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Jack Anderson

WITH LES WHITTEN

WASHINGTON—For the comfort and convenience of vacationing bigwigs, the National Park Service maintains rustic chalets at two of the nation's most scenic sites.

Both lodges are closed to the ordinary taxpayers who are obliged to seek public accommodations or pitch their tents.

Only the privileged few are admitted to Brinkerhoff House overlooking Jackson Lake, Wyo., at the foot of the majestic Grand Teton mountains, or to Camp Hoover deep in the forests of Shenandoah National Park.

The National Park Service zealously protects the privacy of the distinguished guests who stay at these idyllic hideaways. But we have obtained copies of the star-studded guest registers from both lodges.

A number of notables, ranging from CBS's Walter Cronkite to Utah's Gov. Cal Rampton, have holed up at fabulous Brinkerhoff House, with its great stone fireplace, stately beamed ceilings and picture windows opening on breathtaking views.

One enthralled guest, Rep. Teno Roncalio, D.-Wyo., was moved to write prophetically in the guest registry: "Worth Jack Anderson's Abuse!" Another, Rep. Lee Hamilton, D.-Ind., found both the scenery and the nominal charges "awe-inspiring and relaxing."

Prominent Washington attorney George V. Allen Jr., referring to the trout that inhabit the cold, clear mountain streams, wrote happily that "Fish creek yielded an 18-inch cutthroat today."

Cronkite, who brought three of his family with him, apparently had the lodge opened especially for him in mid-winter. They spent a five-day Alpine vacation beneath the craggy, snow-capped peaks during the New Year, 1974, holiday. Cronkite left no comments in the registry, but he told us his access to the lodge had been wholly "innocent."

Among the others who signed in at Brinkerhoff House were Reps. B. F. Sisk, D.-Calif., John Jarman, R.-Okla. and Federal Communications Commissioner Rex Lee.

Camp Hoover in the picturesque Shenandoah woodlands was a favorite retreat for White House aides, who sought to get away from the tribulations of the Watergate scandal in 1973 and 1974.

Among those whose names appear on the register are Curtis Herge, who collected illegal contributions for President Nixon; Clay Whitehead, who cracked down on the TV networks for Nixon; H.R. Haldeman's cup bearer, Larry Higby; and Nixon hatchetman Fred Malek.

Two of the good guys of the Watergate days, former Attorney General Elliott Richardson and his sidekick, William Ruckelshaus, also visited the lodge.

Grumped one official about the

pampered few who stay at the exclusive hideaways: "They make enough money to scratch for lodgings like the rest of us."

Footnote: The rules supposedly limit the use of the lodges to "Members of Congress and presidential appointees." But in practice, the cronies of the mighty also have wangled VIP keys.

CIA COVERUP: Former CIA chief John McCone now has acknowledged a story he denied to us more than four years ago.

In January, 1971, we reported that the CIA had recruited two underworld figures. Sam Giancana and John Roselli, to plan the assassination of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

We identified their CIA contacts as William Harvey and James "Big Jim" O'Connell. The CIA was put in touch with the underworld triggermen, we reported by billionaire Howard Hughes' former Nevada honcho, Robert Maheu.

The plotters are now being hauled behind closed doors of the Select Senate Intelligence Committee to tell what they know.

McCone emerged after three hours of secret testimony to admit cautiously to the press that plots, indeed, had been sanctioned to kill Castro.

This was the opposite of what he told us in 1971. "No plot was authorized or implemented" to assassinate Castro, he told us. We went ahead with the story anyway, and now McCone has acknowledged we were right.

"The plot to knock off Castro," we reported on Jan. 18, 1971, "began as part of the Bay of Pigs operation. The intent was to eliminate the Cuban dictator before the motley invaders landed on the island. Their arrival was expected to touch off a general uprising which the Communist militia would have had more trouble putting down without the charismatic Castro to lead them."

Yet even after the Bay of Pigs, we reported, assassination teams continued to try to eliminate Castro until the end of February, 1963. "Nine months later," we noted, "President Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas by Lee Harvey Oswald, a fanatic who previously had agitated for Castro in New Orleans and had made a mysterious trip to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City."

Among those privy to the CIA conspiracy, there is still a nagging suspicion—unsupported by the Warren Commission's findings—that Castro became aware of the U.S. plot upon his life and somehow recruited Oswald to retaliate against President Kennedy.

The Senate committee is also investigating this intriguing possibility that the CIA attempts to kill Castro may have backfired against President Kennedy in Dallas.

No less than the late President's brother, Robert, and successor, Lyndon Johnson, were deeply conscious of this unproved possibility.