year, his hosting service suddenly, without explanation, announced that it would no longer have anything to do with the site. (Young promptly relocated to another service.)

He says he has received three visits to his home from the FBI, including one from a pair of agents with the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

Young's enemies have tried to shut the site down with denial-of-service attacks. Officials at the National Security Agency read his site with interest, and everyone wants to know where he gets his information.

So why should he believe me? As it turns out, I am not the first reporter from Radar to interview Young. Anthony Haden-Guest, a British writer who splits his time between New York and London and is known as a garrulous, debonair, and well-traveled tippler, approached Young and spoke with him at length one year ago for a Radar story that never materialized. Young finds this curious.

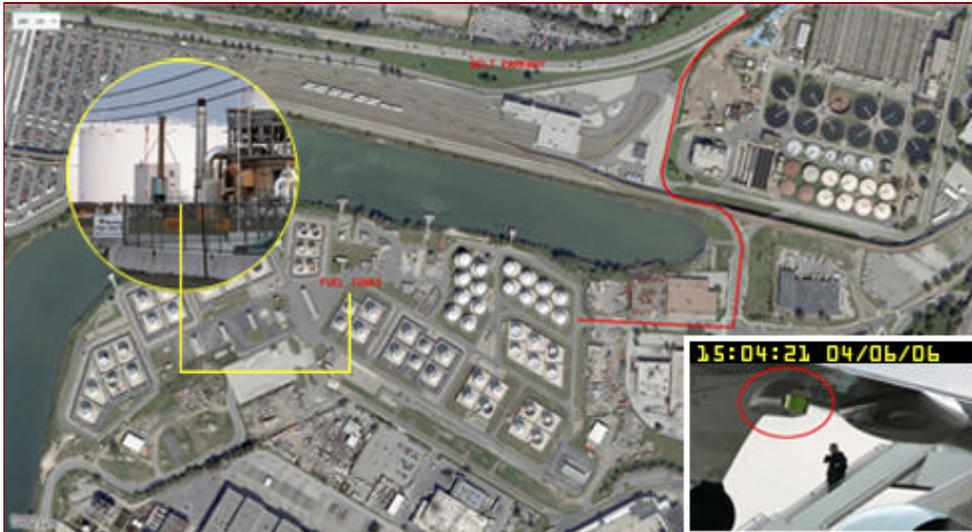
He doesn't understand why Radar is so interested in Cryptome.

"It doesn't seem to be the kind of story that Radar would run," he says. "You do this interesting, catty stuff. We don't do that. Radar is almost the antithesis of what we do."

(Though he runs his site independently, Young says "we" to give credit to his sources, without whom he says Cryptome wouldn't exist.)

He watches me, gauging my reaction. He thinks there's a story here, but it's not about him. It's about something else entirely. "People eat your stuff up," he says.

"Congratulations on your success. The thing is, I'd like them to eat something more toxic."



EYEBALLING JFK

Young published these shots of JFK's jet-fuel tanks hours after a terrorist plot to blow them up was unraveled.

At right is a close-up shot of Air Force One's anti-missile countermeasures

John Young doesn't look his age.

He "is fit and spry, and, with his coat, tie, and "close-cropped gray hair, the picture of upper-middle-class propriety.

Though he lives on Manhattan's Upper West Side, he wouldn't for a moment look out of place standing on a train platform in a Connecticut suburb with a briefcase in one hand and a Wall Street Journal in the other.

He is soft-spoken, polite, and capable of delivering vicious insults in a measured, calm voice with just the hint of a twinkle in his eye. He has a wicked sense of humor and an impish smile that he flashes like a switchblade. He likes to fuck with people.

Young cheerfully agreed to meet me in the bar of New York's Princeton Club, where his wife is a member, last spring. It wasn't until halfway into our two-hour conversation, during which Young was cryptic and reluctant to divulge anything but the most basic personal details, that I realized that it wasn't an interview.

It was an operation.

Young was born in 1935. His parents were "marginal people" and his father worked at "menial tasks," he says, refusing to elaborate. He grew up in West Texas.

He didn't tell me where, exactly.

"We were at the very bottom of the social scale," he says. "And authority was the enemy. That's the psychological background."

He attended Rice University in Houston and did a stint in the Army Corps of Engineers before moving in 1967, at age 32, with a wife and four children in tow, to New York to pursue a graduate degree in architecture at Columbia University.

