

12/15/71

Dear Wayne (cc BF),

Bud has sent me a copy of your letter and story on Claude Cockrell. The name sure sounds familiar, but I can't place it independently. The story is typical of racism, which suggests you might want to check with A.I. Botnick, regional Anti-Defamation League man in New Orleans (504/JA2-9534), known as "B" and hospitalized as of the day after our pleasant meeting at the Memphis airport.

= Some aspects you did not emphasize interest me. In N.O. there were constant but fruitless leads to divers, in almost all cases also involving sado-masochism. I can't make out the name of his outfit on the xerox of the xerox of the card, so I don't know if it is that of any outfit of which I then heard.

Bud might consider running through Group Research. There is a Mrs. Bishop in NSRP, from your general area (re Cal or Carl).

Mobile radio telephone is not what was used in the King fake. That is CB, which is different. I wonder that Bell had CB aerials. How would 208 Poplar be re: reception where the broadcast was monitored?

Do you have a list of what was stolen at the Armory. Any .30-06 rifle would be very, very interesting, wouldn't it?

His history and his Wallace connection makes him of interest in some leads I'm following, so if you have any other scrap, no matter how seemingly insignificant, I'd appreciate. Has he close connections with any other local politicians of which you know?

I have nothing on the other names, but suggest GR check would be appropriate.

Your story says he claims to have been a major organizer for Wallace. Any claim to have been a fund raiser? Or to have travelled with others on such ventures? I have such a lead, without names. Any claim to friendship with Leander Perez (Sr., dead)?

This is the kind of thing that could fit. Have the local morgues anything on him? There should have been some stories at least during the campaigns.

Best,

Harold Weisberg

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December 13, 1971

M E M O R A N D U M

Enclosed is a letter from Wayne Chastain, reporter for the Press-Scimitar and associate of the Committee, and a clipping on Claude Cockrell.

Anything to add?



Memphis Press-Scimitar

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Dear Bud;

Here's what you ought to know about Cockrell. He is a businessman, who has a contract with the highway patrol for rescue work (scuba diving etc.); spends a lot of time in New Orleans; has three other businesses, Cockrell Container Corp. (kinda vague about what it manufactures); West Corp., an ~~oil~~ oil exploration firm. He claims he also deals with foreign currency, including Cuban pesos, etc. Claims also he is in trouble with State Department and that latter pressured Canale's office here to frame him....

Now get this. He was arrested, but never convicted of theft of firearms from the Tennessee Air National Guard ~~armory~~ armory. Sounds like a Minuteman, do you think?

Russell A. Thompson told me two years ago that he was tied in somehow with the fake police chase of the Mustang report transmitted over the Citizen Band Radio system.

Now get this. Note in the story about the raid on his address at 208 Poplar. This ~~raid~~ occurred in March 1970. Although the mobile radio telephone was not found, security officers of the South Bell Telephone Co., who accompanied police on the raid, said some CB radio antennas on the premises belonged to the company and were stolen about two years before. Police seized them although they were not listed in the warrant.

Note the dates: two years before March 1970, would be March 1968-- less than a month before the big event.

Cockrell is a bug on ~~the scene~~; three things: airplanes, electronic gadgetry and firearms. (He ~~has~~ has been arrested on numerous occasions for discharging firearms, including firing a blank pistol at the wife of Alfred Andersson when he was 16.) His former wife says he is dangerous, although he has a very friendly facade when you first meet him.

Last. Cockrell professes to be friend of a Cal Bishop, a swarthy, six footer whom he claims he met in New Orleans. Bishop is a pilot, oil explorer, adventurer, and is supposed to own a large share of stock in American Airlines. The mobile telephone radio Cockrell is charged with concealing, Cockrell says, is really one that Bishop sent him ~~from~~ Air Freight from Panama City, Panama. Bishop also spends a lot of time in Miami, speaks fluent Spanish, can pass as a Spaniard, and has some intelligence connections, although Cockrell does not recall what they were. "He had been mixed up in a couple of revolutions in South America,"

Cockrell ~~says~~ says, "but he doesn't remember what they were all about." Bishop is supposed to be about 40.

(MON)

Jury Finds Cockrell Guilty Of Concealing Car Radio

By WAYNE CHASTAIN
Press-Scimitar Staff Writer

Claude Cockrell Jr., Memphis businessman and one-time American Party candidate for Congress, today faced eight years in the penitentiary after being convicted of receiving and concealing a South Central Bell mobile radio telephone.

The instrument can be used to place calls to any place in the nation and overseas, said Asst. Atty. Gen. Ewell Richardson.

A jury brought in the verdict last night after Richardson had subjected Cockrell to a low-key but searching one-hour cross-examination. Cockrell took the stand in his own behalf.

This climaxed a week-long case before Criminal Court Judge Arthur Faquin.

John Collier, a key prosecution witness, testified that he had been a friend of Cockrell. He said he once accompanied Cockrell to the office of Gov. John Bell Williams in Jackson, Miss., to discuss a farm transaction.

Collier said he fell out with Cockrell last year after he had lost \$7,000 on an oil lease venture with Cockrell. Before this incident occurred, however, Cockrell had delivered to him a box sealed with plastic tape and asked him to keep it for him, Collier said.

Collier said he turned the box over to the police shortly before Christmas last year, after learning that police had searched the Cockrell Container Corp., 208 Poplar, on a warrant charging Cockrell with receiving and concealing a stolen South-Central Bell radio telephone.

Memphis Police Lt. J. P. Talley testified that he led a detail to the Poplar address with a warrant after a telephone company official signed a complaint that he had seen Cockrell talking over the instrument while sitting in a Lincoln Continental parked near the Shelby County Courthouse.



CLAUDE COCKRELL JR.

Talley said there was evidence that the mobile unit had once been installed in the vehicle.

Two other defendants, Morris Gammon Jr., 41, and M. K. Ratliff, 31, were acquitted. They had been indicted on charges of larceny in addition to the same charges against Cockrell.

The indictment charged that Ratliff originally had rented the instrument from the company, that his automobile later was wrecked, and while it was being repaired, the instrument had been removed; and that Gammon, an accountant for the garage, had reported to the telephone company that it had been stolen.

Under cross-examination by Richardson, Cockrell denied that he had assumed the aliases of Johnny McNamara and Carl Bishop.

Earlier, Richardson had placed on the stand Henry Lesh, owner of a communication repair shop, who identified Cockrell as a man who drove a Lincoln Continental into the shop and asked for repairs on the mobile telephone system.

Lesh testified that his mechanic had discovered the

Bell system numbers on the instrument and contacted the telephone company. Meanwhile, Lesh said, the man had first signed the repair bill as "Carl Bishop," but later signed a check under the name as "Johnny McNamara."

An American National Bank employe, Mrs. Carolyn Edwards, testified that she was familiar with a bank account opened by a man who identified himself as Johnny McNamara, and then pointed Cockrell out in court as the man purporting to be McNamara.

Cockrell denied on the witness stand that the Continental taken to Lesh was his, claiming it belonged to a

friend of his, Carl Bishop of Panama City, Panama.

"I signed the repair bill because the car belonged to him," he said.

When Richardson asked him if he knew how to get in touch with Bishop, Cockrell

worked somewhere in South America for a major oil company.

Cockrell ran against Rep. Dan Kuykendall in 1968 on the American Party ticket, claiming also that he was a major organizer in the South for George Wallace for president.

He announced for a 1969 special congressional election as an American Party candidate but withdrew.