

Jack Anderson's Washington Merry-go-round

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—With Les Whitten

WASHINGTON—A top space official, who went salmon fishing last year with Boeing big-wigs, tried afterward to award his fishing companions a "wasteful" \$200,000 contract.

The inside story is told in confidential memos from the files of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The memos identify the obliging space official as Jack A. Jones, a quality control chief based in Houston. He was taken fishing by corporate executives during a visit to Boeing's Seattle headquarters.

Another space official, Joseph H. Levine, was included on the fishing trip but played no part in seeking the \$200,000 contract for his hosts.

The incident was turned into stark drama when the complainant, James Maxwell, suddenly died of a heart attack after he brought the scandal to the attention of NASA investigators. Friends say his diligence in pressing the investigation helped bring on the fatal attack.

Maxwell was upset because his name was listed as the NASA engineer who had requested the \$200,000 contract. The money was supposed to be spent for research equipment that he thought was unnecessary. According to a confidential report, he saw "absolutely no need for this purchase request" and considered it "wasteful to spend (the) money."

It was Jones, not Maxwell, who sought the \$200,000 contract for Boeing, the documents charge. He allegedly began pushing for the contract immediately after he returned from the fishing trip with Boeing executives.

The outraged Maxwell complained

that the use of his name "implicates me in a violation of law." He died before NASA completed its investigation, which resulted in cancelling the contract. Jones and Levine got off, however, with a mild reprimand.

Footnote: A NASA spokesman confirmed that Jones and Levine were entertained by Boeing on the fishing trip and acknowledged that Jones has sought a \$200,000 contract for Boeing after his return. Norman Wym, one of the Boeing hosts on the salmon excursion, confirmed that it took place, called the affair "insignificant" and hung up on our reporter, Marc Smolonsky. Jones and Levine did not return our calls.

SURVEILLANCE SUBSIDY: When local policemen or prosecutors need special help to spy on alleged criminals, they turn to Uncle Sam for help. During the past seven years, the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) has responded with unusual generosity.

The agency has distributed a staggering total of \$160.8 million to support 1,929 intelligence-related projects around the country. The figures were provided to Chairwoman Bella Abzug, D-N.Y., whose Government Information Subcommittee is investigating federal snooping.

Approximately \$2.5 million dollars was earmarked directly for the "purchase of electronic surveillance equipment," according to the LEAA report provided to Abzug.

Incredibly, \$1.3 million of the bugging equipment went to states which either prohibited wiretaps or had no specific laws on bugging.

California, for example, outlaws

wiretapping except in unique circumstances. Yet, the federal government gave California authorities \$98,596 for sophisticated surveillance equipment.

The California Department of Justice acquired, among other things, ten "beeper" systems, which allow police to follow vehicles at a distance, 15 voice-activated tape recorders, 36 miniature microphones and headsets, and five "intelligence kits" at \$2,500 apiece.

Other states which prohibited wiretaps at the time they received their LEAA grants — Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan and North Carolina — were supplied with body transmitters, auto tracking devices, and other unspecified "technical surveillance equipment."

Even when money is doled out to states where wiretapping is legal, there is little method to LEAA's mad giveaway. Official bugging is legal, for example, in New Jersey. There state authorities spent \$206,093 in federal funds to buy eavesdropping equipment to handle 808 authorized wiretaps.

But, the report noted, there was "no correlation between the number of wiretap authorizations and the amount of funds expended for electronic surveillance equipment."

Clearly, LEAA exhibits little control over the local spending and use of the equipment. The report points out, in fact, that 25 states simply refused to provide LEAA with an itemized breakdown for

the bugging equipment bought with LEAA money.

PRESIDENTIAL ODDS: Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder, our political oddsmaker, rates President Ford a runaway favorite to win the Republican nomination, with Sen. Hubert Humphrey, D-Minn., his most likely opponent.

Ford's nomination is such a safe bet, in Jimmy's book, that a betting man would have to put up \$3 on the President to win \$1.

Anyone wishing to take a risk on Ronald Reagan, on the other hand, could collect \$7 on a \$2 bet. Third in the GOP ratings, at 8 to 1 odds, is Vice President Nelson Rockefeller.

Humphrey is a 2 to 1 favorite to win the Democratic presidential nomination. In other words, a \$1 bet would be worth \$2 if he is nominated.

He is followed by Sen. Henry Jackson, D-Wash., 4 to 1; Georgia's ex-Gov. Jimmy Carter, 5 to 1; Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., 8 to 1; and Sen. Birch Bayh, D-Ind., 10 to 1.

Alabama's Gov. George Wallace and Texas' Sen. Lloyd Bentsen are far behind, as Jimmy the Greek calculates the odds, with only a 20 to 1 chance of winning the nomination. The other Democratic aspirants are 25 to 1 long shots, except for ex-Sen. Eugene McCarthy, D-Minn., and Sen. George McGovern, D-S.D., whom Jimmy gives only a 50 to 1 chance.