He studied there under James Marston Fitch, considered the father of the historic preservation movement.

"Jim Fitch said he was the best student he ever had," says Tyler Smith, a fellow student and friend of Young.

In 1968, Young participated in the week-long seizure of Avery Hall, which housed the architecture school, during Columbia's student strike. He wasn't particularly radical, and says he joined in the protest "mainly because it

seemed much more interesting than going to school."

But the strike, and the intellectual climate surrounding it, ignited something in him.

"He came to Columbia as a very traditional thinker - a conservative," says Alan Feigenberg, another student involved in the Avery Hall takeover. "A lot of the stuff we were talking about was shocking to him. He went through a metamorphosis."

Young and his fellow Avery Hall activists founded Urban Deadline, an activist group-cum-architecture practice that sought, improbably, to change the world through design.

Throughout the early 1970s, Urban Deadline donated services to the poor, built storefront schools for high school dropouts, and scraped by on whatever paid contracts it could land.

Young, who was a few years older than his colleagues, reluctantly took on a leadership role despite the group's nominally egalitarian structure. Everyone wrote out their own paychecks at the end of each week. Young's first wife died of cancer either shortly before or shortly after his arrival at Columbia (memories of his former classmates differ, and Young wouldn't say), leaving him to raise their children on his own.

But, according to his fellow Urban Deadliners, he was single-mindedly devoted to the group and its radical goals.

He delighted in his own political obstinacy, and in poking his finger in the eye of whatever establishment figures were within reach.

"The best term that could convey a sense of him is erratic," says Feigenberg. "And eccentric."

When Columbia offered him a teaching position, he argued with the dean that he shouldn't receive any payment since he had no prior teaching experience.

Young once took out a series of ads in the small type along the bottom of the front page of the New York Times attacking I.M. Pei:

"I.M. Pei: Why so many bad buildings?"

When he was invited to say a few words at an opening at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he told the audience of patrons,

"I've just had a chance to look around briefly, but if you move that Rubens and the Rembrandt and store them down in the basement, we could put 32 units of housing in here. We're prepared to start right now."

"I have no idea how John figured out how to make a living," says Tony Schuman, another Urban Deadliner. "I remember times when the electricity was shut off in his apartment because he was so wrapped up in this stuff that he hadn't bothered to find paying work. We were eating rice and beans."

Over the years, financial necessity caused Young's classmates to peel off and start their own practices, and Urban Deadline effectively dissolved in the late 1970s.

"I felt like you couldn't make a life of it," says Feigenberg, today a professor of architecture at the City College of New York. "John felt differently. He felt that it was his life."

We said, "We'll put up anything that no one else wants to put up," Young says. Within months, the site started to see daily visits from NSA computers.

Cryptome started in 1994, when Young was a member of an e-mail Listserv called Cypherpunks, whose members included such online luminaries as John Gilmore, one of the earliest employees of Sun Microsystems, and Tim May, a former chief scientist with Intel.

Young happened across the group when he first got online.

The cypher-punks concerned themselves with the policy implications of encryption technology, which at the time was a hotly debated topic. For the first time in the history of the electronic age, private citizens had access to powerful encryption software that allowed them to communicate with one another without government agencies having the option of listening in.

[The NSA](#), which exists for no other purpose than to listen in, objected, and a series of protracted legal battles ensued between the federal government and privacy activists.

Philip Zimmermann, a cypher-punk and the creator of the Pretty Good Privacy e-mail encryption software, was investigated by the federal government in 1993 for making his software available online, on the grounds that doing so constituted the criminal unlicensed export of a weapon (charges were never filed).

When cypher-punks, many of whom were engineers and mathematicians working as government contractors, needed a way to leak classified technical documents about encryption, Young volunteered as a conduit, first using the small hosting space that his ISP provided and later launching *Cryptome* as a stand-alone site.

"My defense is, I don't know what these documents are," he says. "It was pretty arcane stuff. We said, 'We'll put up anything that no one else wants to put up.' That was our motto."

Within months, he started to see daily visits from **NSA** computers. He'd gotten their attention. The site quickly shed its focus on cryptography, becoming a catch basin for random bits of information - data - about national security and government secrecy.

