

CHAPTER 10

Failing By Succeeding

If it seems that I regard much of my youthful work and life as learning experiences, as preparation colleges cannot provide for my later assassination work, to a large degree this is true. It was especially true of my several victimizations when I was guilty of nothing at all. It was also true when much of what I did in the OSS was what others well-trained professionally could not do for themselves. It was true, too, in terms of what I learned about those in positions of authority were capable of and about those who were quite willing to steal to be able to commercialize and profit from the work of others. That this happened I had learned. That it happened even with what was highly classified was surprising.

This and learning not to be intimidated by rank and not to accept abuse by those with official authority were among the other learning experiences of some of my Presentation Branch OSS jobs I here recount.

I was assigned to write the history of OSS secret operations. That was its appropriate title. Either I was told to or I decided to go into detail on the training and then illustrate that with specifics of intelligence jobs performed. There were to be only 13 copies, the original and 12, and it was classified 'Secret.'m After study of the available classified relevant records i decided to go to two secret, at least supposedly secret, OSS training camps at Quantico, Virginia. It was not classified that a famous Marines camp was there.

Meanwhile, the OSS decided that all its non-commissioned officers who had not had basic training were to get it. Sergeant Rogers was getting his at one of those OSS Quantico camps. So, after sterilizing a hacksaw blade I took it to Beu's, an excellent bakery then three or four blocks west of the White House

on Pennsylvania Avenue, and had them bake a cake with that hacksaw blade in it. That was for a party for Rogers one of the nights I'd be there.

The commanding officer of that training area, a Captain Nehring, typified everything Donovan did not want in the OSS, all that GI stuff so inhibiting and limiting in an organization like the OSS. Nehring was super-GI, the stickler of sticklers on insignificant details. But, I was a private, in uniform, and he found no time for me and saw to it that no officers under him did. I was fed and quartered with the enlisted men while my lieutenant chauffeur and civilian photographer were fed and quartered with the commissioned officers to whom I had no access at all.

When after two days of this I decided that without the change I had no reason to expect I'd get nowhere and was wasting my time. The second night we went to Rogers' noncom quarters, gave him the little party I'd planned with the cake its centerpiece, and I told him I planned to return to Washington a report that Nehring was preventing my doing my job. Rogers believed I should so I told Russo we'd leave after breakfast in the morning.

Meanwhile, and this is an aside, I had spotted a violation of the most basic principles that were taught all being trained for intelligence work: avoid anything that is conspicuous, that can later attract attention to you or to identify you.

At lunch the first day there, when I was separate from those actually under me, and had to stand in line in a long "chow" line to eat with the enlisted men, I was immediately attracted to an unusual pair of wire-framed eyeglasses a soldier was wearing. Several years later I recognized those unusual frames in the picture of the Associated Press correspondent in Prague. He had been arrested as an American spy. When he was being trained neither that super-GI Captain Nehring nor any under him had spotted this glaring violation of almost basic trade-craft.

Back in Washington I wrote and turned in a report on how I was obstructed in doing my job, why and by whom. A day or two later I was promoted to corporal and put in civilian clothes so no hoity-toity, GI officer could again pull rank on me and keep me from doing what was assigned to me. I also heard at about the same time that Captain Nehring had already been shipped overseas.

Before I went to Quantico the Army had issued a regulation in which it rethought and canceled an earlier regulation. It decided to discharge all the men who had been indicted when they did not meet the minimum physical standards for Army duty. My medical discharge was then initiated.

When I was sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey for discharge while most of the research for that secret history of intelligence operations was completed, the writing was not complete.

Not many years later it appeared as "O.S.S.," starring Jimmy Cagney.

I rested for a few weeks after discharge. Meanwhile, Rogers had transferred to the Research and Analysis Branch, to its Latin American Division (LAD). There he learned it had a State Department project for which my Nazi cartel work and knowledge could be valuable. Although I was offered a job with U.S. News and World Report I decided instead to join OSS LAD as a civilian.

That project, when published much later, was known as the United States "Blue Book on Argentine." It was a detailed study of the Juan Peron military dictatorship and its close links to Nazis and Nazism.

I'd had one of those special assignments when in the Presentation Division that was also credentials for working on the economic part of what became that Blue Book.

"X-2" or counterintelligence was the last component not to be able to tell the White House what it wanted to know when the Danish owned of a dozen ocean-going commercial ships had been taken over as Nazi property. He went to court to demand either the return of those ships or payment in full for them

at their inflated wartime value. By the time that job was bounced to me there were only 48 hours before the White House expected the answer.

