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Political Burglary Scandal -- Bay Activists Were Targets

By Rick Carroll

A Watergate-style scandal involving a host of political burglaries stretching back nearly a decade has surfaced in Santa Clara county, according to a 188-page report filed yesterday with the San Jose Municipal Court.

and longtime Republican Party activist was arrested in the case yesterday.

He is accused of 21 felonies and is in the Santa Clara county jail in lieu of posting \$100,000 bail.

The voluminous report is the Santa Clara county deputy sheriff

Jerome Ducote, 46, a former Santa Clara count deputy sheriff

Back Page Cal. 5

From Page 1

result of an 11-month investigation by the California Department of Justice's Organized Crime and Criminal Intelligence Branch, the Santa Clara county district attorney's office and the San Jose Police Department, according to William P. Hoffman, a Santa Clara county assistant district attorney.

The report includes a rambling, 96-page interview with Ducote in which he admits 17 burglaries, most of them committed in 1966 and 1967.

His targets, Ducote told investigators, included the Delano office of the United Farm Workers, Ramparts Magazine, both the Carmel home and Chicago office of radical organizer Saul Alinsky, San Francisco's American-Russian Institute and the People's World (a Communist Party newspaper), the San Jose office of left-leaning lawyer the San Jose headquarters of Catholic Social Justice, and numerous anti-Vietnam War groups in San Jose, Oakland and Berkeley.

The admissions emerged during a tape-recorded interview last February 14 with Walter Kubas, special agent of the State Department of Justice.

His accomplices in many of the break-ins, Ducote said, were Andy Gulerovich, now living in Saltinas, and Henry Scherling, now a resident of Cour d'Alene, Idaho.

Ducote told Agent Kubas that he resigned from the Santa Clara sheriff's department in 1963 and, that same year, was elected president of the county's Young Republican Club.

At a Republican meeting, he met Kenneth Wilhelm, then the secretary of the Santa Clara County Farm Bureau, who offered him an \$800-a-month job to ferret out radicals.

Three years later, the burglaries cropped up throughout Northern California. (Investigators corroborated most of the break-ins, according to the report.)

Piles of stolen documents were turned over to Wilhelm, now a Peninsula schoolteacher, according to the interview.

At one point, Ducote visited Congressman Charles G. Galanter in Washington, and turned over copies of the purloined documents to the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

The committee's chief investigator and a Central Intelligence Agency Congressional liaison man asked for copies of all future documents, Ducote claimed. He said he did not tell anyone in Washington how he got the files.

Ducote's two closest shaves came in Delano and in San Francisco, he said.

During one burglary of a group that worked closely with Cesar Chavez, Ducote's and Scherling's rented auto license was copied.

Several days later, Scherling surrendered to the San Jose police. After Ducote told a Delano policeman that the purpose of the break-in was to prove Chavez's links to the Communist Party, the investigation was dropped, Ducote said.

In San Francisco, Ducote said he waited near the People's World office at 81 Clementina alley for "three or four nights" to obtain a copy of the Communist newspaper's subscription list.

When the subscription lists were dumped into a trash can, Ducote wound up in an uneasy struggle with an FBI agent, a San Francisco policeman and an Army Intelligence agent over them.

The policeman won, Ducote said, after he threatened to arrest Ducote and the other two investigators.

Ducote and his accomplices cannot be charged with burglaries themselves, according to Assistant District Attorney Hoffman, because there is a three-year statute of limitations on the prosecution of this crime.

However, Ducote was accused of grand theft because, within the past year, he persuaded 14 prominent San Jose businessmen to aid him in his fight to link Chavez to the Communist Party.

When the businessmen learned that Ducote did little or no investigating with these funds, they complained to the district attorney's office, triggering the investigation.

The other seven felony charges, Hoffman said, stem from Ducote's hanging onto purloined documents. He is also accused of seven counts of concealing stolen property.

* Clippings on burglary of Ramparts magazine filed Misc under date of 9-23 Apr 67.