More on phone check, a.m. 10/2/75

Fiarly early yesterday morning I got a pleasant call from a Mr. Meyer (phon) identifying himself as of the security office of the state phone company in Baltimore. He had heard from Harrison, whi I think he described as being lines manager for the local branch. They were, it seems, taking a serious view and were having a careful check made. My recollection is that they wanted permission to do this inside our home and while I may remember it incorrectly, believe this would be close to the first. I did agree. I asked him if he meant to include bugging the phone and he said yes. I said I expected there would not be anything but perhaps it would be a good idea.

The more we talked about it the more apparent it became that while he claimed the phone company never permitted tapping (he didn't mention counrt orders) he seemed to be of the belief some flaw in this caused the problem. He got so carried away with this p.r. approach that I finally had to remind him "don't get carried away. I have no question about your intent or any phone company employee whose I've ever seen here, but there is Southwestern Bell and similar cases." When he said something like that was the only one I reminded him of Black and those six rented truncks.

We did discuss the possibilities and one by one seemed to eliminate all that could be considered normal in the interruption of phone service and the line going dead.

During the conversation it turned out that there were men at our automated switchboards until after that time. From Western Electric. He said they'd not be able to tell because they did different kinds of work. But, I said, if anyone had done what I was promised, go there immediately, at least your man could have gotten in. Well, yes, and perhaps that should have been done.

I told him that because of the previous threats taken seriously by the police and phone company I had a phone directly wired for taping and at that time learned that there were cases of lines being patched to customers lines, so what I was suggesting as the explanation was not unheard of. No demurrer.

I did protest the promise to me not being kept and found the excuses not relevant. They have to be able to get in in an emergency and they could always have stationed someone to watch or guard until they could. He agreed it wasn't done well. At the end I said that I thought all interests would be served by his writing me a formal letter of complete explanation after his check was finished. I think he agreed.

When I heard nothing until some time after lunch.I phoned Harrison. He put Charlie Mertz on the line. Mertz remembered my speaking to his Kiwanis Club but I don't remember him. Harrison told me that one of his men had been at the switchboard with the WE men until 7 p.m. or later, much after my complaint and he agreed they should have checked as they had not. He said he did not ask questions about what he was told by State Security because maybe they had a legal court order. No, he did not think this would be the case with me. I said I could think of nobody except an official who'd be interested in intercepting my phone calls. He said he'd have the checking done promptly and completely. I think he said the board had already been checked and showed nothing. This is what I had said first thing, that if there was no immediate check there was no purpose in any.

Finally a Mr. Malone came. He was not particular pleasant and was interested only in checking the contacts and continuities. We have an extension cord where, on motion, the contacts of one plug are not good. It has been that way since it was new. There is never any trouble and even on the rare occasions when I walk with it all it does is make noise. It is one I got in an emergency, when Lil broke or sprianed her ankle 2/68, when there was a fire. He checked that phone and asked about the cellar wiring. I took him down to the celler. He checked where the line comes in the house and followed it to where there is an old box, a ringing box, apparently from an older type of phone. There were some wires I'd never noticed out in the air around it. They did not interest him. You could see lines running elsewhere but he had no interest. I asked him if he'd not like to follow them. Maybe he should. So I showed him where they went. His only comment was that at some point there had been a change. It was visible enough, with one line cut and just stapled to the girder. He never wanted to check the other outlets in the house

house even though I told him we had two more in the back. Did we have one outside? Often from xxxx weather they give trouble. Impossible I said and showed him the one in the carport. Checking it consisted of taking the cover off and agreeing it was OK.

I told him about the threat and the taping provision I have but he did not come back to it. So, when he was about to leave I asked him if he didn't want to check that phone. Oh, you have another? I took him into my office and showed him the phone. He didin t even check the female plug (he opened only the carport one although each is large enough to hold a bug). He muttered a few things about the line coming from the phone with the plug on it and the tape recorder. I told him that the plug was never removed, was wired directly and properly to the phone. He opened and checked it and said nothing except that xxxxxx "I don't know what all that stuff is."(approx, true to sense.) Either there was something not needed for the direct line to feed the tape recorder or there was not. If he is to do this kind of checking he should have known. I have no reason to believe there is anything a competent man ought not recognize immediately, like perhaps minerature condensers. He didn't even check the plug line. Not that he should have. Clearly there was no relevance in any of this because if they had any reason to believe there was thisx one-time only direct short he made no effort to see if there is a single bad wire in the house in which we have not less than six outlets.

I had reported what my neighbor, Paul Stiep, had told me at the time somex of my files disappeared. There had been some men working on the pole near his house. When they left he had no phone service. He seemed then to have some reason for thinking they might not be phone company men. He called the phone compnay and it immediately sent a crew that put his phone back in service. Malone had not asked Paul about this as he came in and I had reported it to Harrison and Mertz who agreed that checking their repair records should show this.

It appears that they are checking all the junctions from the switchboard to my home. Malone said that with all the fine lines there it is possible that by accident one had been broken to explain Paul's problem.

Someone said that an open line as well as a dead short could have caused my line to go dead in the middle of the conversation with Jon Newhall. But everyone agreed that once he hung up there was no way of explaining this as caused outside of Frederick or other than at the automated, unattended switchboard or between there and here.

My general impression is that while they maintain the posture that a tap is improbable they don't really believe it and are somewhat concerned (above the Malone level).

(It occurs to me that with Jon and I having talked regularly about Security Associates and the faling they are up to these people are in a business in which they can have the connections to pull this kind of deal.)

I phoned Bonnie, to whom I had spoken just before this call. He had called me to tell me of Aynesworth's unexpected called to him, a sort of setup call. This, of course, could xxxxx provide another source of interest. He told me that they had obtained transcripts of call made on one single phone in the entire paper office, it is done with such care and pinpoint accuracy. There was official interest in a single reporter and although his phone was on a switchboard they got transcripts of his calls only.

When the connection with John was broken he heard a loud noise. I didn't.

It seems to me that when right off yesterday Harrison knew he'd had a man at the switchboard then he'd have asked if this could have been caused by a normal accident. If he did he didn t say it and it is apparent that if he had a report this had happened there would have been no reason for further waste of money and time checking.

There still seems to be no way any equipment malfunction could have caused this. No explanation offered did not collapse as fast as I addressed it. The phone remained dead for some time after Jon hung up. and the time my phone was on the cradle was more than enough to disengage all relays. Besides, it was completely dead, no line noise and I could not hear my own voice in my ear.

We are on one of the more modern exchanges. Normally the service is excellent and clear.

No further word yesterday.