That seemed like a very close deadline. Perhaps that is what kept me from thinking of the obvious place to look for what the White House needed to prevent the return of scarce seagoing ships to Hitler's uses. Whatever caused it, I did not think of the most obvious place to begin that search. I not only should have thought of it because it was that obvious- I had only recently spent much time working in them on my part of the research for the Blue Book on Argentina.

My failure to think of the obvious was an embarrassing learning experience, that we all do sometimes miss the obvious. What I then did to overcome my failure was another learning experience: know where to turn for advice or whom to ask.

Among the government agencies that had failed to locate the evidence for the White House was the Department of Justice. The primary legal responsibility for enemy prosperity lay with its Alien Property Custodian.

Nonetheless I did phone a Justice Department lawyer who had been on the Senate Civil Liberties Committee staff briefly when I was. I presented the problem to him and he immediately gave me a name and a phone number, also within that Department. He referred me to a researcher. For two phone calls without leaving my office I knew where to go. And while that was even more embarrassing because the correct place should have been the first that came to mind and because I had spent so much time working in those very files, what does this say of all those other government components, including the Department of Justice and the OSS's counterintelligence component, X-2? To say nothing of any other agencies that may have been involved and failed!

The proper place to begin the search was only a six block walk from my OSS office but because

the deadline was so close I took a cab. In that day that cost only 20 cents. I added a nickel for a tip. I also took a cab back. I went to the Old District National Bank Building, on the south side of G Street northwest, between 14th and 15th, to its third floor. In very little time I found the "missing" records that had never been missing but were where all, including me, should have begun the search for them. I made the necessary notes and returned to my office to report. The total cash cost to the government for preventing the return of those ships to Hitler's service was a half dollar! Plus my time. That was a standing cost in any event, because i was in the Army. But what I then got, aside from deductions for an allowance to my wife and for insurance, was a take-home pay of \$10 a month plus a small allowance for rations and quarters.

And for about a half of a day of this time and 50 cents the supposedly insoluble problem was solved.

How many of us had failed to solve that simplest of problems!

How many had not thought of the simple philosophy of the early British philosopher, William of Occam, seek the simplest solutions! (As so often I have prided myself for doing.)

There was something to be learned from so many throughout the vast government bureaucracy having filed when the source of the answer was so very obvious, but not one of us thought to go to the place those records were supposed to be stored.

Perhaps after the first failed all the others assumed that is where the failed search had begun.

We all did fail and we all did avoid the obvious and failed for that reason alone.

Especially in wartime that was quite a learning experience. Ships were vital for both sides, for carrying food and military equipment.

There was also something to be learned from the subsequent history of the stranger who had told me where to look when I did not think of it myself.

I had been referred to a young woman researcher whose name was Judy Coplon.

It was not many years before her name was on all the front pages.

She was charged with giving secret information to a Russian who worked at the United Nations in New York.

The evidence that appeared in the news stories seemed to make an open-and-shut case against her. They indicated that she had been caught red-handed, so to speak.

But the case was thrown out of court. She could not be tried. The reason, and this, too, was a learning experience, was because in what may have been an excess of zeal the FBI had violated her legal rights beyond remedy.

That meant she could never be tried.

No matter how guilty, if she was guilty, she could never be tried because without any apparent need the FBI had what it knew was forbidden and had been caught at it.

From the newspaper accounts she was made to appear to be guilty.

And from doing what it knew it should not do the FBI had rendered her legally not guilty.

I was to learn that this is not as unusual as it seems on its face to be.

A general belief of those who are in a position is that the government, mostly the FBI and Justice Department lawyers, get away with such abuses more often than not. They were to be my adversaries in my FOIA litigation. They and Department lawyers had their share of responsibilities they did not meet in the assassinations investigations.

In my King assassination lawsuit (Civil Action (CA) 75-1996) among the many file cabinets of records I obtained was the FBI legal counsel division's legal opinion, approved all the way up to J. Edgar Hoover and then approved by him, that it was both proper and necessary to violate the Constitutional rights

of all the Ray family, including the then unapprehended alleged assassin, James Earl Ray- even if it made it impossible to try him, even if the violations of those supposed inalienable rights could do no more than provide a lead for capturing him!

The then attorney general Ramsay Clark did not agree. In a nasty insolent memo after Ray was captured Hoover withdrew the no longer useful request to wiretap them all. What was kept so secret the attorney general never learned it I got proof of later in that lawsuit. The proof was an account of a wiretapped conversation between James Earl Ray's younger brother, Jerry, and me!

The FBI had deliberately misfiled it as a bank robbery case, not in its King assassination files!

The wonders of government about which my education was increasing during and for a short while after World War II!

