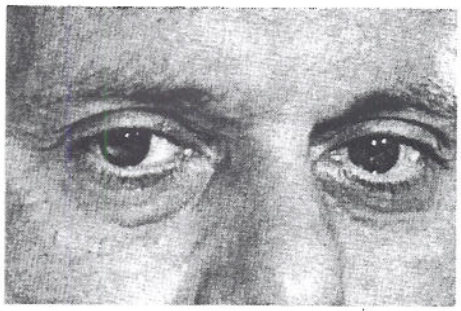
Weisberg



CONFESSIONS OF A WATERGATE BURGLAR

"We used sex to get information"
"A Democratic staffer let us in"
"John Mitchell told me not to worry"

BY ANDREW ST. GEORGE

The man in the photograph under the first Watergate burglary headlines in June 1972 is familiar to me, even though the oddly wrenched chin, the milky eyeballs, the stretched skin recall the last mug shots of men with broken necks. The photo is captioned, "F. Sturgis, arrested Watergate burglar." But I know that is wrong. The man in the picture is not "F. Sturgis"; he is Frank Fiorini, an old friend from the days when I worked as a correspondent in Cuba during Fidel Castro's revolution.

Early that October I find myself in Miami, where Fiorini lives, and knowing he's out of jail on bail, I drive to his home to see how Frank is getting along. Now, sitting in his living room, he looks tanned and trim, like the Fiorini I used to know. His black wavy hair is still full; his dark-eyed olive face juts into a heavy Mediterranean, seafaring jaw, his broad shoulders square with a stocky midriff. No wonder, I think, even *Time* magazine, with its close-checking researchers, mistakenly keeps calling him one of the "Cuban-Americans," despite the fact that Fiorini is a third-generation Italian-American from Philadelphia. He looks nothing at all like that June newspaper photo. Except perhaps in the eyes, where there is a troubled, opaque shadow of hurt. The White House has dismissed the Watergate break-in as a "third-rate burglary." Frank Fiorini—World War II Marine, ex-motorcycle cop, veteran gunrunner, revolutionary and intelligence agent—has never before been called "third-rate," and he is not pleased.

"We were never complete fools about making an 'entry' [break-in] anywhere," Frank says of his activities with the 'plumbers.' "When we were told to make an entry at the Democratic National Committee or some other office, Rolando [Martinez, a Watergate burglar] and me, we bought a coupla new ties, and sort of hung around the place for a few days, and met some of the office girls. We dated them; and, often as not, we ended up in the sack with them."

Frank, who doesn't drink, lights up a cigarette, and says, "Some of the girls gave us a complete rundown about their office setup just to hear themselves talk. More than one girl—we propositioned them and they agreed to work for us, more for the thrill of it, I guess, than money or anything else. Campaign volunteers and Washington secretaries are a special lot. And supposing that nothing came of a date like this except maybe a few busy nights? We'd still drop around and visit our dates at their jobs and really get oriented about the place we planned to enter. You know, after we were arrested, the FBI agents who questioned us tried to scare us by pretending they'd known about us a long time and had even bugged our team operations. I told the FBI guy, 'If you had done that, you'd have an awful lot of tape by now with nothing on it but loudly creaking bedsprings.' "

As he pauses, I think that the mask Frank Fiorini has worn for 20 years—as a political adventurer, an intelligence operative, a para-warrior, the emblematic underground man of our age—the mask has begun to strangle him. Choked by the mean dripping brick walls of the D.C. jail, by the waist chains and restrainers which (*Continued on page* 74)

Journalist Andrew St. George first met Frank Fiorini, alias Frank Sturgis, during Fidel Castro's Cuban revolution (see photo at right) in 1957.

Photo By Wide World

are regulation when the marshals move you around in custody, by the sting of snake-black headlines, Frank Fiorini wants his own face back. He is trying to convince me, an old friend, that he did not at age 49 suddenly become a bungler.

"Hey, listen—we didn't do so bad. Not at first, anyhow. What did they tell you we were looking for in the Watergate, that time we got busted—proof that the McGovern campaign had some of Fidel Castro's money in its coffers? Well, that's true, far as it goes. It's true there were intelligence reports that Castro was giving money to help elect George McGovern. You say that's dumb? Well,we never did find the evidence. But, hey, let me tell you something—that proposition was not so far out. The idea was for Castro to support a left-wing candidate for the presidency; if he won, with Cuba's trade relations restored, Castro would make back the money he'd invested a hundredfold. So we never found the evidence, but you can be damn sure that doesn't mean we found *nothing*.