Young and his wife, [Deborah Natsios](#), who helps him run *Cryptome*, assembled it all in one permanent archive, where readers can fall through the rabbit hole for hours, scanning presidential motorcade security procedures, reading declassified CIA case files, and viewing enhanced photos of that mysterious bulge in the back of President Bush's suit jacket caught on camera during the 2004 debates.

Young has posted 41,000 files so far and averages roughly 50,000 visitors per day.

"There's a massive organization of hundreds of thousands of people around the world totally counting on secrecy," he says of the intelligence agencies he covers. "They are the most ?unreliable people in the world. And it's corrupted our culture. There's nothing that should be secret. Period."

"He's a Johnny Appleseed of information," says Michael Ravnitzky, a former investigative reporter who has made the results of his Freedom of Information Act requests available to Young for posting. "Every time you go there, you find things that alter your worldview and make you look at things in a new light."

"He's a hero in a lot of ways," says Cindy Cohn, the legal director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation. "He's done such an amazing thing in such a quiet, steadfast way."

Young reads the Federal Register every day, files FOIA requests, electronically clips news coverage of the intelligence world, and tracks down court documents.

He once paid a court reporter \$9,000 for the complete transcripts of the New York trial of Osama bin Laden and 21 others for the Kenya and Tanzania embassy bombings. (He sells a DVD archive of everything on *Cryptome* for \$25 apiece and sells ads on the site; aside from that, Young covers *Cryptome*'s costs himself.)

"*Cryptome* functions like a kind of scout in the field of national security," says Steven Aftergood, director of the Project on Government Secrecy for the Federation of American Scientists. "John Young sees many things that others do not see, and posts things others do not, or would not, post. What makes it most useful to me is not the wild stuff, but the day in and day out monitoring of the national security landscape."

The wild stuff: In July of 2000, a disgruntled former agent of the Public Security Intelligence Agency, Japan's version of the CIA, leaked Young a list of more than 400 PSIA operatives, which Young promptly published.

The Japanese government complained about the list to the FBI, and two agents called Young at his home to ask

him to take it down.

"It was very descriptive, and that poses a safety risk," says an FBI spokesman.

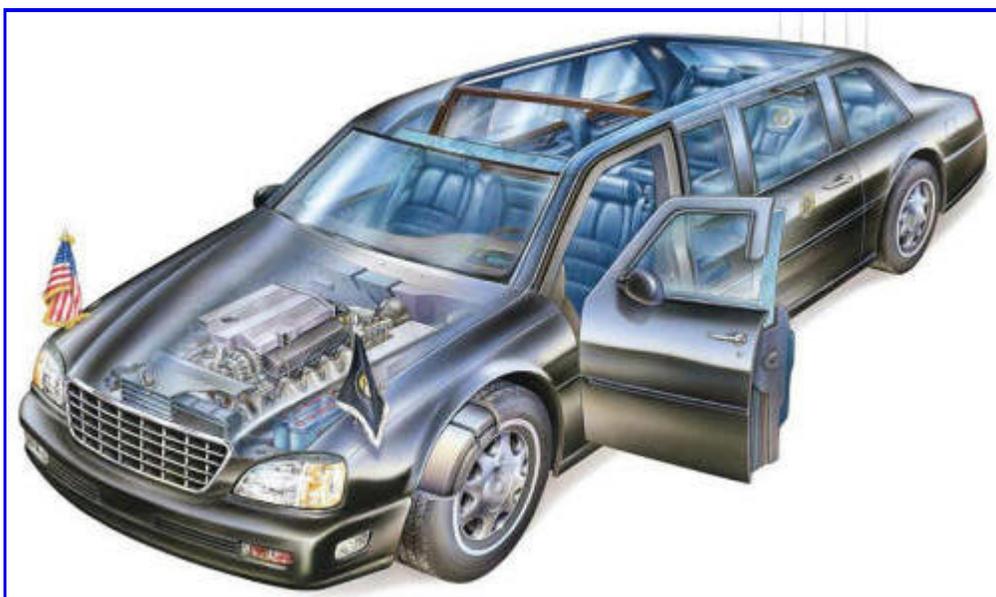
Young refused, and published the names of the agents who called him. Three years later, two agents with the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force dropped in on Young unannounced.

They asked him to stop posting detailed aerial and street-level photos of nuclear installations, and to pass along any information he received that might help them unravel terrorist plots.

