

Political Burglar's Thrilling Tales

By Rick Carroll

Jerry Ducote, who claimed that California growers hired him to discredit Cesar Chavez as a Communist, is, according to those who know him, part con-man, part madman, but always a first rate raconteur.

His stories may not always be true, but they are always good ones, say those who knew him years ago in police work, then in Republican politics and, more recently, in push private cocktail lounges where he spent his evenings regaling young ladies with his thrilling tales.

The 46-year-old former Santa Clara county deputy sheriff now is in a jail cell, held in lieu of \$100,000 bail and charged with more than a score of felonies because he told an investigator from the state Department of Justice his best story yet, a story of political espionage involving burglaries, kickbacks and shakedowns, and possibly a coverup, a little Watergate.

He will appear publicly for the first time since his arrest when he enters a plea tomorrow in San Jose Municipal Court. He is charged with 14 counts of grand theft and seven counts of concealing stolen property.

Ducote—a tall, lean, hard-muscled and well-tanned man retains an impressive image even in the mind of Suzy Grimmer, one

of 13 Santa Clara county residents who claim he bilked them of more than a total of \$15,000 ostensibly to help finance his expose of Chavez.

"He dresses 'like a big-game hunter,'" said Mrs. Grimmer, a divorcee who further described him as a "nice looking charmer" and a "great friend. She claimed he took her for \$5,000.

"A big spender, a big tipper, always buying drinks for others," she added.

He told friends his late-model car was supplied by the government. He lived in a suite at San Jose's fancy Le Baron Hotel, where as a non-member he appeared often in the members-only Jabberwocky Club with a "different, pretty lady almost every night," according to a female regular at the club.

A native of San Jose, educated by Jesuits, he never went to college, marrying instead and fathering eight children. He was divorced earlier this year.

In 1983 he resigned from the Santa Clara county sheriff's department in which he was a detective.

A high placed source says that Ducote was about to be fired.

It could have been because he moonlighted as the owner of a fight-wing shop, peddling John Birch tracts from his American



JERRY DUCOTE
He'll plead tomorrow

Opinion Book Store in downtown San Jose.

He was often controversial and once sued the city of San Jose, demanding officials cease flying the United Nations flag at city hall.

He lost the suit but won election in 1966 as chairman of the Young Republicans of Santa Clara county, a position in which he came to be regarded by even the most dedicated right-winger as one of "the super-crazy fringe," according to Michael Cobb, former state president of the Young Republicans and current chair-

man of the Santa Clara county Republican Central Committee.

"He used to always talk about Communist conspiracies in the farm workers even back then. I took Jerry Ducote with a grain of salt," Cobb said.

In 1964 Ducote entered politics as a candidate for the 25th Assembly District, unsuccessfully opposing incumbent William Stanton whose San Jose law office Ducote later admitted burglarizing.

Two years later the Republican Central Committee on a vote purged Ducote of its membership and drove him from the party.

His public and political life over, Ducote then stooped to the crime of political burglary, and brought his police skills into perverse play against the left wing in general and Cesar Chavez in particular.

Raconteur or psychopath, burglar or superpatriot, spy or agent provocateur: the whole truth of Ducote may never be known. His incredible story may be part fiction or part fantasy, or he could be telling the truth—once.

All that state investigators know (or will say) for sure is that upon Ducote's confessions, they recovered boxes of stolen documents from his ex-wife's garage and solved 17 political burglaries committed a decade ago.