"First of all, about Cuba: we had more responsibility than just looking for evidence of money and deals. One of the things we were looking for in the Democratic National Committee's files, and in some other Washington file cabinets, too, was a thick secret memorandum from the Castro government, addressed confidentially to the Democrats' platform committee. We knew that this secret memorandum existed—knew it for a *fact*—because both the CIA and the FBI had found excerpts and references to it in some confidential investigations they had conducted a couple of months earlier. But we wanted the entire document; it was more than 130 typed pages, according to our information.

"There were two main parts to it. One was a long, detailed listing of all the covert espionage and sabotage and countersubversive operations the CIA and the DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency, the espionage arm of the Defense Department] and the various joint operations groups have launched against Cuba from the United States since 1965 or '66. The second part was a sort of long beef about these 'subversive activities' against Cuba. It said that the Castro government suspected the CIA did not tell the whole truth about these operations even to American political leaders; therefore, the Cubans were providing an itemized list of all such 'abuses.' The complaints were especially bitter about various attempts made to assassinate the Castro brothers.

"The whole memo ended with a proposition, from the Cubans to the Democratic leadership: if McGovern got elected President, and if he then stopped the 'subversive forays' against Cuba, then Castro would be willing to talk a deal with the McGovern Administration, a deal about resuming diplomatic relations and trade, and so forth. We looked high and low for this document—we broke in a couple of times—and although we found a piece of it one night at another office, we never did find the entire thing."

Odd, this obsession with Cuba in a man who once seemed destined to enter history as a minor hero of the Castro revolution, I think. And the obsession held through all of our talks over the succeeding months. Frank was just a flyspeck in the blazing Cuban sky the day I caught my first glimpse of him in June 1957. In a moment or two he sounded like a buzzing fly. The twin Piper Apache engines were a distant whine, coming nearer, swelling greater, roaring deeper as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara and the rest of us stood watching in the jungle clearing, watching in silence as the plane suddenly coughed, tilted, slipped wing tip down into an incredible drunken descent, dropping like a kite in an air shaft, dropping to earth in that tiny hillside patch, one wing slashing sea-grape leaves, one prop buckling as it churned mud. Frank Fiorini had done the impossible, he had landed a supply plane at the jungle hideout of Fidel Castro's rebel army, the passenger seats buried under piles of Garand rifles and Mendoza machine guns, belted ammo and cans of Three-in-One oil, other goods the guerrillas needed more than gold and, as Frank clambered out onto the wing, khaki shirt sweat-stained but the Italian-American grin flashing white-on-white, Fidel suddenly shouted in exploding admiration: *"Eso si es un yanqui barbaro!"* (This is one helluva Yankee!)

"I can tell you what else we were looking for the night we were arrested at the Democratic National Committee office. We were looking for *everything*. Our orders were to 'sweep' the entire file system of the Democrats. There's been a lot of kidding and cackling about 'Keystone Kops,' about five of us all making the entry in a team. But our assignment was to photograph 2000 documents that night. We had very efficient photo gear, and an efficient system we'd developed ourselves for pulling, copying and replacing files. We got *busted* at Watergate, but we did not *begin* there. We had done other assignments, successfully, and as we went along we improved our techniques. One man—and this has to be an experienced team member who knows what he's doing—pulls the files. One man photographs them, in a continuous sequence. A third team member is assigned to replace the sheets as they pop out from the portable photocopy stand. You'd be amazed at what a skilled team can accomplish in one sweep."

Barbaro was one of Fidel Castro's favorite words. It was a great encomium; *yanqui* was not. For a while in late 1958 and early 1959, as the Cuban revolution fought its guerrilla campaign to triumphant finish, Frank Fiorini was Fidel's favorite yanqui. He was the jungle army's most efficient gunrunner. He was their best bush pilot. And, surprisingly for a gunrunner, Frank was not a thief. By the time Castro was victorious in January, 1959, Frank had earned a reputation for honesty. During two reckless years, while supplying the rebels, with all the reckless rebel money to spend on his supply route, Frank took for himself not one loose peso. He had awkwardly hand-scrawled accounts he folded and kept in a plastic envelope, accounts no one wanted to look at because what had counted was delivery, not the cost. Frank's accounts, when they were finally checked out, proved to be absolutely correct.

