

TV Guide Editor Admits To 'Dull' Ties With CIA

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PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 27 (AP)—The editorial director of TV Guide magazine, Merrill Panitt, says he cooperated with the CIA in 1958 in an association he calls "remarkable only for its dullness."

Panitt defends his relationship with the agency in a copyright story in the magazine's Oct. 1 issue.

"I still don't see anything morally or journalistically wrong in a member of the press giving information or observations to the CIA on a one-time or even on a regular basis," Panitt wrote.

He said he was prompted to make public his CIA connection by Carl Bernstein's recent report in Rolling Stone magazine that 400 American reporters have worked with or for the CIA. Panitt called Bernstein's report "profitable journalism."

"I wondered how many of the 400 were men like myself who saw—and still see—nothing at all wrong in telling the CIA the same things we'd tell

any cocktail-party acquaintance who bothered to ask," Panitt said.

Panitt said he became involved with the CIA while he was managing editor of TV Guide in September, 1958. With the opening of the Soviet Union to foreigners, he wanted to write some articles about television there.

A week before he was to leave for the Soviet Union, the CIA contacted him, Panitt wrote. The agent said he would like to see Panitt again after he returned to discuss the editor's impressions.

"Don't try to be a spy," Panitt recalled the agent telling him.

The trip was unexciting, Panitt said. About two weeks after he returned, the agent showed up. The agent read his articles and asked him a few questions, mostly about the last names of the editor's Soviet guides, Panitt wrote.

Panitt said he gave the agent a copy of the journal he kept during his trip and that concluded his association with the CIA.