"The complaint was, 'Is there some way to persuade you not to do these things?'" Young says.

"They were nice guys, always very polite. They were a little sheepish about it."

Young refused to take down the offending images, and told the agents that if he came across any information about terrorist threats, they could read about it on the site. After they left, he published the names of his visitors on *Cryptome*.



EXPLODED VIEW

**On the eve of Bush's second inaugural,
Young published a "survey of presidential protection,"
including this illustration of the presidential Cadillac swiped from popularmechanics.com**

The British Secret Intelligence Service, also known as MI6, was too canny to approach him directly, but it did reportedly try to get him booted off his ISP, after he published, in 1999, a list of more than 100 MI6 agents that had been released originally by former agent Richard Tomlinson on sites based in the U.S. and Switzerland.

Those sites removed the list at the request of the British government, but Young grabbed it before it went offline.

Since then he's added two more batches of names.

"We don't discuss personnel," says an SIS spokesperson. "But it's obviously unhelpful and dangerous when these names are published."

"I would regard the damage he's doing as considerable," says Peter Earnest, a 36-year veteran of the CIA who now serves as the executive director of the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C.

Earnest is also the chairman of the board of directors of the Association for Intelligence Officers, a group of retired spies, military intelligence officers, and even some journalists who cover intelligence, whose membership list -

complete with addresses - Young published in 2000.

"I think it's serious. We just finished a trial over Valerie Plame, and that was just one person. I don't know what purpose it serves aside from aiding people who would do them harm."

Even Young's admirers admit he goes over the line.

"I think it's irresponsible," says Aftergood. "Publishing the home address of the Director of National Intelligence is not something I'd fight for. If an individual whose cover was exposed on Cryptome comes to harm, or if a facility that's highlighted - I can't even say it."

To Young, complaints about agents' safety is pure tradecraft. You can't argue with spies, because everything they say is a lie. Former covert operatives have told him as much, he says.

"They say, 'Don't believe that, it's just standard fare. It's a ploy.' If you believe any of this, you don't understand how spies operate. They lie so much and run so many false operations and plant so many false agents. They expose their own agents so much - there's nothing you can do that they haven't already done. In fact, they hope you will do it. To muddy the waters."



UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS

Young took this photo at Site R, the Pennsylvania mountain bunker that reportedly served as Dick Cheney's "undisclosed location" after September 11

For 90 minutes, through one and a half salted margaritas, John Young has been eyeballing me, speaking softly, fidgeting with the digital recorder I've placed in front of him.

He's heard all the questions I am asking before, and he answers them carefully and pleasantly. Then he tells me why he's here.

A few years ago, Anthony Haden-Guest called Young and asked to meet him for a drink. Haden-Guest, who wrote a book about Studio 54's glory days and is a two-time winner of Spy magazine's Ironman Nightlife Decathlon, is known in media circles as something of a hapless rogue, full of astonishing, barely believable yarns. His brother is **Christopher Guest**, one of the creators of *This Is Spinal Tap* and the director of *A Mighty Wind*.

Haden-Guest has a habit of calling magazine editors out of the blue from Chad or Syria with a great story. He is a

contributor to Radar and a personal friend of Radar's editor in chief.

Haden-Guest wasn't on an assignment when he called Young, he was just interested in *Cryptome*. Over drinks, Young says, a loquacious Haden-Guest offered a confession: He has been accused of being an agent for MI6, he told Young. In fact, Young says, Haden-Guest revealed that he actually had on one occasion done some unpaid work, as a favor, for British intelligence by writing a report while traveling in the Middle East.

This was all in the strictest of confidence, Young says:

"He said, 'You must never repeat this.'"

Afterward, Haden-Guest wrote a brief, laudatory article about Young for a British newspaper. Roughly one year prior to my interview with Young, Haden-Guest called Young again and proposed doing a more involved story on him for Radar. They met at Haden-Guest's New York apartment for three hours, Young says, and Haden-Guest tape-recorded the conversation. Young never heard from him again.

Young dribbles out this information in bits and pieces, changing the subject abruptly before returning to Haden-Guest and suggestively dropping another nugget - did I know that he had been incarcerated by the Germans as a child during World War II? - and studying my reaction. Eventually, it dawns on me what Young is getting at: He thinks Anthony Haden-Guest is a British agent. He thinks MI6 sent Haden-Guest to "ping" him - "like a radar ping; try a ping and see what comes back" - using a fake Radar interview as a pretext.

