

Mention of Willie Weisberg in Gentry's book on J. E. Hoover

12/7/91

Dear Dave,

Your inclusion of page 534 makes me wonder whether I sent you a copy of what I wrote earlier about him and this.

None of the FBI SAs or DJ or FBI lawyers with whom I dealt ever asked me any questions nor is any connection suggested in disclosed records + have even though a phone intercept of a "arcello phone conversation with his immigration lawyer, Jack Wasserman, refers to a Weisberg who is an author and had FBI records.

Willie was a cousin. I do not recall that when a boy I ever met him. He was the family black/sheep. His parents, Shimon and Bobtsy (Betty) were two of the warmest people I ever knew, Shimon in particular. He was also one of the jolliest. Mostly I saw them at my paternal grandfathers, always for the seders or Passover meals and observances.

If I ever knew I now do not recall the exact relationship of Shimon and my grandfather. They could have been brothers or first cousins. However, the family was so close in those days the relationship may not have been as close.

Shimon had a furniture store on Frankford Ave. in the Frankford section of NE Philadelphia. We used to go there by taking the elevated and I recall its elevated track were in front of his store. I recall a wide concrete pavement and a iron railing between Shimon's and the next place of business.

I do not recall how many children Shimon had but I remember two other sons. One got to be a store manager for a fine department store, Frank & Seder. Another has a business of some kind of medical-equipment supplies.

Willie's life of crime started early. He decided when quite young that because his father was robbed with some regularity and nothing ever happened to those who robbed him his father was really working for the crooks, so that is where the money was.

We left Philadelphia right after Harding was elected. I was in about the fourth grade. I never saw Willie's parents after that. But although his career made the entire family sad, I know of nobody who disowned him for it. I think but am not sure that infrequently I heard about him from some of my first cousins who remained in Phila. but I'm not now sure. If I did it was because they saw his name in the papers. I think I knew that he had somehow gotten close to the top in the Phila. mafia. (They may have seen him at parties.)

On all sides of all the many families I know of no other Weisberg or anyone married to a Weisberg who ever ran afoul of the law except my cousin Charles whose mother was my grandfather's sister. Charles was brilliant but apparently could not make a living within the law. He became a successful forger, of checks and manuscripts. He was known in Phila's bohemia as "the baron." I do not know why. He was convicted of forging a Hopkinson revolutionary War manuscript. He forged as I recall three copies of it and they were so good he got caught only because two of those who purchased it from him compared notes.

He had bought scrap paper when the old Phila. custom's house cleaned up. He found

many valuable ancient records in it but because of his reputation fell under suspicion when he was innocent.

He jumped bail after arrest and before trial, going south. He looked me up and he spent that night with us. Rather a very short night. I was working on the Morning News then and as we frequently did, some of us went to the restaurant of two Greek brothers one of whom was a good friend and treated me like a father. Of the reporters with us that night I now remember only one who had left the News and had written a successful novel that I think made a movie, "Hex Woman," Robbie (pronounced like "Raubie" so maybe it was) Walters.

Charles made his way to Louisiana and became a great success on radio as some kind of fortune teller, another scam. When Huey Long was assassinated the police picked up and questioned every newcomer they could locate. That is how Charles was caught. He was sent first to the Pennsylvania jail in which Hofia served his time. He actually instituted job training and quite successfully, especially considering that he began ignorant of metal-working, what he really taught. I heard from him from Lewisburg, the name comes back, but after he was transferred to Atlanta, where he died, - have no recollection of hearing from him although I should have.

Charles and Willie were first cousins, I think.

The last time I saw Charles where he had a regular job was when he was in the Phila. branch of the WPA Writers' Project. In the same office with him, on the second floor of a dock on the ~~Delaware~~ Delaware river, was Paul Comly French, the reporter whose career did not survive breaking one of the most sensational stories of that era. He was trusted by former Marines General Smedley Butler. When a New York bonding-house executive propositioned Butler to lead a march on Washington on a white horse, yes, a plot to overthrow the FDR government, Butler involved French and thus he was in on the scheme as it developed. Butler was director of public safety. French was a reporter on Liberal Democrat New Dealer J. David Stern's Philadelphia Record, a lively paper I got <sup>late night</sup> every morning when I left the News office. After French broke the story the McCormack-Dickstein committee, later headed by Martin Dies, held public hearings on the plot. I do not know why French lost his job but he did soon after he and Butler testified. By an odd coincidence, I think that a later New Jersey member of the Dies Committee, J. Parnell Thomas (nee Faeney and also soon to be convicted criminal), had come from that same binding house.

I have a clear recollection of Charles discussing rocketry long before there was any talk of it, the early 1930s. He was one of the most friendly <sup>with me</sup> and entertaining of men, with a fine baritone voice and a good pianist. Warm in a very European way. Because he was so handsome and so excellent a student he was actually used on posters to sell World War I <sup>(Colley)</sup> war bonds. He earned scholarships and gave them away. I remember also that when the NC4 was the first plane to fly the Atlantic he made me a cardboard model of it about 2' wide. He and Willie were among society's tragedies, each for a different reason. H



Dear Dave,

12/7/91

I've finished reading the pages of Gentry's "J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets" that you sent. By and large I think it is quite good and I saw no error of any consequence.

I also learned nothing of any significance from it, but that does not in any way detract from its value as a book.

I have the impression that he worked from no or virtually no original materials. The one I recall being cited in the notes is no citation at all. Not any DJ or FBI file number, for example, that 11/25/63 Katzenback to Moyers memo, which is simply cited as almost word for word I here refer to it.

Nothing wrong with good use of secondary sources, either, but that is his major source for these pages at least.

He cites my work, for example, to HSWA, which used it as its own work.

In some instances I got the impression that he used third-hand sources or sources more remote because of what I know he could have used in the document itself and didn't use.

He reflects no knowledge of how, for example, the 1/22 and 1/27/74 executive session transcripts came to light. He does not mention this when it would have been useful to him and he makes a factual error which is not important in his note on the 22d one, saying it is not listed in the Commission's indexes. I did not know it had any but it is in the Commission's working papers and the full transcript, in facsimile, with the appropriate working papers is in WW IV. He says what is not correct, that the transcript had been typed up and suppressed. So I think he did not use any of my work or he'd have known better.

Too many items of importance are not sourced at all. He seems to have them straight as best I recall but they should have had their sources indicated. In this sense the scholarship is lousy. But on the other hand, he was not writing what he intended for scholars.

He does not have the major FBI report, CD1, straight in his own mind so I am sure he did no original work on that. His first mention of it is as a "five-page" report. He later makes a general reference to five volumes. But he does not give an inkling of its content and the importance of that content.

He is skewed enough on the mailing of the doctored and manufactured tape of tape excerpts and the accompanying letter to King so I am sure this also is second-hand. He says an agent mailed it. It was the late Lish Whitson, who flew from Washington to Tampa to mail it. The Office of Professional Responsibility refers to him as a former or retired agent. His name was disclosed to me as I recall. Maybe to Cesar.

Best,

*Harold*