In working on my Nazi cartel stories I'd also spent days in those very files I'd failed to remember and of which I was reminded by Coplon!

That writing and the research and the investigation of it is what I remembered when I was assigned to the economic section of the Blue Book. Under Peron and before and after him the Nazis had a very strong influence on the Argentine economy and on its military.

Germans, many of whom were or became Nazis for years had great influence in Argentina and in all aspects of Argentine life.

To a less degree so also were Italians and the Mussolini government.

Britain were a significant influence in the economy but they were without real influence in the Peron government. Argentina had a strongly pro-Nazi government.

The Blue Book was completed on time. The State Department policy was to use at the conference of the American states as they prepared for a unified position at the coming organizational meeting of the

United Nations. It was held in San Francisco.

That conference was at Chapultepec, Mexico. The head of the United States Delegation was Nelson Rockefeller. He was an assistant secretary or an undersecretary of State. At Chapultepec he made policy by refusing to use the Blue Book and refusing to oppose Argentina's admission into the UN.

He there made policy that was in the fact the exact opposite of decided of United States policy. Our official policy, the policy he was to implement was to oppose Argentina's admission into the UN. That was the sole purpose of that Blue Book. Taking their lead from Rockefeller, believing that official United States policy was not to oppose Argentina as a UN member, the Chapultepec conference did not oppose its admission into the UN.

Nothing happened to Rockefeller, except that his political career did prosper. He later was the Vice President of the United States, a candidate for the Republican nomination for President and was also elected New York's governor.

Despite Rockefeller's unpunished violation of it, official policy remained to oppose Argentina's admission into the UN. It was also decided to update the Blue Book into a "White Book" that would be used at the UN's San Francisco organizational meeting. With the economic portion well in hand, it was decided to update the military part. I was put in charge of that.

By then President Harry Truman had closed the OSS down and soon created the Central Intelligence Agency. My part of the OSS was transferred to the State Department.

When I was assigned to the White Book project I gave it no thought. But when after a few days I did I decided that it was bad policy, bad for the United States and its relations with countries friendly to it, especially in Latin America. There was nothing I could do to change this policy that had become bad policy so I explained my reasons and asked to be relieved of the assignment.

Unlike most of the others with whom I worked I had no college or university background in Latin America, in its history, culture and politics. I was without doubt that the release of the White Book would be very unpopular there, that the people would dislike and resent it and that the governments friendly to us would be seriously embarrassed and would, regardless of its politics, be compelled to speak out against it- even those who agreed with it.

I predicted there would be universal condemnation of "Yankee Imperialism" throughout the rest of the hemisphere and that it would cross the political spectrum; that there would be denunciations of the colossus of the north; and that there would be universal condemnation of a shift in hemisphere policy about which they were kept in the dark and had not participated in. There also was the insult of asking those countries to take an exactly opposite position on what was a major political and diplomatic matter of great importance to the entire hemisphere with no way of explaining it.

All that and more erupted all over Latin America as soon as the position of the White Paper was known there. There was total hemispheric outrage vehemently expressed.

Our government adhered to the White Paper at San Francisco.

Argentina nonetheless was admitted as a UN charter member with Latin American support.

It was satisfying, if that is the right word, in being a minority of perhaps one. It was not a pleasure or a joy of any kind. It was, in fact, depressing because of all that it said about the professional diplomats, the trained and educated Latin Americanists of whom I was not one, about our policy and how it is made and unmade, there were those of all ranks who were silent. They preferred to hold their jobs rather than do what was the right thing.

The traditional and once respected right thing is to refuse to be part of what one believes is wrong. Our responsibility to the people and to our personal and professional integrity. I took that principled

position. And I was proven to be right. But my career did not long survive it.

The once respected tradition and obligation of public service, not to be part of what we believe is wrong, was regarded by some who did not observe it as it would have been regarded in an authoritative society. With out my Zieg Heils they fell in step.

Despite my opposition to the policy, which meant I had nothing to do with the presentation of that policy, I continued to do what had become a responsibility when I went to work in the Latin American Division of the OSS that had been transferred to State. I did practical things for the PhDs that they did not know how to do, and what comes from experience cannot be taught and isn't part of a PhDs education.

One service I remember was simple: getting microfilm readers so they could read records and other information that then existed only on microfilm. The usual requisitions did not provide them. I located two or three and snaffled them for the White Book project.

I had yet to learn that my taking the traditional and respected position of not being part of policy I considered wrong made me a "red" to those who regarded almost anyone not to the right of Genghis Khan as dangerously left. They were coming increasingly into control of policy by their control of "security" cases who would be hired and who could be charged as security risks, what Joe McCarthy came to symbolize and what was and is still known as "McCarthyism."

