

Top FBI Official Shot; JFK Probe Loses Another Witness

William C. Sullivan, sixty-five, the retired number-three man in the FBI and former chief of all the Bureau's intelligence operations, was killed November 9. He was shot in the back in an apparent hunting accident in the tiny resort town of Sugar Hill, New Hampshire, where he lived for the past several years with his wife. News of his death, for the most part, was relegated to the obituary pages of the nation's newspapers. But the real news was the House Select Committee on Assassinations lost an important upcoming witness.

Sullivan was the fourth of five men to die this year before being called by the Assassinations Committee, which is looking into the murders of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King. George DeMohrenschildt, a conservative Dallas oil engineer and close friend of Lee Harvey Oswald, allegedly blew his brains out last spring in Florida on the very day commit-

tee investigators were knocking on his door. Carlos Prio Socorras, former President of Cuba and a major figure in the Cuban exile community, also allegedly shot himself last spring. Charles Nicoletti, an associate of Sam Giancana, who figured prominently in the American assassination plots against Castro, was murdered; the case is unsolved. And last week another sure witness, Manuel Artime, forty-five, died of liver cancer in Miami. Artime was a political and military leader of the Bay of Pigs invasion, and played key roles in American attempts to destabilize the Cuban government in the mid-Sixties. He was a close friend of E. Howard Hunt.

Sullivan, aside from testifying before the Assassinations Committee, was also scheduled to give key defense testimony in the trial of former New York City FBI chief John J. Kearney. Regarded as perhaps the most important case ever against the FBI, this probe by the Justice Department will determine whether FBI agents are criminally liable for illegal operations such as burglaries and mail and phone surveillance.

Sullivan worked for the FBI for

thirty years and headed the secret Domestic Intelligence Division ("Division 5") from 1961 till his retirement in 1971. This branch handled all espionage, sabotage,



William C. Sullivan in 1965

and subversion cases and was, until 1970, the Bureau's liaison with other intelligence agencies such as the CIA. Highlights in Sullivan's career included his role in drafting the Nixon administration's Huston Plan to harass domestic dissidents, and in 1969, his supervision of the installation of illegal wiretaps on reporters and seventeen National Security Council aides for Henry Kissinger and General Alexander Haig. The taps were intended to plug White House news leaks.

During the Sixties Sullivan directed all of the FBI's "Cointelpro" activities, including the surveillance and harassment of student protesters, antiwar activists and black leaders — especially Martin Luther King. In 1964, Sullivan was instrumental in arranging the anonymous mailing of a tape recording to King's wife that contained parts of bedroom conversations between King and other women, as overheard by hidden microphones. This was only one of dozens of harassment activities the FBI carried out against King, right up to his death. The Assassinations Committee might have had a great deal to ask Sullivan; the committee has been investigating a theory that someone in the FBI knew in advance that King would be shot and therefore, at just the right time and place, ordered away all the agents covering him.

Of further interest to the committee, Sullivan's intelligence divi-

Real Paper 12/3/77

sion was involved in investigating the JFK murder, being responsible for, according to a 1964 statement by Sullivan, "resolving questions of international involvement in a conspiracy." His division also maintained files on Lee Harvey Oswald prior to the assassination.

Sullivan was forced to retire in 1971 over a political dispute with J. Edgar Hoover. The argument involved Sullivan's criticism of Hoover for paying too much attention to the American Communist Party instead of the elements Sullivan feared, such as the New Left and the Black Panthers. Since then Sullivan had been an outspoken critic of Hoover, calling him "a master blackmailer" in a 1973 interview. Testifying before Frank Church's Senate Intelligence Committee, he went so far as to criticize some of the very Cointelpro activities he himself had administered. He also told the Church Committee that in the weeks following Kennedy's death, Hoover released documents intended, Sullivan said, to "blunt the drive for an independent investigation of the assassination."

Sullivan was shot in the early morning darkness by Robert Daniels, twenty-two, the son of a New Hampshire state trooper, who allegedly mistook Sullivan for a deer. Daniels turned himself in immediately afterwards to the local police chief. As authorities reconstructed the shooting from Daniels's account, he saw what he thought was game and drew a bead on it through the scope of his high-powered rifle. Sullivan was wearing a brown hat, a white turtleneck and a red and black hunting jacket. There were no obstructions between the two men, and authorities estimated they were separated by 243 feet. The bullet hit Sullivan in the back, exited through his neck, and killed him instantly. There were no witnesses.

Despite Sullivan's stature and his importance to current inquiries, the official investigation into his death was quite limited. Local police, New Hampshire state police and the FBI itself assumed almost immediately that the shooting was accidental. Consequently, according to law, the task of conducting the investigation was turned over to local officials of the state Fish and

Game Department, an agency inexperienced in dealing with unnatural deaths of political figures.

The Fish and Game Department brought misdemeanor charges against Daniels, and he pled no contest nine days later. The maximum penalty for "shooting a human being mistaken for game" (the official charge) is a \$1000 fine and one year in jail. Sentencing will take place after Judge Peter W. Smith examines recommendations on Daniels from the New Hampshire Probation Department.

After the very brief trial, both Richard Dufour, the Fish and Game officer in charge of the investigation, and John Rolli, the county prosecutor, said they were completely satisfied that this was just a hunting accident. The investigation is now closed.

Shortly after the shooting, the chief investigator from the House Assassinations Committee, Clifford A. Fenton, arrived in Sugar Hill with a subpoena for documents of Sullivan's. He became the subject of some highly distorted news stories. According to various accounts, Fenton was booted out of town after he all but broke into the Sullivan house. The Boston *Herald* headlined its story, "JFK Death Prober Tried to Enter Slain FBI Man's Home." The article stated, "The Committee agent failed because [Sugar Hill Police Chief Gary] Young declared himself caretaker of the Sullivan house and ordered its investigator out." In reality, Chief Young told us, "We met on Sugar Hill's main street [several miles from the Sullivan home] and talked for approximately a half hour. . . . It was just a conversation between two cops. He never entered or even saw the house. He was hoping to locate someone who could help him gain entrance." The chief told him that no executor to the Sullivan estate, which includes his papers, had yet been appointed by the court, and, therefore, the subpoena couldn't be served. Fenton promptly returned to Washington.

Hunting accidents do occur, and retired FBI officials do die. Maybe that's all that happened here. However, in the case the public is certainly entitled to a more complete examination of the killing than has yet occurred.

Jeff Goldberg and Harvy Yazjian