

F Post
11/30/78
Jack Anderson's
Washington
Merry-go-round

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example, the Lemoore Naval Air Station in California requisitioned a \$64,000 fuel truck that wound up being used by the Lemoore Aero Club.

Most of the property disposal abuses could be avoided with proper bookkeeping methods that would make supply officials at each level accountable for what they requisitioned and how the material was used. But the free-and-easy attitude toward the public's property permeates the whole system. As one defense official told our associate Peter Grant, the attitude that taxpayers' money is somehow not real money "carries over to the type of records and controls maintained for the property."

Officials in charge of property disposal claim that accounting methods are being tightened to prevent the rip-offs, and that new regulations are being considered to bring some order out of the free-wheeling chaos.

But other officials say the problem will continue as long as the military feels that the property is theirs, not the public's. The fact that the property cost thousands of dollars is of no consequence to the profligate brass hats.

In earlier, more frugal times, the rule was: "Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without." For our devil-may-care military, that has been changed to: "Use it a little, throw it away, get some more, the taxpayers pay."

Footnote: If you are privy to government waste, report it to Jack Anderson's Watch on Waste, P. O. Box 2300, Washington, D. C. 20013.

FORSAKEN WIZARD: Martin Kaiser is an electronics wizard who for years was the federal government's major supplier of bugging and de-bugging equipment.

But after he blew the whistle on shady practices that were costing the FBI thousands of dollars in overpriced equipment, his sales to Uncle Sam dried up and blew away.

Even worse, the FBI expressed its gratitude for the money Kaiser saved the agency by instigating criminal and civil suits that may ruin him.

Kaiser made his first government sale

in 1967, and his merchandise was so highly regarded that his customers soon included virtually every federal intelligence agency. At one point, his annual sales to the feds totaled \$150,000.

But in 1975, Kaiser testified before the House Select Committee on Intelligence that the United States Recording Company, the middleman between Kaiser and the FBI, was marking up his equipment as much as 238 percent. The General Accounting Office confirmed the ripoff.

Disclosure of the mark-ups evidently embarrassed FBI officials who had sanctioned the arrangement. Kaiser was visited by two G-men who tried to get him to change his story. He refused, and, within a year, Kaiser's sales to federal agencies had dropped to almost zero.

He was told by two members of an interagency technical committee that at the FBI's urging, no intelligence agencies would buy from him. A highly placed Army intelligence official told Kaiser he was "taboo" in the spy community.

Then, last December, Kaiser was included in a criminal case against two North Carolina bank officials, who had used some of his equipment to bug FBI agents who were interviewing bank employees. Ironically, the bugging device which Kaiser supplied to the bank officials was detected by a debugging device the FBI had purchased from Kaiser.

The bank officials pleaded guilty. Kaiser was found not guilty, but his legal costs amounted to more than \$80,000.

That was not the end of it. Although FBI agents were on official business when they were bugged, they are now preparing a multimillion-dollar civil suit against Kaiser and the bank officials for "great humiliation" and "irreparable injury to their professional and private reputations."

The FBI maintains there is nothing in the anti-bugging statutes that prevents someone who is bugged in the course of official business from suing as a private individual.