

The Conservatory

The Conservatory started out in classic paranoid Cold War fashion: formed in 1947 as part of the provisions of the National Security Act of 1947, part of Majestic-12 and MK-ULTRA since the very beginning of both programs, firmly part of the Deep State, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. Its focus has always been in the field of psionic development, and its efforts have long since paid off. Conservatory scientists have by now worked out the basic principles of telepathy, psychokinesis, ESP, and bioenergy -- including how to almost reliably encourage those talents in non-psionic individuals. They also have a near-monopoly on the creation and training of psionic assets in and for the Shadow Government, and the Conservatory protects that monopoly ruthlessly.

It's a remarkably congenial place to work in, however. The Conservatory was quietly taken over by the first wave of involuntary test subjects, back in the 1960s; and ever since then the organization's focus has been on protecting psions, not exploiting them. By now the Conservatory is in its fourth and fifth generation of psionic individuals, most of whom were born into the Conservatory subculture. The rest are either from the steady influx of 'natural' psions

(who often, if admittedly not exclusively, required rescue in the first place), or else individuals from other parts of the Shadow Government who volunteered for a psionic enhancement program. By now there's enough for a stable breeding population, although the people involved prefer to think of it as 'having close-knit extended families.'

This attitude permeates everything about the Conservatory, in fact. The standard bleak Cold War industrial medical style was one of the first things to go when the psions took over; their medical and research facilities are comfortable, friendly, psychologically soothing, and extremely ethical. The Conservatory excels at teaching prepubescent children how to access their powers without turning them into screaming psychopaths in the process, and they're equally good at encouraging teenage psions to use those powers in a non-resentful fashion. Many of the Conservatory's children go on to have nice, productive lives as Men in Black, in fact; and they work secure in the knowledge that **somebody** will notice and object if they just up and disappear.

The relationship between the Conservatory and non-psionic humanity can be complex. Psions feel superior to non-psions; this is known. What is also known is that megalomania is not a long-term survival trait for a

psion, which is why the trait has been ruthlessly excised from the gene pool whenever it rears its head. As a result, the average Conservatory psion reacts to the average non-psion with a carefully-calibrated level of amiable smugness; non-consensual powers on non-psions is considered to be a potential marker for megalomania, which makes the practice rare. Non-psions of exceptional ability are also often invited to join the breeding program, which serves as an informal sign of full social acceptance. Again, Conservatory psions think of this general situation as 'joining the family,' not 'participating in the breeding program.'

The Conservatory has long since overflowed its original underground Cold War bunker, and is now centered in Ambleton, a large town in Coshocton County, Ohio. More or less everybody in Ambleton is at least a latent psion, and the oldsters are invariably veterans from some of the most secretive parts of the Shadow Government. It is, in fact, a popular retirement spot for non-psionic Black Ops types, given that the local healers are excellent and it's almost impossible for anybody to sneak up on the place.

Good schools, too.

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