This astonished everyone in Havana, even the most puritanical guerrilla leaders. Underground suppliers like Frank were expected to look out for themselves. Fidel himself was, for once, taken aback—he had learned in the jungle that a gunrunner who accounts for two-thirds of his cash is an okay gunrunner—and he said again, this time in a tone of soft incredulity: *"Eso si es un yanqui barbaro."* This helluva Yankee showed none of the civilized instinct for skimming a little something off the top.

"Hey, *chico*, make no mistake: this Watergate was not a jerk deal. We had a *lot* of targets. First off: any document with money on it—that is, any references to financial dealings, whether contributions to the McGovern campaign or other transactions. I was told that Mitchell and Ehrlichman suspected Democratic National Committee bosses were profiteering from the campaign—that they had somehow arranged for kickbacks, personal kickbacks, from some of the concessionaires at the national convention. We never found anything about this, but we sure kept looking for it.

"Another priority target: anything that had to do with Howard Hughes—correspondence, memos, *anything*. Third: we knew that the Democrats had a 'shit file' of damaging rumors about Republican leaders. We dug for that everywhere. Both [G. Gordon] Liddy and [E. Howard] Hunt told us, more than once, to copy *everything* that could be leaked to the press with a damaging effect to the McGovern people."

E. Howard Hunt, an old Fiorini friend. It was in one of Hunt's cloak-and-dagger books, *Bimini Run*, that Frank found his cover name of Frank Sturgis.

"Once, we found that the secretary of one of the Democratic National Committee vice-chairmen had apparently laid her face on the glass top of the office copying machine and made a Xerox of it; then she colored the mouth with lipstick and scribbled under it to her boss, 'The body of this outline is available if you can get away from Bethesda next weekend.' Bethesda being where the vice-chairman must have been living with his wife. Well, we didn't photograph this; we took it entire. Stuff like that Hunt loved to get; but most of all, Liddy. Liddy kept saying he had plans to 'screw the whole lefty lot of McGovern freaks' one way or another, either by compromising them in the press or blackmailing them privately."

Yes, Fidel was fond of this yanqui, and Frank's rank rose from captain to first-deputy commander of the rebel air force, then director general of Security and Intelligence of the Air Command. In 1959, Frank even served as Cuba's Superintendent of Games of Chance: he was Havana's chief gambling inspector.

That was the good year—1959—even though it didn't quite last 12 months. Frank was happy. We were all happy in Havana. Fidel kept shouting, *"Eso es barbaro!"* and *"De pelicula!"* his other favorite exclamation, which meant things were going as beautifully as in a Hollywood movie. Then everything suddenly broke in mid-laughter, like a badly threaded film.

Frank Fiorini was among the first rebel officers to fall out with Fidel over the issue of Communist encroachment in the Cuban forces. "Those of you who betray me," Castro raged at the defectors, "will end up among the lumpen [dregs] of Miami." As I listen to Frank's account of Watergate, a spill of words now defiant, now troubled, it occurs to me that Castro's prediction had in a sense come true.

"Hey, listen, our bunch was a good team—all except that faking, brown-nosing [Bernard] Barker. Liddy was the C.O., and he loved it—he loved playing the commanding officer of a special-ops team. Liddy was like an Eagle Scout who finds he's passed the exams and become a CIA chief. He was a nut about guns and silencers and combat daggers and so on. And he was always talking about 'disposal'—about killing people. I told him once, if it ever came to to that, I'd use my bare hands and a piece of wire, and poor Liddy turned gray. Killing wasn't really in him, except in talk. Hunt was different: he was a professional. He'd been a clandestine services officer all his life. That's another thing everyone is snickering about —how Howard tried to assassinate Castro, and Castro is still around bigger than ever. Alright, but hey, listen: Howard was in charge of a couple of other CIA operations that involved 'disposal,' and I can tell you, some of them worked."

Frank was born in Norfolk, Virginia, but his parents separated when he was an infant, and he grew up with his mother's family in Philadelphia's Germantown section. Not yet 18 in late 1940, he went from high school into the Marines, and then it was four years of front-line combat in the Pacific. With the First Marine Raider Battalion, the legendary Edson's Raiders, Frank made the entire circuit, from Guadalcanal to Iwo Jima and Okinawa. There were amphibious landings; commando raids; diversionary assaults; three serious combat wounds; jaundice, malaria, bush fever. He made sergeant, got busted for an unauthorized junket, made corporal again; toward the end Frank probably went a little mad. His final hospital stay, at the Sun Valley Naval Medical Center, involved treatment for combat injuries as well as "exhaustion" and possible psychoneurosis. Along with his honorable discharge, Frank was awarded lifetime disability pay: $51 a month.

