

CRIME RECORDS

King assassination records appeals
Divisional files
Crime Records Division

Harold Weisberg 7/3/80

This is to amplify a number of prior appeals. About them, in your last year's deposition testimony, you testified that I was about to receive a response. I haven't.

There has been no search to comply with Item 7 of my 4/15/80 request # - not even after the deposition testimony by FBI agents established there was never any search. SA Wiseman testified that all he did was speak to someone in the public relations office.

SA Hartingh, who had been assigned to Crime Records, testified that his duties included preparing "public domain" information.

My request is for any kind of information, in any form whatsoever. It does not use the word "secret" or anything like it.

Washington Star's Jeremiah O'Leary, who had cozy relationships with both the FBI and CIA, wrote a story for the Readers Digest that had the effect of turning the Ray case around before it came to trial. When the nature of his FBI relationship in connection with the Readers Digest was made public in the general JFK releases, O'Leary sought to explain that relationship away (it was prior ownership) by saying that it meant nothing at all because all of his information was provided by the FBI. O'Leary is one of those listed in my Item 7.

According to his book, "Bill", Gordon Liddy was a supervisor in Crime Records. Liddy's description of the functions of "Crime Records" is that it performed the functions included in Item 7.

Refusal to search these records and the 94 files constitutes deliberate non-compliance and I again appeal your refusal to cause the proper searches to be made. 80 files also need to be searched.

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keep trying to get citizens to volunteer to help us find him. What d'you say?"

She gave us the name of a nearby ranch and we left. The resident agent was right about the madam's connections, though. The first thing Monday morning the Denver office got a complaint from the office of the governor of Wyoming. Meantime, though, the fugitive was apprehended.

In June 1961, when the news came that I had been promoted to Bureau Supervisor at "S.O.G." (for Seat of Government, as we called FBI national headquarters to distinguish it from "W.F.O.," Washington Field Office), Scott Werner and I were happy. Fran was not. Good soldier that she was, though, she swallowed her disappointment and looked at the bright side; she'd be back East where her mother and all her friends lived.

I was assigned to Division 8, the Crime Records Division, headed by an exceptionally able Assistant Director of the FBI named Cartha DeLoach, known throughout the Bureau as Deke.

Fran and I rented a brick house in Arlington that conformed to the regulation that Bureau Supervisors live within quick reach of headquarters. Unfortunately, a house that close did not conform to our budget. The FBI had the power to appoint me, at age twenty-nine, a Bureau Supervisor, but Civil Service regulations did not permit me to be paid accordingly. At about \$8,000 a year Fran and I found ourselves living between an executive of the Associated Press on one side and a navy admiral on the other.

The Crime Records Division was a fascinating place. The actual keeping of records on crime was accomplished by just one section. The others handled such things as J. Edgar Hoover's correspondence; all FBI publications; congressional relations; press relations and public relations (though it was denied these last two activities existed); exhibits; requests for information about persons and activities or organizations that attracted Hoover's attention; his visiting schedule; FBI television programs; radio shows, movies, and, very important, ghostwriting for Hoover.

I was first put to work preparing memoranda responding to Hoover's inquiries—in the beginning the more mundane, then, as confidence in my ability grew, matters of increasing sensitivity. The rules were strict and easy to remember: absolutely no errors, of any kind or significance, were tolerated. Everything prepared for Hoover's signature went through the "reading room," staffed by a crew of spinster experts on grammar and spelling. I wasn't there more than two weeks before I got my first letter of censure for an error. It was occasioned by an incorrect initial on an envelope and I noted with amusement a psychological touch: letters from Hoover with good news—a promotion, commendation, or raise—were on blue letter-

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head; bad news—censure, demotion, transfer for disciplinary reasons, etc.—were on black letterhead.

I learned, too, that no one ever questioned anything Hoover actually said, and few things said in his name. In the latter category was an edict from the reading room that stated that certain English words were being used too frequently in Hoover's correspondence and were, henceforth, banished. It was a scandal when I suggested that Hoover was the only government official whose vocabulary was *decreasing*.

Everyone had to initial his work. As a memorandum passed upward through the chain of command to Hoover, each person reviewing it initialed it, sometimes making a brief comment in longhand. All such writings and initials were to be made only in pencil. Hoover alone was permitted to use ink, and he employed a distinctive blue that made his initials stand out from all the others. They also made all other comments irrelevant. After I had been there awhile, and noted the awe accorded anything written in Hoover's own hand in blue ink, I gave a few old-timers cardiac trouble. I am an excellent forger and Hoover's handwriting is one of my specialties. I'd have one of their memoranda copied over, then write on it in Hoover's hand in bright blue ink something like "Idiotic. This man has been around too long.—H." and leave it in the poor man's in-basket. Finally they knew enough to come to me, trembling, asking, "Please—this is one of yours, isn't it?"

Some of the things Hoover said or noted on memoranda were ambiguous, but no one would ask him what he meant; they'd just make a guess, act, and hope. When a class of new agents was marched through Hoover's office to shake his hand he muttered to an aide: "They've got some real pinheads in that class." The next day, as the class was at firearms training, their lockers were opened and the snap-brim hats all were required to have were measured. The three agents with the smallest hat sizes were washed out.

