

Stranger Walks In, Bares Bizarre Plot

By Jack Anderson

We have found ourselves sucked into the vortex of a bizarre extortion scheme.

It began with the recent appearance in our offices of a mysterious stranger dressed in a flowery shirt and flared pants. He called himself "Crayola."

He told us an improbable story, which we have now been able to verify. Justice Department sources filled in the details he omitted.

In late June, according to government sources, the general manager of the posh Concord Hotel in New York's Catskill Mountains received an extortion letter.

Unless he coughed up \$320,000 in unmarked bills, threatened the letter, the hotel's guests would be dosed with LSD. The letter was signed, in bright crayon, with the name "Crayola."

The hotel immediately notified the FBI, whose agents supervised the payoff arrangements. At Crayola's instructions, the hotel on July 6 sent a girl into downtown Manhattan with the payoff packages.

At precisely 3:15 p.m., she was waiting beside some phone booths at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 44th Street. Hanging from her shoulders were two

peach-colored flight bags. One of the telephones rang. She picked it up and stammered the code word, "Crayola."

She was directed from phone booth to phone booth, with unseen FBI agents following at a discreet distance. The strange scenario was directed by Crayola from a vantage point on the second floor of the Pan Am building.

As the girl approached Grand Central station, Crayola contacted an accomplice named "Bob" at a pay phone on the lower level. "It's on," said Crayola.

Bob moved to a glass-paneled door with a sign, "Ladies Room Closed. Use Upper Level." Behind the doors, a female accomplice named "Inez" waited. Bob pushed his foot through the left panel of the door. In bustling Grand Central, no one noticed the tinkle of broken glass.

By now, the girl with the flight bags was becoming distraught. When she was instructed to proceed to still another phone booth on the lower level, she objected. "No job is worth this," she pleaded.

Crayola assured her she wouldn't be harmed and directed her to a phone beneath a poster advertising a watch called the "Concord."

"If I weren't so scared," she whimpered, "I'd be laughing."

At the Concord sign, she was told to turn around, walk quickly to the glass door behind her and then shove the flight bags through the hole. The bags landed on a rug attached to a piece of rope. From the recesses of the room, Inez began reeling in the loot. One bag fell off, but the other disappeared with her into the darkness.

Three FBI Agents rushed up but found the door locked. When they managed to enter the abandoned restroom, they discovered it was connected by an old stairway to the upper level ladies room. The culprits had escaped with half the payoff.

The money, however, was fake, and the bags were planted with electronic beepers. But the dropping of the bags caused the beepers to malfunction.

Two weeks later, the FBI received a letter from Crayola claiming the extortion plot had been a hoax. "The bureau blundered disastrously and irretrievably by substituting fake money for real," he wrote. This was "irrefutable proof of the bureau's knowing, deliberate and wanton endangering of hundreds of unsuspecting

guests at the Concord."

Believe it or not, Crayola was trying to blackmail the FBI. Jack Anderson would be told of the FBI's "callousness," he threatened, unless the jailed LSD prophet, Timothy Leary, was released.

But the FBI had the last laugh. Its agents, working quietly, identified Crayola and located a safety deposit box he had opened in a phony name at the New York Savings Bank.

Crayola was under partial FBI surveillance when he came to us. My associate Joe Spear listened incredulously to his story of the extortion-blackmail plot against the FBI. As evidence, Spear asked to see the extortion letter.

Thereafter, an accomplice picked up the letter from the safety deposit box. He was on his way to make a Xerox copy for us when the FBI moved in. Robert Greenman was arrested with the incriminating document. Agents also nabbed John Calvin VanOrsdell, a freelance writer and author of a novel entitled, "Ragland," in Pennsylvania.

VanOrsdell has now authorized us to identify him as Crayola. He would not, however, name his accomplices.