Fiorini spent the years after the war wandering up and down the eastern seacoast—Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Washington, Miami—trying one job after another —motorcycle cop, bartender, nightclub manager. In 1949 he reenlisted; this time in the Army—looking for what? Looking,

(to page 76)

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most probably, for himself; looking for the real face of Frank Fiorini. The truth of the matter—that he would never find himself in a new job or a new city, that his true inner need drove him toward self-definition in terms of action, always action—had not yet struck this rootless wanderer.

"Jim McCord, a real electronics expert, we really needed him. Before he joined the team, we tried to do electronic surveillance: it always gave us trouble. In the fall of 1971 we were assigned to run a big sweep on Teddy Kennedy: 'Get all the *dirt* on him!' We had the addresses of four girls who were said to have been romancing Teddy—one went to Hawaii with him on a trip—and we worked out an approach: we called on them one by one, saying we were from a Democratic research organization, researching Senator Kennedy. The way we interviewed these girls, it became plain in the end we were no friends of Teddy's. The idea was to tap their phone wires and listen in afterward to see who they called to report our visit, what they said in the first flush of anxiety. Well, we pulled off the interviews alright, but we could never find the right pair of phone wires to tap; it was all a waste. McCord was a hell of a savvy guy about electronics, but he had trouble bugging the DNC. Not because he didn't know how. McCord was too security-conscious, that was what screwed us. He was worried that the police and security units around Watergate would pick up our transmissions from the bugs we planted in the office of Larry O'Brien and Spencer Oliver. To avoid suspicion, McCord installed the lowest-powered transmitter bugs he could rig up. The result was that the transmissions were inaudible to radio units not specifically tuned to them, but they were almost inaudible to our monitor, too, the one Alfred Baldwin was running across the street in the Howard Johnson motel. That was one reason why McCord came in with us the night we were busted, to turn up the volume on the bugs, so to speak."

By January 1953, Frank is a civilian again. He moves back to Miami, drifting indifferently through several meaningless jobs, through an empty marriage to a long-legged, mean-mouthed Cuban nightclub entertainer. But through his wife he enters a new world: the clandestine microsociety of Cuban exiles, "combatants" and "militants" plotting to overthrow Dictator Fulgencio Batista. For Frank, military life had been a disappointment, full of strutting, pompous asses, but here was a new world of solitary, voluntary, almost transcendentally existential action. So while he had nothing against President Batista, Frank Fiorini melted into the Cuban underground as smoothly and effortlessly as a man fulfilling his ordained destiny.

"D'you remember what [Richard] Helms [the former CIA Director] testified about Rolando Martinez [who was arrested at Watergate] to the Ervin Committee?" Frank asks me angrily. "He said Rolando was a sort of tipster who reported bits and things about other Cuban exiles to the CIA, that his pay was something like 100 bucks a month? Let me tell you something: Rolando made $1200 a month, and if the Company [i.e. the CIA] paid him 12 thousand, it wouldn't have been enough. Rolando was never any kind of tipster. What he was was a *practico*, a CIA boat pilot, who guided the clandestine inshore runs to Cuba, to land agents or to pick them up, to bring them back to Key West. There is no more dangerous work. And Rolando has *ten years* at it, more than anyone else—he's made more than 200 runs. In Miami, Rolando is a goddamn *hero* today. There is not a Cuban shoeshine boy who'd accept a quarter from him; he's just a giant to them. A *tipster!*" Frank shook his head bitterly at Mr. Helms' perjurious duplicity. "That was a really low blow. Why did Helms call him that? What was he afraid of?"

In 1955 Frank began to run clandestine night flights into Cuba for former President Carlos Prio Socarras, sometimes delivering passengers (agents, contact men, underground organizers), sometimes cargo (tommy guns, hand grenades, plastic explosives) to be employed, in one manner or another, against General Fulgencio Batista, the hated *"La Hyena"* who had become the dictator of Cuba by military coup.

