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# Informant Tried to Spy on Kennedys

By Jack Anderson  
and Les Whitten

Washington police attempted to plant an informant in the household of Ethel Kennedy, widow of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D-N.Y.), in 1971.

The informant, E. Robert Merritt Jr., committed burglaries and other dirty deeds for the police and the FBI. Confidential FBI files say of him: "Nothing has developed ... to indicate that the informant has furnished other than reliable information."

The police provided Merritt with Ethel Kennedy's private phone number and home address. He was instructed to apply for a job opening as gardener-driver at the Kennedy residence and to use the position to gather information about the friends, associates and members of the Kennedy family.

This particular plot fell through, but Merritt completed many more bizarre undercover assignments. Under the guidance of his attorney, Alan Cilman, Merritt, 31, has told us about some of his exploits:

— When antiwar demonstrators descended upon Washington on May Day, 1971, the police asked Merritt to infiltrate the inner circle and spy on activist leaders Jack Davis, Rennie Davis and a

young lawyer, Ray Twohig. The police gave Merritt pills and marijuana to plant on Twohig. Merritt also was instructed to distribute drugs, including blue-striped capsules that caused nausea, and to disrupt demonstrations by cutting microphone wires.

— At the instigation of FBI agent William Tucker, Merritt entered the Red House Bookstore, which is associated with prison reform, and stole mail, which he turned over to the FBI.

— The undercover operative also picked up a box of addressed envelopes left outside the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and delivered it to FBI agent Terry O'Connor.

— Merritt also was instructed to spy on the Institute for Policy Studies, a left-wing research group. Told to take anything he "could get away with," he walked off with a sack that turned out to contain first-class letters. He turned over the mail to the FBI's Tucker, who retained it for study and later asked him to return it.

— Both the FBI and Washington police asked Merritt for any gossip he could glean about the following members of Congress: Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton (D-Mo.), Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.), Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), Charles McC

Mathias Jr. (R-Md.), George McGovern (D-S.D.), Lee Metcalf (D-Mont.), Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), William Proxmire (D-Wis.), Abraham A. Ribicoff (D-Conn.), and Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), and Reps. Bella Abzug (D-N.Y.), Mario Biaggi (D-N.Y.), Shirley Chisholm (D-N.Y.), John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.), Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.), Don Edwards (D-Calif.), Richard H. Ichord (D-Mo.), Claude Pepper (D-Fla.), and Charles E. Wiggins (R-Calif.), as well as Del. Walter E. Fauntroy of the District.

Footnote: The two FBI agents, Tucker and O'Connor, declined to comment. Tucker's superior, Nick Stames, also refused to comment but promised to investigate any questions of impropriety. Some of the Washington police officers involved with Merritt had no comment, others did not return our calls.

Washington Whirl — There's more than meets the eye to the sudden confession of Jack Ford, the President's son, that he has smoked marijuana. We knew he had experimented with pot and made repeated attempts to question him about it. Instead, he made the announcement on

his own, taking credit for candor.

— Susan Ford, the President's daughter, is the star of her political science class at Washington's Mt. Vernon College. Some of her classmates are grumbling, however, that the course is becoming a seminar on life with father at the White House.

— Richard M. Nixon's confidante, Rabbi Baruch Korff, agrees with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's private assessment of the former President. Kissinger described Nixon as an "odd, artificial and unpleasant man" at a dinner in Ottawa recently. Korff agreed with Kissinger that it was unusual for a man so uncomfortable with people to run for office. Korff explained to us that Nixon became a politician to overcome his shyness.

— Former Vice President Agnew's name may be dragged back into the headlines. The FBI is investigating reports that certain builders with the right political connections were granted government leases. One of Agnew's cronies, the FBI has learned, wangled a questionable \$45 million lease.

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