Of my varying responsibilities in that era three, two relatively minor, come to mind as helping prepare me for the work I did on the JFK and King assassinations and for then understanding as otherwise I might not have understood the bureaucracy and the bureaucratic mind, even among the eminent scholars who were part of the bureaucracy.

For a short period of time I sat on the Paraguay desk even though I did not speak Spanish and had no background on Paraguay from college studies or in any experience. Until a qualified Paraguay desk

office was located, I sat on that desk. That meant that I handled all Paraguay information and requests for that information.

Hector Morinigo had established a military dictatorship. It was bloody and brutal. Part of the army, the part based in the hinterland up the Parana River, at Concepcion, a democratic part of the army, loyal to Morinigo and based in the capitol, Asuncion, was not doing well. I was able to glean a little from the Paraguayan papers that were flown up and I was able to read the intelligence and other information in English. As I studied what was available to me I wrote a simple intelligence memorandum in which I predicted that there would be a change in the leadership of the army loyal to Morinigo. I predicted that a general whose ancestry would become chief of staff of the army.

That prediction was no big deal. It just seemed obvious to me that Morinigo would change his top generals and that he would choose Smith.

But when it happened it was a minor sensation in our shop.

I saw nothing spectacular in it. It seemed to me to be an obvious development based on the information I had seen.

Why others had not anticipated it, I cannot say. I was far from the only one to have that information and, in fact, the information I had had been routed to me by others.

In effect I used their information to tell them what was going to happen that they did not see happening.

I think my popularity for what I did was limited to my own shop!

It got me no Brownie points at the CIA, that is for sure!

The CIA was still organizing and staffing with Ivy League types. It had distributed a brief intelligence analysis any Paraguay expert should have known was very wrong if he or she knew no more

about Paraguay than a casual skimming of any encyclopedia would reveal.

Not in Paraguay and most often where there was a high percentage of illiteracy political parties were known by their colors. The two major Paraguayan parties took the colors red and white.

The CIA's analyst whose gross ignorance must have been his qualification for sitting on that desk could not have known anything at all about Paraguay. He identified the Red party as the party of the left. There was little really left in Paraguay. But the reactionary party was the White party.

The Red party was the reactionary party of the military dictatorship that lingered into the last decade of the century. Only then did the successor, "Red" military dictator, General Stroessner, who succeeded Morinigo, bow out and allow relatively uncorrupted elections.

When one with the correct academic credentials took over the Paraguay desk I was assigned to do a study to be presented at the United Nations as the United States statement on the pro-Nazi influence of the Spanish Dictator Franco and his Falange party in Latin America. It was clear as Central Records sent me what I asked for that there had to be much I was not getting.

There was little help from the FBI, which then was operational in Latin America but much of the information came from it. (My friend Henry Wade, who was the Dallas County District Attorney when JFK was assassinated and for years thereafter, was then an FBI agent in Ecuador. Among the informers on his paid string was the president. With all the poverty and low income there he was an FBI paid informer for, as I now remember, less than \$100 a month.) The one Falange report from the FBI I recall (and there may, of course, have been others) identified a young man from Pennsylvania as a Falangist or a Falange agent. He was, in fact, a University of Pennsylvania graduate student doing his thesis on the Falange in Latin America.

That was the sophistication of the reporting of political intelligence!

Like the author of that CIA report on Paraguay, the FBI agent had made an assumption and reported it as fact.

To each, ignorant as they were, the assumptions appeared to be justified.

One can only wonder how much more such "reporting" there was and what the consequence might have been.

However, for all their deficiencies and omissions, the FBI reports were the best available source. I drew on its reports heavily. They then were the proper agency for reporting on the Latin America Falange for our government.

After I turned it in the long absent division chief, the California professor and a recognized Latin Americanist, called me in. Dr. Roland Hussey affected a gray-green long-sleeved, front-buttoning sweater. He did not need it. But he thought it made him look professional. He expressed a low opinion of my study. It was probably justified but hardly for the reason he gave me: "No scholar worthy of his salt would use FBI records."

Hussey was not a radical, not even a liberal. He was a stereotypical professional scholar. To then regardless of what information the FBI provided, the FBI was not scholarly so it therefore was not an acceptable source- for an authentic "scholar"-no matter how little information was available from any other source or how correct it may have been.

That there were no texts, standard or other, on the influence of the then very young Falange parties in Latin America made no difference in the Hussian concept of scholarship for the government and its policy-makers.