Don Carlos Prio, whose Florida real-estate holdings had made him one of the world's wealthiest men, wanted to regain the Cuban presidency. But in early 1956 an obscure, stubborn, reckless young country lawyer named Fidel Castro, just out of jail in Havana for plotting against the Batista dictatorship, began organizing a guerrilla invasion of Cuba. Fidel worked tirelessly in Miami and Mexico to recruit a team of men whose only shared qualification was a stone-cold willingness to die. And although Fidel Castro had no money to spend, no connections, no promise of lush rewards after "la victoria"—only the austerity of total commitment to action—Frank took leave of President Prio and joined the threadbare Castro movement. "You see, Prio is a politician," Frank once explained to me. "What he does is four-fifths talk, one-fifth action. Fidel and his guys were all action. They needed a reliable pilot in the worst way, and so I started to ferry in stuff for them. Batista's secret police caught me once, on the way out from the mountains. They gave me a good beating. Ox-gut whips. But I wasn't carrying anything and I managed to not say much. Batista just ordered me deported, and that was alright—I was on my way to Miami anyhow, to pick up the next planeload of ammo."

It seemed at first that in Cuba it was all there for Frank, that he had finally found what he had so deeply and unconsciously hungered for: a community of men who accepted him as a leader and a brother; a lifestyle in which *everyone* who mattered shared Frank's need to find an identity in action. But politics intervened—Communists abruptly appeared all over the place, received instant officers' commissions and began indoctrinating the rebel troops—and just as abruptly the Castro team split up. Frank split when the air force commander-in-chief, Pedro Luis Diaz Lanz, another daredevil guerrilla pilot, rebelled against Communist military instructors taking over the air force training courses. In September 1959, Frank and Diaz flew to Miami, announced their break with the "Castro-Communist clique" and became defectors. It was an act that led directly to the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

"The Bay of Pigs—hey, there was one sweet mess. I met Howard Hunt that year; he was the political officer of the exile brigade. Bernard Barker was Hunt's right-hand man, his confidential clerk—his body servant, really; that's how I met Barker. I wish I had never met the dumbhead. You know, Barker tells everybody to call him *'Macho.'* That's supposed to be his nickname. A man who is *macho* is supposed to be some kind of virile hard-charger. Calling Barker 'Macho' is like calling Liberace 'Slugger.' When he is around Hunt, or anybody that's over him, Barker is like a valet. Servile—you know what I mean? 'Sit here, Mr. Hunt, the sun won't bother you.' It's disgusting. 'Yessir, Mr. Hunt, let me refresh your drink, sir.' Enough to make you puke. And Barker is the biggest Scrooge you ever saw. Hunt gives him $500, saying 'Round up some men, we have a job to do.' So Barker comes downtown and he says to me: 'Let's have lunch, I need some people for Mr. Hunt.' And you know where we end up having lunch? In the cheapest hamburger joint in Miami. Barker kept telling me: 'Eat four of these burgers if you like. Eat five. They're not very big.' You bet they aren't—they cost 15 cents apiece."

Though Frank loathed Bernard Barker, he liked Howard Hunt. Frank and Hunt understood each other. There was a class gap between them, immutably woven in the warp and woof of their lives: Hunt belonged to the Jockey Club; Frank to his wife's church-basement social scene. But they had a deeper bond: both were —Hunt as executive, Frank as "field man" —"operators."

Operators are not necessarily nice, well-regarded people, even among their own kind. After the Bay of Pigs, the inspector general of the CIA, Lyman D. Kirkpatrick, investigated the debacle and decided operators were responsible for it. Operators were not just the agents and the control officers who ran the invasion project and ran it into the ground; operators were the men who would not play by Establishment rules, men who, as Kirkpatrick bitterly noted, "chose to operate outside the organizational structure of both the CIA and the intelligence system." Shame on Kirkpatrick for seeming surprised.

After all, he should have been well aware of the fact that operators are not timid bureaucrats, they are not trimmers, traditionalists, estimators, climbers. Operators are stress-seekers and risk-takers, born to gamble for life-and-death stakes. Thus in the summer of 1970 when Hunt came to Miami and told Frank Fiorini they were going to "work for the White House," Frank asked few questions. Hunt was talking about action, and Frank needed *action* the way shipwrecked men need fresh water.