And he thinks I have something to do with it.

As it happens, Haden-Guest had indeed written a 565-word story about *Cryptome* for Radar. The piece was Radar's idea. When he became too busy to work on the story, it was killed and reassigned to me.

For months and months, Young had sat on this data he'd collected, waiting to hear back from Haden-Guest about the story. Nothing. Then, out of the blue, I'd sent him an e-mail saying that, once again, Radar would like to interview him.

So he showed up to ping me.

"That's why I'm meeting you," he says matter-of-factly, locking eyes with mine. "Don't forget, you're all supposedly suspect. The thing is, I told [Haden-Guest] the full story, and he got it on tape. And it was sent off somewhere else. Being a reporter is a standard cover story. So, if you don't know that's out there - that is what I think about you. It's what I think about him, too."

Young believes that Haden-Guest and I are both working on stories about him.

But for MI6, not Radar.



**MASTER SPY?
Anthony Haden-Guest**

I glance around at the tables next to us, concerned that someone might overhear our conversation. I don't know if it's because I don't want them to hear the paranoid rantings of a lunatic, or because I don't want them to hear the "truth" about Anthony Haden-Guest.

It is a simple and harmless set of facts: Radar killed Haden-Guest's story and handed it to me. That's not evidence of espionage. And so what if he bragged that people think he's a spy? Haden-Guest has been regaling acquaintances with fantastical-seeming tales for decades.

Why, if he really were an agent, would he volunteer - to John Young, of all people - that he's suspected of being an agent?

"It's standard tradecraft," Young explains.

What seems like a reporter's effort to butter up a subject by appealing to his interest is also a tactic used by agents to inoculate themselves against being uncovered. It muddies the waters.

And why wouldn't MI6 send someone to ping the man who'd ousted 276 of their agents, to see what clues he may inadvertently give up about his sources? And who better than a reporter?

In John Young's world, *Spy* magazine's Nightlife Decathlete may well be an actual spy. The more Young talks about it, the less absurd it sounds. There are the random phone calls from third world hotspots. There was the episode in the 1980s when Haden-Guest was kidnapped in Beirut while traveling with a DEA informant who claimed he was working undercover on a heroin sting.

There was the strange story in the British edition of *Esquire* about the Middle East intelligence-gathering exploits of his friend "CK," who is "a mercenary, if you like, one of the rare agents on the ground in this high-tech epoch." But in the end, this was still the man who once appeared on a panel discussion with Randy Jones of the Village People.

I slowly come to see the point of Young's constant references to "common tradecraft," and "standard fare": He

lives in this world every day.

We see headlines now and again. We know - and quickly forget - that the CIA tailed Fox News Channel's Brit Hume, then a reporter for the late muckraking columnist **Jack Anderson**, in the 1970s.

That it kidnapped German citizen **Khaled el-Masri** in Macedonia, shoved a tranquilizer suppository up his ass, chained him to the floor of a plane, and flew him to an Afghan secret prison in 2004. That the NSA is capable of listening in on any communication, anywhere. This is what they do. It's not so crazy to imagine they'd check in on someone like Young. It's standard.

You just have to know what to look for.

As Young lays out his case, he oscillates abruptly, and at a disorienting pace, between charm and hostility. He is furious at Haden-Guest. He feels like he's been had.

A relatively well-known media figure has all but told him that he's an agent, using a magazine as cover, and for some reason - Affection? Vanity? - Young hasn't posted a word of it to *Cryptome*.

"Now *Cryptome* is on the hook," he says. "It was a terrible mistake not to out this guy. I out everybody else. I agreed to keep a secret. I'm opposed to secrecy."

He rants about the betrayal, then drops it, and tells me that he's willing to put me in touch with good sources for national security stories. Then he insults me. A half-hour ago he said he found Radar "delightful"; now he finds it insipid.

I point out to him that he's alternating between affability and belligerence, and he bangs on the table with glee, delighted that I noticed.

"That is a practiced technique," he says. "It's called whipsawing."

Young points out how easy it was for me to set up the interview, how accessible he made himself to me.

