

DASPO

Esalen Institute: The Week the Army Controlled a Hippie
Nudist College.

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The war zone wasn't the place to conduct drug addict rehabilitation. The medical staff was woefully ill-equipped to handle the situation. At the Army's huge base at Long Binh, 15 miles North of Saigon, when I filmed there, the troops testing positive, were isolated in a barrack surrounded with barbed wire and around the clock MP guards. The addicts stayed there several weeks, until they were sanitized enough to pass the urine test, then put on a stateside bound plane.

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Drug counsellors at the Long Binh holding facility told me, that some troops were shooting or snorting 15 and even 20 vials a day of 90 to 95 percent pure heroin. Some of the addicts couldn't even get high any more. They also stated that stateside the heroin purity was only 5 to 10 percent, and mentioned a \$200.00 a day habit in Vietnam would be a \$1000.00 to \$2000.00 a day habit back home.

In the early 1970's, 6th Army headquartered in San Francisco with an area of responsibility from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean, heard that Esalen Institute, with offices in the Bay Area and a campus at Big Sur, CA., was boasting they could get higher off their own body than from drugs

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Eselan Institute

The only other speaker that I remember was probably the high point of the week. He talked about (FACIA) spelling probably wrong. He stated Facia was an oily membrane between the skin and the muscle tissue. When massaged properly you induce a high that rivals drugs. He took one volunteer from the delegates and after several minutes of wrist and arm massage the guy tripped out as though on a narcotic high and definitely didn't feel any pain.

Near the end of the week, one of Eselan's grounds keepers, told me he was skeptical of the army coming there. He said the usual clientele didn't give a damn; adding towels from the steam bath or pool are all over the property, behind trees and under bushes or anywhere the people drop them. But you army folks put the towels in the hampers provided. He thanked us for being considerate and making his job a lot easier.

Back in Hawaii, when the DASPO staff asked what transpired at Eselan, the entire team that saw and heard the conference was at a loss to explain what took place. After the film was processed, I'm sure it was shipped to 6th Army and that was the last I heard of Eselan; even though I retired from the Army at Presidio of San Francisco.

AFTER THOUGHT: The strenuous schedule set during the conference adversely affected the desired goals. The attendees were so exhausted, they blocked out everything but rest. Had the army brass concentrated on fewer guest lecturers and conducted one on one training rather than group sessions more fruitful objectives might have been obtained. If troops taking 15 to 20 viles of nearly pure heroin couldn't get high, what would rubbing their arms do? Where would command and control, productivity, unit readiness and moral go, if half a unit went on sick call to get high?

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