(to page 80)

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WATERGATE (from page 76)

In the old days, let's face it, Hunt was a hell of a guy. The trouble was, wherever Hunt went, Barker went with him. Let me tell you one or two things about how we got caught. First of all—here's something you've never heard before—we had an inside man in the DNC office at Watergate. A student who as a volunteer worker for McGovern was scouting for us on the side. The first time that downstairs entrance was taped open it was this inside guy who did it. He had asked Barker how to make sure we got in that night, and Barker goes out and does it the cheapest way, buys a 39-cent roll of plastic tape at People's Drug and hands it to this inside man, to tape the lock for us. Barker kept bragging about it all afternoon: 'For 39 cents, the problem is taken care of.' The hell it was. The guard noticed the tape on the door. There were a dozen ways of keeping that lock open—ways that wouldn't have been spotted. Barker was just as stupid about his goddamn walkie-talkie. Macho wanted to be on the team, be a big man, so Hunt told him he'd be in charge of 'security.' His only job was to keep his ear to that goddamn walkie-talkie, listening to our lookout across from Watergate in case there was any outside problem.

"Now monitoring your own personal walkie-talkie is not a big job, is it? But Barker has to do it the cut-rate way, like everything else. He's too cheap to install a fresh battery in the thing before an operation; no, he keeps the old battery going week after week by never turning up the volume. It didn't matter on our other break-ins, because no problem occurred.

"But the night we got arrested, the minute we get safely inside the DNC, Macho turns the volume of his walkie-talkie all the way down. I remember McCord asked him a question about it, and Barker said something about 'too much static, too noisy.' But it wasn't that; it was just Macho saving the battery. He also kept us from picking up the first warning call from the lookout across the street, Alfred Baldwin, who was standing watch with a walkie-talkie of his own on the balcony of the Howard Johnson motel, saw the unmarked police car arrive, saw the cops begin turning up the lights on

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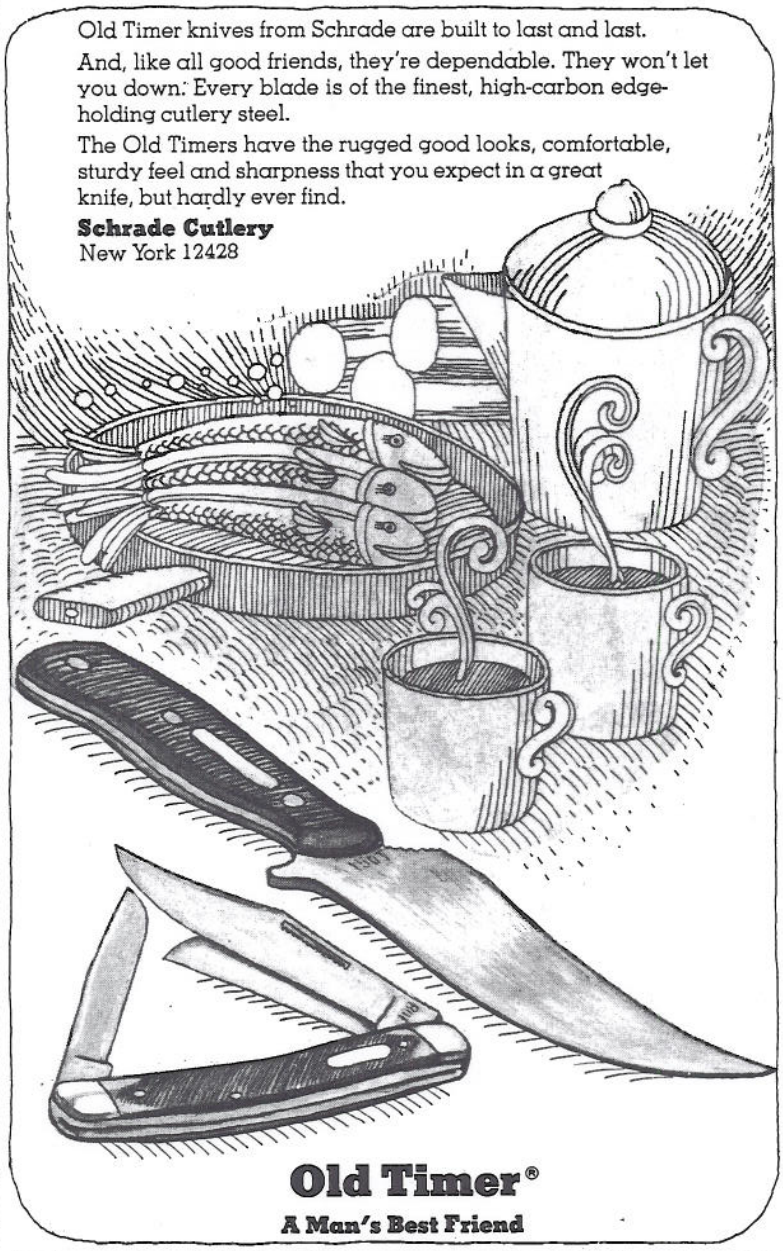
one floor after another. In the meantime we had begun to remove the ceiling panels in the DNC office suite, to make a nest for a new bug. We had set up our photo equipment. We suspected nothing until finally Barker heard the footsteps of the cops pounding outside our door and turned up his walkie-talkie. Hunt was stationed in another section of the Watergate complex and his voice came in, squeaky with tension, 'Alert! Alert! Do you read me? Clear out immediately, we have an emergency. . . .' But by then it was too late: the cops were in the corridor. Barker saved his damn walkie-talkie battery and blew our team."