"See, it's standard tradecraft in the spy world to be extremely cooperative to people who are expecting resistance. You just offer all possible help, and they just walk right into it. Did you really think I'd let you interview me, rather than me interview you? I'm plumbing your data. I've learned a lot about how Radar operates. I'm just doing the usual shit that agents do to recruit other agents."

Am I being recruited?

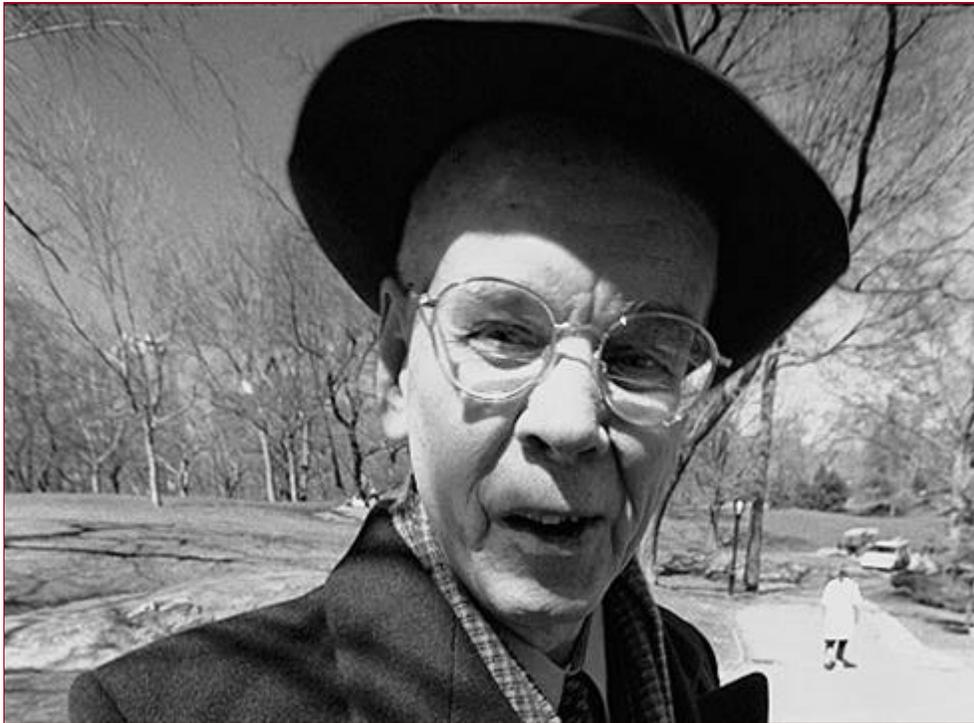
"Yes."

My mission, should I choose to accept it: Find out what happened to Haden-Guest's story, and write about Haden-Guest's alleged MI6 connection in Radar.

If I don't, Young will write about it on *Cryptome*.

"I don't believe you for a minute that you're any different from Haden-Guest," Young rants. "I'm about to get fucked over again. Radar's behind this. Turns out, you're on my shit list. I'm only talking to you to figure out what happened, and what I'm going to make of it. It doesn't look good. Until you find out what this story was and why it was killed, I only have vengeance in my mind against Radar and anyone associated with it."

"Or you know," he says, flashing his teeth, "maybe it's a fucking con job I'm giving you, and you're about to get eaten alive by Anthony Haden-Guest. He's more famous than me. And so it's kind of interesting what you'll do with this. I'll give you a month."



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT
John Young

In person and online, Young casts himself as an outsider and misanthrope. There is some truth to this portrayal.

At the same time, he has done architectural work for some of the most powerful members of the political establishment that he has sworn to attack.

"It's an easy way to make money in New York, to do corrupt work," he says with a shrug.

He has worked for the [Council on Foreign Relations](#), the bête noire of the conspiracy set. He was, for six years in the 1980s, the consulting architect to the Pierre, a Fifth Avenue apartment hotel that has been home to Sumner Redstone and Mohamed Al Fayed.

His résumé cites work on developer Kirk Kerkorian's residence there.

During the renovation of Grand Central Terminal in the 1990s, he was hired to document the existing structure and spent days in the rafters above the vaulted Main Concourse, meticulously measuring beams. He is respected enough in his field to have been selected, in 1998, for the nominating committee for the Chrysler Award for Innovation in Design.