Each of us had to take his turn in the "nut room." People came into FBI headquarters every day asking to see J. Edgar Hoover. Most of them were tourists in Washington for the only time in their lives, admired Hoover, and wanted to tell him so. Others wanted to offer him advice, or interest him in their latest invention to combat crime—and a very few wanted to kill him. As important as it was to intercept a would-be assassin, it was deemed equally important to Hoover that no citizen disposed to support him and the FBI be offended. Accordingly, walk-in visitors were told we'd "check to see if Mr. Hoover is in." Their names were run through the indexes and the special list of crackpots known as the "nut list," and, if nothing "derogatory" turned up, they were told that Mr. Hoover was, unfortunately, out of the city. They were advised further, however, that special arrangements had been made for them to have an audience

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with "Mr. Hoover's top assistant, Mr. _____" (fill in the name of the supervisor on duty in the "nut room" that day).

Within a short while I was writing magazine articles for Hoover, and I was assigned to appear at events in and around Washington when an FBI speaker had been requested. Because someone on the way up the administrative ladder is likely at some stage to be a Special Agent in Charge—a role that requires speaking frequently—such engagements were often monitored. I must have done well enough, because my engagements increased in frequency and size of audience, but there was one I thought would send me back to Indianapolis.

I had been assigned to address a local association of handicapped persons on the standard theme of FBI history, jurisdiction, and accomplishments, adding that the Bureau employed handicapped persons wherever it could. I was told that two FBI employees would be present, and I was given their names and assignments.

I gave the talk and, when I got to the part about the handicapped, I thought to dramatize the point by calling out the names of the two employees and asking them to make themselves known. I called the first name. A woman in a wheelchair raised her hand and the audience clapped. It was when I called the name of the second woman that I got in trouble. She was seated next to the employee in the wheelchair and, instead of waving her hand in the air, started to rise. I was horrified. For some inexplicable reason, I assumed that something was wrong with her legs, too.

"No, no, Miss Frobisher!" I shouted. "Don't try to stand; just raise your hand!"

Too late. Miss Frobisher was already on her feet. Embarrassed, I tried to recover and made things worse: "Wonderful!" I shouted. "There's an example of determination we can all be proud of!" and I started clapping my hands. The audience followed in an ovation for Miss Frobisher.

At the tea-and-cookies reception after the speech, I approached the two employees to congratulate them. To my surprise Miss Frobisher was furious. "There's nothing wrong with me, you fool!" she hissed between clenched teeth, "I'm the one they sent to push the wheelchair!"

My office was on the fourth floor of the Department of Justice building; Hoover had his offices on the fifth. So did the then Attorney General, Robert Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy and Hoover hated each other. Headquarters was constantly abuzz with the latest skirmish in their private war. No sooner had I arrived than I was told with great glee of their first clash. Hoover's office was a few feet across a hall from the Attorney General's. Soon after Bobby Kennedy took office Hoover looked down at his desk one morning to find a strange object attached to it with wires trailing off under the carpet. Alarmed, he

summoned a technician from the FBI laboratory immediately to find out what it was.

The job was easy for the technician. "It's a buzzer, sir, so when the Attorney General wants to see you, he can just push it and have you step over to his office."

"Rip it out!"

And it *stayed* ripped out. Kennedy retaliated by having a Justice secretary walk his big, hairy dog, Brumus, in the corridor outside Hoover's office. This *lèse majesté* infuriated Hoover. He knew the Attorney General was a physical fitness buff who used the FBI gymnasium in the basement regularly, so he ordered that henceforth no one without FBI credentials was to use the gym, and he posted an agent guard on the door. From that moment on, try as he might, Bobby Kennedy couldn't get into the FBI gym.

Hoover was able to make things like that stick because of the extensive files he had on anyone with political power. The synopsis files on every senator and congressman were kept in an office a few doors down from mine. I used them in my work. It was common knowledge that the Kennedys were powerless against Hoover because JFK's extensive pre- and extramarital sexual activity was thoroughly documented in the sensitive files kept by Miss Gandy. The first entry in JFK's file noted an espionage surveillance observation of a young naval officer leaving the apartment of the target's mistress by the back door as the target came in the front. When the officer was identified it was reported to Hoover, who informed Ambassador Joseph Kennedy of the potentially embarrassing situation. The Ambassador had Franklin Roosevelt see to it that the navy transferred his son out of Washington. Nor were those files limited to politicians or to writings. Anyone with any kind of power or national celebrity was represented and the quality of detail was remarkable: in the tape I reviewed of the lovemaking between the late Sam "Mooney" Giancana and a well-known popular singer, even the squeak of the bed-springs was audible. As we said at the time, in a takeoff of an old joke about Hopalong Cassidy: "Nobody fucks with J. Edgar."

In the fall of 1961 I learned that while things were going well for me at the Bureau, there was trouble at home. We were barely making ends meet humbly and Fran was being tried from struggling to care for three babies under three years old, even sewing fat into the night to make clothing for them and herself. But she always managed a smile for me, and I never realized the extent of her exhaustion until I came in one day to find her in a doorway, gripping the molding on both sides of the wall and crying as she smashed her head repeatedly against the door frame. I took her in my arms and held her. "I'm so tired," she sobbed. "I'm . . . so . . . tired!"

There was more to it than that. She was pregnant again.

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