It was, of course, not just Howard Hunt who led Frank to Watergate. The Bay of Pigs had been a personal disaster for Frank. By the mid-Sixties his livelihood came from a thinning patchwork of freelance assignments, mysterious "special projects" for unnamed intelligence agencies. There were occasional night flights over Cuba. For the CIA? For the DIA? For a "study project" managed jointly by both? Frank never knew for sure on any given night.

What Frank knew was that his unlisted home phone would ring the evening before the flight, and a familiar voice would signal an assignment. Once in his plane, Frank would follow a precisely charted course. By the time he approached his target, it was dark. His arrival, the noise and radar blips generated by his plane, excited the Cuban coastal defenses. They began to chatter, to track, to communicate, to warm up night fighters and electronic night-vision devices. And this was the whole point of Frank's mission, for the invisible electronic alarms and excursions in the night air were unfailingly recorded by a U.S. intelligence-gathering ship's huge antennae.

The Cuban gunners would track him with their four-barreled radar-guided cannon, and the rocket crews would fix his position on their target display boards. Still, Frank had a set "time frame" for his mission, and a set course to follow. He was a slow and obsolete sort of mechanical rabbit working a lot of high-powered hunters into a frenzy below. Frank, sweating as he maneuvered, was frequently shot at. For $600 per flight. No insurance. Frank's second wife, Janet, would get double the fee in the event of his death. Still, Frank Fiorini kept making the flights.



"Getting arrested at Watergate wasn't a big deal. We were told, time and again, that fail-safe arrangements had been made to get us out of trouble if anything ever went wrong. Liddy told us over and over not to worry; the men behind Watergate had 'contingency plans.' [John] Mitchell told me the same thing: don't worry. We'd be protected. [Mitchell has denied any prior knowledge of the Watergate entry.] We were told that if we *did* get arrested for illegal entry, the charges would be just that: illegal entry, a Class A misdemeanor, but nothing like a felony. We were told that we would be out on bail within hours if anyone tried to arrest us; that the bail would not be set higher than $500 or so; that if anything we did in the course of our operations ever came before a court, the prosecution would go very, *very* easy, and if worse came to worst, we'd walk away with something like a three-months' suspended sentence and a $5000 fine. All taken care of, of course; all taken care of by the 'big people.'"

What went wrong is hard to tell. There is speculation that the Liddy-Hunt team did *too much* of a job. The idea behind the Watergate break-in does not seem so absurd if we keep in mind that it was never meant to be a one-shot operation. In the course of the "special operations" undertaken during a two-year period by the Hunt-Liddy-Fiorini team, a number of "surreptitious entries" (burglaries), "electronic surveillances" (phone taps and bugs) and other "countersubversive activities" (i.e. harsh harassment of President Nixon's opposition) occurred. Some of the targets: the Chilean Embassy in Washington; the Chilean Delegation to the United Nations in New York; the law office of Sol Linowitz, former U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States (and onetime chairman of the board of the Xerox Corporation) who, in 1972, served as a confidential foreign-policy adviser on Latin America to the McGovern campaign; Senator Edward Kennedy; CBS Washington bureau chief Dan Rather; Senator Jacob Javits; and a number of others whom White House counsel Charles Colson was wont to call the "treason merchants."

(to page 82)

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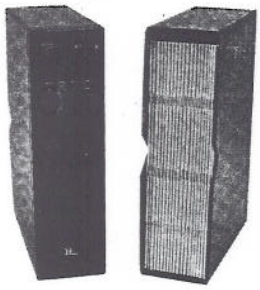

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By the time Frank and his teammates were arrested at Watergate, no one in authority dared execute the "fail-safe arrangements," if, in fact, there ever were such things.