He nominated [James Bell](#), a Washington man who was convicted in 2001 of stalking U.S. Treasury agents, for Bell's online essay,

"Assassination Politics," which Young described as "an imaginative and sophisticated prospective for improving governmental accountability by way of a scheme for anonymous, untraceable political assassination."

The closest Young comes to explaining to me why he created Cryptome is this: "I'm a pretty fucking angry guy."

If it's incongruous to imagine a paranoid, spy-hating anarchist going over blueprints with Mrs. Kerkorian, consider the preposterous, cosmically incomprehensible case of John Young's late father-in-law.

Young has been married at least three times; in 1993 he met his current wife, **Deborah Natsios**, the daughter of Nicholas Natsios, a career CIA officer who served in Vietnam, Iran, and elsewhere.

Young disclosed the fact on *Cryptome* in 2000:

"My father-in-law was a longtime career officer in the Central Intelligence Agency, one of its earliest members, and chief of station in several countries.... He's not talking to *Cryptome*, and that's regrettable, for I believe such knowledgeable persons should disclose everything they know about the global culture of secret intelligence and its profound effects - to better inform citizens on the true way their governments function."

When Young published the membership list of the Association for Intelligence Officers four months later, Nicholas Natsios's name and home address were on it.

Natsios died in 2004.

When I called his daughter Christine Natsios - Young's sister-in-law - to ask her what she thought of *Cryptome*, she replied,

"This is a family matter, and it's none of your business."

Deborah Natsios's cousin is Andrew Natsios, currently the State Department's special envoy to Sudan and formerly the administrator of the *Agency for International Development*, appointed by **George W. Bush**. The CIA is commonly thought to use USAID positions as cover overseas. Disclosing the relationship on *Cryptome*, Young described him as a "low-paid hardworking honest guy mired in a hopelessly venal fat-cat system."

The closest Young comes to explaining to me why he created *Cryptome* is this:

"I'm a pretty fucking angry guy."

He describes it as a public education project.

But for every hard data point he offers, there's the ever-present admonishment that secrecy corrupts everything.

"We caution people, don't believe anything we publish," he says. "We're totally untrustworthy. We may be a sting operation, we may be working for the Feds. If you trust us, you're stupid."

It's like a nihilist art project: Provide your readers with more than 40,000 files of data the government doesn't want you to have, data that exposes the lies of the powerful, and then remind them that you can never, ever know for sure who is lying.

John Young didn't give me a month

The next day he wrote Haden-Guest an e-mail, which he also posted on *Cryptome*:

"I have recommended John Cook speak to you about *Cryptome* and your dead article for Radar, and yourself. Cook's interview of me last night evening [sic] was vapid in the Radar mode - no preparation, ignorant, shallow. He has a recording of it, so you two might exchange raw data."

He didn't return further e-mails or phone calls.

Several days later, when Young started getting calls and e-mails from friends alerting him to my inquiries for this story, he posted this:

"Cook is sucking up to a slew of folks in the U.S. and elsewhere gathering material for a *Cryptome* smear.... Excellent, feed him sewage, I urge.... I referred him to Anthony Haden-Guest... who got three hours on tape of my crap in 2006 for a Radar story that never appeared. Well, never

appeared in public; who got it can be mused.

Sucking up, Guest bragged of his periodic voluntary work for MI6, and that he was suspected of being a spy around New York City (standard bar pick-up talk)... Cook said he didn't have the time or interest to read *Cryptome*. Agreed, I said, it's off Radar's screen, so what's your purpose? He said, "Who are your sources?" literally pushing the recorder closer to me."

Young continued to post his correspondence about me with various friends and relatives I had contacted for this story. His daughter [Anina Young](#), who operates an online clothing store in New York, asked me to put my questions in an e-mail; she never replied, but the e-mail showed up on *Cryptome* two days later.

Young called Radar a "vile magazine," accused me of "hounding" his family, and advised his associates that I would tell them a "mixture of truth and lies" in order to "seduce and betray" them.

"Expect to [be] abused and hurt by the process if you want to join the nasty fun," he wrote.

Toward the end of my conversation with Young, he returned to the question that plagues him: "Why do I believe you? Radar is a piece of shit. Saying that you work for Radar and we're going to do this in September, that's a bullshit story."

