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Remembrances: Weapons Maker Concocted 007 Touches at Secret Lab --- Real-Life 'Q' Influenced Use of Concealed Guns With Pocket-Size Sidearm

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Paris Theodore (1943-2006)

PARIS THEODORE invented a fearsome array of deadly weapons that would make James Bond proud.

He called them "unique defense devices." Among them: exploding light bulbs, blades that attached to the soles of shoes and poison fiber-optic strands meant to be fired into a victim's scalp. There also was an Uzi machine gun disguised as a briefcase, binoculars that fired .38-caliber rounds and a cigarette lighter that could spray three .22-caliber bullets. With typical elan, Mr. Theodore called it a "Zappo."

Mr. Theodore began as a holster manufacturer, but soon began inventing -- and later patenting -- weapons in a secret laboratory. His most important influence on the firearms industry was to popularize the idea of a pocket-size service sidearm, a 9mm gun known as the ASP, which he invented and later started his own company to manufacture.

Only about 250 of the pistols were sold by Mr. Theodore's Armaments Systems Procedures Corp. -- the derivation of the ASP name, and a unit of Seventrees Ltd., which made concealed custom holsters. But it "blazed the way for today's concealed carry handguns," said a February 2000 article in Guns Magazine. A spate of articles in the gun-industry press described the ASP's sleek lines and other innovative features, including its "Guttersnipe" sight for close-range combat.

Agent 007 himself traded in his .32-caliber Walther for the ASP in John Gardner's novels about the further adventures of the British spy. "The ASP became a status symbol in the Intel community," Mr. Theodore wrote in Combat Handguns magazine in 1986.

Mr. Theodore, who died Nov. 16 at age 63, had reason to know what the intelligence community liked, according to a documentary produced by a son as well as interviews with his family and associates. Starting early in his career, they say, he contracted as an agent for a U.S. government agency so secret it didn't have a name.

There are a few documents showing Mr. Theodore's contacts with the government. In 1973, the Federal Bureau of Investigation ordered a "covert ten-shot firearm which has been secreted in an aluminum clip board" for \$250, according to a letter from the FBI saved by his family and seen by The Wall Street Journal. He was exempted from "all provisions of the National Firearms Act," allowing him to own, transport and fire most weapons, according to a 1973 letter from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. FBI and ATF spokesmen couldn't confirm the documents, but said they seemed authentic.

In 1975, on his way to meet a member of a Senate committee investigating Central Intelligence Agency operations, Mr. Theodore realized he couldn't avoid a detector at the Russell Senate Office Building, according to **Michael Hershman**, then an aide with the former National Wiretap Commission. "I'm packing!" Mr. Hershman said Mr. Theodore whispered to him. When Mr. Hershman asked where the gun was holstered, he said Mr. Theodore responded, "It's behind my tie." Mr. Theodore ultimately testified in private before the committee, says Mr. Hershman, now president of the Fairfax Group, an international intelligence and investigative company based in McLean, Va.

Mr. Theodore grew up in Manhattan, the son of an artist, John Theodore, and a ballet instructor, Nenette Charisse. The actress and dancer Cyd Charisse was an aunt, and the family moved in theatrical circles that grew wider when his parents divorced and his mother married Robert Tucker, a Broadway choreographer. Mr. Tucker helped choreograph the 1954 production of "Peter Pan," starring Mary Martin, leading to an appearance by Mr. Theodore, then 11, on Broadway as Nibs, one of the Lost Boys.

In 1966, Mr. Theodore founded Seventrees, the holster manufacturer with a motto, "Unseen in the Best Places." A side door led to a secret weapons laboratory, with windows blacked out at night behind a bank-safe door in Manhattan's garment district. "Paris reminds me of Q...except Paris was street smart, debonair," says Mr. Hershman, referring to the character who supplied James Bond with his gadgets.

The Senate CIA hearings and a presidential order forbidding the assassination of foreign leaders put an end to Mr. Theodore's covert weapons factory, associates say. In 1980, he formed Techpak Corp. to teach a shooting protocol he called the Quell System. A 1985 patent on his system highlighted what he considered the most lethal targets on the human body. The system didn't catch on with its intended audience, police officers, because "it's not politically correct to shoot somebody in the face," says Steve Minguez, a longtime friend and officer at a large metropolitan police department.

In the late 1980s, Mr. Theodore was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He spent the past decade largely bedridden, living in poverty in Chatham, N.Y. One of his sons, Paris Kain, is producing a documentary about his father's career, entitled "008." It includes lengthy interviews in which Mr. Theodore neither confirms nor denies his role as an assassin. Asked about his contributions to unique defense devices, Mr. Theodore brightens and says, "I was Q!"

-- Rose Mattus, co-founder of Haagen-Dazs, the first national brand of premium ice cream. Ms. Mattus managed the business side of Haagen-Dazs, which her late husband, Reuben Mattus, created in 1959 as a way of bolstering his family's Senator Frozen Products Inc. of the Bronx, N.Y. Reuben Mattus devised a high-butterfat, all-natural-ingredient ice-cream recipe, and then pulled out of thin air a faux-Danish brand name for it. In her 2004 memoir, "The Emperor of Ice Cream," Rose Mattus wrote that her husband focused on Denmark to honor the Scandinavian nation's good treatment of the Jews during World War II. The brand grew slowly through the 1960s, distributed at first via Greyhound Bus deliveries to college towns where it targeted what she called "the marijuana culture of the '60s." The brand is now owned by General Mills Inc., which licenses production in the U.S. to Nestle SA's Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream Holdings Inc. Died Nov. 28 at age 90.

-- David Hermance, the lead American engineer of Toyota Motor Corp.'s Prius, the breakthrough gasoline and electric hybrid. Mr. Hermance, a Detroit-trained engineer specializing in emissions control, worked to adapt the Japanese-designed Prius to the U.S. market. After a lackluster 2000 launch, the Prius caught on in its second iteration in 2004, after Mr. Hermance worked to give it greater acceleration and better fuel efficiency. He was an advocate of clean technologies, popular with ecology and safety-minded groups such as the Union of Concerned Scientists of Berkeley, Calif., and the Center for Automotive Research of Washington, D.C. "We'd like to sell cars for a long time into the future," he told the Toronto Star in 2004. "If we don't do something to reduce the footprint on the environment, we may not be able to be sustainable." Mr. Hermance was killed when his home-built Interavia E-3 stunt plane crashed into the Pacific Ocean while he was performing loops off Long Beach, Calif. Died Nov. 25 at age 59.

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