I have seen Frank Fiorini in many different moods since we first began our talks about Watergate in October 1972; but I have seen him only once with tears in his eyes. The occasion was my first visit to Frank in the District of Columbia jail on January 18, 1973. Six days had gone by since he and the other Miami defendants pleaded guilty before Judge John Sirica. On this day Frank was in prison, behind the pane of glass which separates visitors from inmates. Talking to me, Frank suddenly formed a gun with his fingers and held it to his head: "I will never leave this jail alive," he whispered hoarsely, "if what we discussed about Watergate does not remain a secret between us. If you attempt to publish what I've told you, I am a dead man."

He feared the other Watergate operatives, who were all then imprisoned with Frank in the D.C. jail.

Bail money for Frank Fiorini was not set at "$500 or so." It was set at $40,000. Despite all the "big people" behind Watergate, it took six weeks to raise the bail. Six weeks which Frank spent in the District of Columbia jail. At the trial there was no fix, no talk of lenient Class A misdemeanors: it was felony counts all the way, and the wrath of Chief Judge John Sirica gave each count a lethal sting all its own. Existential man, doomed to define himself in action, has no national or cultural roots to lean on; there is nothing to support him but the essential matrix of action, the team. In the moment of his ultimate peril, the team let Frank Fiorini down.

What happens to a man when *that* happens—the collapse of the last prop, the utter solitude that follows the ultimate betrayal? Frank Fiorini is not given to philosophical exegesis, but anyone who spends an hour talking to him, now that he has been released on appeal after more than a year in various federal penitentiaries, will sense a new hardness, a narrow-eyed withdrawal into the wounded self.

"The liberals . . ." Frank says bitterly, his voice grating. That—when he was betrayed by the Republican administration—he speaks bitterly of "liberals" says much about the state of Frank's mind these days. Fiorini, of course, is damning not a political perspective, but a cold world full of betrayal, an invisible legion of double-crossers, hypocrites, bureaucrats, power-brokers, hand-washing Pontius Pilates who had let him down. Frank worked for John Kennedy's election in 1960, he had been a registered Democrat all his life, and "liberals" has never been a term of opprobrium for him before. But now his eyes are cold and his mouth rigid with hatred. "The liberals have twisted everything. There's no use trying to explain. If I had my way, just one chance . . ." his voice dropped and rose again, a harsher, deadlier voice than I'd ever heard him use, "If I had my chance I'd kill every one of them. *Every one.*"

I stare at Frank, at this well-dressed, hard-faced stranger, this friend of 15 years who is displaying a face I have never seen before. And I hope to God that this is not the real face which Frank Fiorini has been struggling existentially all these years to reveal to himself and the world. T

NEXT MONTH IN TRUE

THE BAILBONDSMAN

"He lives in a world where checks bounce, lawyers lie, and cops and judges are on the take. He saves his trust for professional criminals because they never skip."

BOW-WOW CROWD (from page 27)

make smaller side bets. But the man who lays down the heavy bread is Harvey, the man behind the wheel. In groups of two and three the "motor-heads" slide nervously into the garage and hover for a few minutes around the 340, exchanging knowledgeable guesses as to what's wrong, then move outside again to wait for some action to show up.

One of the Bow-Wow crowd tells me, "We love to go down with the 340." I see why. With its dark-gray primered body, twisted and misshapen from dozens of earthshaking midnight runs, and its oversized rear wheel wells, crudely tinsnipped like some leftover eighth-grade metal shop project, the car looks like a giant garbage rat with wheels. And under the hood a measly 340? Against a 396 Chevelle or a 440 Barracuda, only a fool would bet the Dart.

Harvey smiles drowsily and stretches. Rumor has it that the Dart's engine puts out damn near 700 horsepower, but Harvey won't say. He'd like to run the Dart tonight—especially against a 427 that someone says is being towed over from Jamaica. "Probably can get three or four cars at the line from those guys," Harvey says. "It's like money in the bank."

Driving a smaller-engined car, Harvey will probably get a three- or four-car length handicap at the starting line. In this situation the starter lines up the larger-engined car, carefully measures off the handicap, and positions the smaller car in front. But Harvey really doesn't much care which car he runs, just as long as he runs. Every Friday and Saturday night he leaves his wife and two children in their $45,000 split-level house and comes to the Bow Wow to gamble on his skill as a driver. He will sit on the stack of slicks until five in the morning waiting to race. Harvey is locked into street racing the way junkies are hooked on smack.

(to page 85)