When I called Haden-Guest to let him know what Young had been saying about him, he replied that he had never told Young that he was commonly suspected of being a spy, or that he worked for British intelligence, and insisted that he had never done a thing for British intelligence.

He said he wished he had let Young know about the disposition of his story, but had been preoccupied with moving back to London from New York City.

He was concerned that someone like Young would spread a false rumor that he was MI6.

"That's heavy," he said.

A few days later, Haden-Guest sent Radar an e-mail elaborating on Young's claims, chalking them up in part to anger over the fact that the original story never appeared:

"Clearly the non-publication angered Young greatly. At our second meeting, I had mentioned a piece of reporting I had done at the beginning of the Iraq war. I had accompanied a buccaneering freelance intelligence operation in Cyprus, Syria, and Lebanon, looking for WMD.

My presence had been cleared by a deputy undersecretary at the Pentagon, but was not greeted with enthusiasm by his British counterpart. Very much the reverse. The piece was published in *Esquire*. This is, I suppose, the report to which Young refers."

Toward the end of my conversation with Young, he returned to the question that plagues him:

"Why do I believe you? Radar is a piece of shit. Saying that you work for Radar and we're going to do this in September, that's a bullshit story."

Then he said he had to wake up early in the morning.

"It was good to see you," he said with a smile. "I don't get out much."

On our way out, he invited me upstairs to have a look at the Princeton Club's second-floor lounge area.

He had mentioned earlier in our conversation that the club had gone downhill, and how pleasant the sitting area once was. I let him lead the way. His insults were still reverberating in my head; I was reeling from the notion that I was involved, unwittingly, tangentially, in an operation to spy on this 71-year-old man. He had been berating me not 20 minutes earlier, and here he was, utterly charming, leading me up the wide staircase into an empty room filled with stuffed chairs and reading lamps.

It was late. We could barely hear the chatter from the bar downstairs.

- Was he testing me, to see how I'd react if asked to follow him into a secluded area?
- Was I about to feel a sharp pinch in my shoulder blade and fade to black?
- Why was he doing this?

We walked into the lounge area. He stopped and let me walk a few feet ahead.

I turned back to look at him.

"It used to be much nicer," he sighed.

THE CRYPTOME FILES

The most controversial posts from John Young's Cryptome



BUNKER BUSTER

With his website, [Cryptome](#), John Young aims to publish forbidden information, including these photos of Dick Cheney's mountain bunker

John L. Young, the obsessive genius behind [Cryptome](#), has been infuriating governments worldwide for years by assembling a library of sensitive, often classified, information about intelligence-gathering and national security.

Below is a list of some of his more illuminating chestnuts:

- [Dick Cheney's "undisclosed location"](#): Satellite photos and aerial maps of "Site R," a military installation dug into a Pennsylvania mountainside that Young says is Cheney's secret hideaway. He also posted photos he took during a field trip to the site.
- [The names and addresses of 2,619 "CIA sources"](#): Young first published this list in December 2000, describing it as a list of CIA sources passed on by an anonymous tipster. It turned out to be the membership directory of the Association for Intelligence Officers, a group largely made up of retired CIA agents. One of the names on the list was Nicholas

Natsios, Young's father-in-law, who was a career CIA officer.

- [The names of 276 British intelligence agents](#): Young first published 116 names of agents for MI6, Britain's foreign intelligence arm, in 1999; by 2005 he'd collected 276 names. The British government reportedly tried to get Young's ISP to take the list down; it refused. An MI6 spokesperson told Radar that publishing the names is "unhelpful and dangerous."
- [The names of roughly 600 Japanese intelligence agents](#): After Young published this list of names of operatives for Japan's Public Security Investigation Agency - the Japanese equivalent of the CIA - an FBI agent called Young and asked him to take the names off his site. He refused.
- Satellite [photos](#) of CIA director Michael Hayden's home.
- Satellite [photos](#) of Donald Rumsfeld's home.
- [Photos](#) of the jet fuel tanks and pipelines surrounding John F. Kennedy International Airport, posted immediately after the announcement of a "terrorist plot" to blow them up in June.
- [Photos](#) of Bill O'Reilly's Long Island home.
- A [roundup](#) of information and photos detailing Secret Service tactics for presidential protection.

**Return to The Global Media Control
Return to The End of The Internet... As We
Know It?**