There then was little or nothing of value in State's own reports, from its ambassadors and those under the ambassadors, including those who provided what for lack of a more appropriate word I call

"intelligence." The records I got from Central Records were pretty barren on the Falange parties of the Latin American world.

But the then traditionalists had little interest in fascist parties. Even when they were a menace and even when its diplomats were their political and social friends, the latter extending to authentic German Nazis.

They did not report on their buddies, having seen nothing wrong with them, Nazis and Spanish fascists as they were.

I had two illuminating experiences when I was CLICK's Washington correspondent.

In one I helped with a story that included pictures of our respected and highly-placed ambassador George Messerschmidt socializing and posing for pictures with overt officials Nazis and other overt fascists in Cuba during World War II. His diplomatic career prospered. I do not recall a single newspaper that picked that story or those pictures up.

I was also asked to help with another such story, on the power of the Falange in Chile and the actual plans for an actual Falangist Nazi revolution in that country.

A CLICK writer in Santiago, an American, had obtained that information, complete with pictures and maps for the coming Nazi/Falange revolution. He did not trust mailing it because he said the Falange controlled the post office. He feared going to the embassy because some in the embassy were cozy with some of the puschists. He phoned his problem to Rogers and Rogers asked my help. When I learned the content I stipulated that our government have first access.

That investigative reporter whose name I remember as Bernie Seaman or Seamon, had all his dope in 35 millimeter film. Through a friend who then was an assistant secretary of State, Larry Duggan, I got an OK for putting his film sealed in the sealed diplomatic pouch and for its initial undeveloped delivery to

another friend then the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division, George McNulty. He, after giving it to the FBI to process and print for its own records gave the film to me.

Before giving it to CLICK I took it to a friend who worked with the President's son, Jimmie Roosevelt, in one of the forerunners of the OSS I think called "The Coordinator of Information." (The CIA inherited the OSS's records. The OSS had inherited the COI's.) Jimmie gave it to his father and lo! this prime intelligence material of a character disdained by the profession scholars made one of FDR's famous "fireside chats" on coast-to-coast radio. (No TV then.)

Later, after the CIA had repeatedly denied having any information on or about me. It gave me those remaining Coordinator of Information records it had tracing those pictures from where they were when located back in the early 1940s to my then home for me to send to CLICK.

So, without the degrees of access to records I should have had for that study and without scholarly tomes I did know a little bit about the Falange, seed of Hitler who made possible Franco's overthrow of the democratically elected government of Spain. And about Hitler's close pal Franco.

But to the authentic scholars in the government, the pros, investigative information? That is something "no scholar worth his salt would use." Leaving damned little to be used, thanks to them.

Hussey downgraded my efficiency rating to merely good. And good is sometimes not good enough for the scholars for whom the only scholarship and information came for the text of the past, some of which they wrote to them. Unless information comes from professional scholars it is not information at all. Worthless. Even if it makes a Presidential report to the people. Hell, he was no scholar anyway, was he?

It was becoming clear that to the professional scholars there is no knowledge other than in the books they or their friends wrote or they like. That there as of then were no books with that Falange

information made no difference. There were very few State reports on it. Yet State had to make a UN presentation. With what did not concern Hussey: information in it could not be from the FBI!

To him- and just consider his degrees and his teaching career-what came from the FBI was not acceptable and was not information. Even if that was all there was!

And thus was there a major contribution to my doing nothing about that spawn of Hitler, the Falange seeding the Latin American world.

It was for all the world that, given the opportunity, they were staking out their turf to block one regarded as an interloper, one who could introduce the to them subversion of using an information from any source, just so it was information.

I suppose it also could have been a way by which they could feel safer and more secure latched to their past of formal, published scholarship and not feel threatened by the forces and developments, to say nothing of political threats, of the present and future.

I continued to learn what is not taught in the finest educational institutions.

Soon it was with a formal notice that I was being "reduced in force."

There was no reported curtailment of appropriations of the work or the people required to do that work. Besides, I am a veteran and under the law, as they well know, they could not do that to a veteran.

I wasted no time going to the Civil Service Commission about it. That Commission lost no time telling State what it knew very well that it could not within the law do what it had done to a veteran. So the action was canceled.

But as State also knew, there was that McMarran "rider" thing that authorized it to ignore all those laws.

That it was obviously unConstitutional would and did make no difference. Before it got to the Supreme Court which consigned it to history's malodorous political swamps, State used it to unload many authentic scholars and other specialists who were not liked because their work did not hew to any party line, left or right.

If anybody or any idea rocked any boat of sterile and outdated concepts, that boat, the official boat, was about to sink.

Any anybody who could do what they so stodgy and sterile of mind could not think of or do was a menace, to them a national menace.

And they were in charge.