

FIRCKIE, W JOCKNAL

By Warren Hinckle

The other day there was a report from the Cuckoolandia of Washington, D.C., that after a half-decade of open sesame the FBI was agitating to roll the rock back against the tomb of its files.

and informers deserting the ship of spycraft to continue telling citizens under the Freedom of Information Act just what the FBI has been doing to them all these years. it was costing the bureau too much in time and money once warmed by the rump of J. Edgar Hoover, said that William H. Webster, who sits in the exalted chair

bittersweetness by a 76-year-old by the name of Sam Krieger. door was read in Rohnert Park with a particular The news of the FBI's new urgency to close its barn

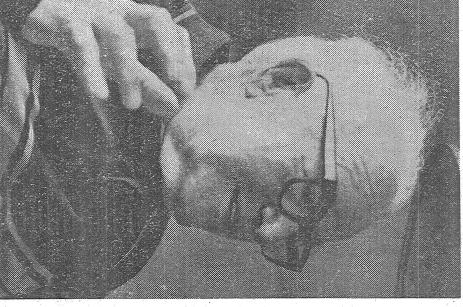
year Krieger has been pursued by goblins of this past coat, into the rites of belonging to the C.P. Over the last He's the former Communist Party organizer whose place in the history of that party is that in 1925 he introduced Whittaker Chambers, the notorious turn-

about the Hiss-Chambers case and was at that time murderer who had jumped bail and fled to Russia in I reported last year that Krieger had been wrongfully identified in a popular book as a convicted book was called "Perjury." being prized by the east coast smart set as the Final Solution to that grand political opera of the 1950s in 1929 to be treated royally by the reds. The book was that it found Alger Hiss guilty as charged of lying. The

neighbors in Rohnert Park, a proper middle-class slurb It took true grit for Krieger to put his story in the paper since it meant sharing his C.P. past with his

not only had his identity been misrepresented in "Perjury," but the way he read it, the whole book was a lie. He thought that by nailing one lie he could help the țruth. Krieger persisted in this because he believed that

Truth is bought and paid for like other things and it has cost Sam Krieger. It has cost him and his wife



His reputation was vindicated — too late SAM KRIEGER OF ROHNERT PARK

libel suit he brought against the author and publisher of the book, Sam Krieger has come out behind in real stress of the year-long battle. And although he won the doctors' bills and acupuncturists and shrinks for the Sadie the privacy of their retirement. It has cost them

> the FBI. A letter which came, he says, too late. All this time Krieger was waiting for a letter from

government information." replied to within ten "working days." Senator Edward toothless legislation required that FOIA requests be M. Kennedy, one of the sponsors of the liberalizing Amendments passed in 1974 to the original LBJ-era ing his files under the Freedom of Information Act. "to delay, resist and obstruct public access to branches and stumps of government would continue legislation, said that without it the FBI and other Two years ago Krieger wrote the bureau, request

over Krieger, calling him in effect a liar for insisting that he was not the escape-to-Russia "Clarence Miller." other persons he had interviewed for his book that they returned from Russia to "retirement in California." New Republic against the assertions of Kreiger and wrote "Perjury," had defended himself in the magazine footnote to the book and said he had later somehow Weinstein had identified him as that person in a had been grievously misquoted. Weinstein jumped all Allen Weinstein, the Smith College professor who

eyewitness who never materialized. Weinstein also textile strike. The professor insisted he had copious who was a well-known leader of the Gastonia, N.C., Krieger's double life. And, he said, Krieger looked like Miller. consisted of a tape recording he never produced and an proof of the existence of a Krieger-Miller. This proof "party name" but was not the other Clarence Miller interview that he had once used Clarence Miller as a insisted there were "FBI documents" that proved Sam Krieger said he had told Weinstein during their

Krieger once again requested his files from the FBI. This was June of 1978. On May 10, 1979, he received his answer.

on the basis of comparison of photographs and that Clarence Miller and Sam Krieger are two different fingerprints, "the FBI was able to positively establish The letter from the Bureau said that, "since 1952,"

27 years. "Perjury" was published in 1978, basing its Thank you very much. The FBI had known this for

Man's Past

conclusions in large part on FBI documents Weinstein had obtained — under the Freedom of Information Act.

How could this be? Krieger could get no satisfactory answer for this question because he had, alas, two weeks earlier settled his libel suit against Weinstein. Everyone had said they were sorry and they supposed Krieger wasn't Clarence Miller, after all. The publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, agreed to put erratum slips in unsold copies and correct any future editions and the New Republic, which Krieger had also sued, said it would print an apology and all three defendants agreed to pay Krieger the princely sum of \$17,500.

Krieger's own legal costs by this time were almost \$15,000. That wasn't counting some \$4000 to be paid back to retired old left Cotati chicken farmers and other friends and volunteers who loaned him money when he started the lawsuit.

What disturbs Krieger is the dates. He received the FBI letter in Rohnert Park on May 10 — but it was dated by the bureau in Washinton, D.C., on April 24. In the intervening time, he had settled the lawsuit. If he had the FBI's unqualified statement that Weinstein was dead wrong, Krieger says he would never have settled. Now his attorney tells him it's too late.

Krieger can't help but speculate about the delay. He wonders if that information got to anyone else. He wonders if the FBI didn't have a hand in the whole matter since Weinstein's book largely exonerated the bureau's position in the Hiss-Chambers controversy.

I called Special Agent Charles Wroblewski in the FOIA section of the FBI. What about the dates? "If it was dated April 24, that's the day it went out," he said. "That's the way things work around here." It is perhaps the ghost of the Hiss case. People are still arguing about the serial numbers on Hiss' typewriter.

Sam Krieger isn't a very big drinker but the other day he was in Lombardi's Market in nearby Cotati buying half-gallons of vodka and scotch and stuff to fill the convivial glass. He's throwing a big Fourth of July party to celebrate, even if it did cost him an arm and a leg to prove his point. "I think it helped the truth," he said of one man's small victory.