

5/2/91

Dear Jim,

Thanks for the Times story on Hoffa's daughter's efforts to get the FBI's records on his disappearance. If you know her or her lawyer I'd make a few suggestions based on what this story reports and what appears to be a not antagonistic attitude of the judge.

She could puncture some of the representations reportedly made in court and have a little fun at the same time. Like on the exposure of informants, Marion Williams' affidavit. And a few others.

Seems to me from the story that only HQ records are involved. I'd not be a bit surprised if Detroit, the Office of Origin, had an index made already, in anticipation of the FBI's having to know what it expected to have to or did provide to others.

It, WFO and HQ at the least should have ticklers.

In any event, it is past time for someone with a case that has a reasonably good prospect of getting attention using a collection of the boilerplate of the past to show a judge how they've lied and imposed upon the trusting courts.

A had an off event Friday night, at a restaurant, when I felt strange and got up to talk around and hit and found walking quite difficult. When I went to the cashier to pay the check I was shaking violently, could not manage to use my wallet, had lost all color, and then, after sitting a short while, started coming out of it. No lack of consciousness, blood pressure normal for me. The family doctor ordered a lab profile and it disclosed no probably cause but it did give him some news. I have anemia, perhaps a reduced kidney function and over the next several weeks we'll learn whether there is some internal blood seepage.

After a month he finally got the results of my wearing the 24-hour heart monitor and I think it provides the answer to my increased tiredness: my heart does not increase the beat when that is necessary and does not slow down when I sleep. It is almost always 56-60. At present no indication of any safe correction but I'll inquire more after the tests are completed and learn if supplemental iron alone will do that job.

The tiredness has come to where if I use the riding mower for a half-hour I have to stop and rest and if I do this three times, which allows me to do all that is safe with the riding mower, that is too much.

Lardner sent me some clippings from the Dallas papers of when he was there. I have the impression from the comments Stone made on his movie after he got my letter that he thought it wise to make some radical changes in the script and what he is using from Garrison's book. He did not use his Rashomon comparison until some time after he got my letter.

Thanks and best,

Harold



Bill Stover for The New York Times

Judge Barbara Ann Hoffa Crancer, daughter of James R. Hoffa, has filed a Freedom of Information Act suit against the Justice Department to obtain the Federal Bureau of Investigation's files on her father.

Hoffa's Daughter Sues U.S. For Files on Disappearance

By ISABEL WILKERSON

Special to The New York Times

ST. LOUIS — Nearly 16 years after James R. Hoffa disappeared from a restaurant parking lot outside Detroit in one of the great unsolved mysteries of the century, his daughter has grown tired of theories and is looking for answers.

She thinks they may lie in the 69 volumes of documents and memorandums amassed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation since her father's presumed murder, and she has sued the Justice Department to have them opened.

The lawsuit seeks access to the files under the Freedom of Information Act. Mr. Hoffa's daughter, Barbara Ann Hoffa Crancer, who has gained prominence as an administrative law judge in St. Louis, is serving as co-counsel in a case that may test the F.B.I.'s right to secrecy and a daughter's right to know.

Judge Crancer, who shares her father's dark eyes and Roman profile, argues that the bureau has had long enough to solve the case. "You can sit forever clipping newspaper articles and waiting for deathbed confessions," she said.

A Four-Year Effort

The Justice Department says that the investigation is continuing, and that

making the files public would jeopardize the case and endanger informers.

"The files will lead to an ultimate conclusion, and at some point the ultimate conviction of someone," said Henry J. Fredericks, an assistant United States attorney in St. Louis.

Judge Crancer has been trying to gain access to the files since she read a newspaper article four years ago. It identified a Michigan woman who said she watched Mr. Hoffa being taken away from the restaurant on the afternoon of July 30, 1975.

She was growing weary of the bizarre theories about her father's death, those that had him buried in the end

Does anyone have a clue to what happened in 1975?

zone of Giants Stadium in the New Jersey Meadowlands or ground up and

dumped in a Florida swamp, or alive and well in Argentina.

The conventional hypothesis, espoused in numerous books and said to be held by Federal investigators, is that Mr. Hoffa was killed by associates of the Genovese crime family over his efforts to regain control of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters after his release from prison. His body is thought to have been ground up and buried in a Mafia-controlled dump in Jersey City under the Pulaski Skyway.

After exhausting administrative channels, Judge Crancer sued the Justice Department in early 1989. But the case has been stalled for months by the Government's refusal to comply with a court order to produce an index of the files, along with reasons the documents should be kept secret.

Government officials argue that even an index of the files would tip off suspects about the investigation and frighten away informers.

"The mere giving of a name, the mere giving of a place, a date, a time could be detrimental," Mr. Fredericks said. "A good criminologist could piece this together like some giant jigsaw puzzle without your telling him anything else."

Another problem is the sheer bulk of files. At last count, there were 69 volumes, each including about 240 pages of memorandums and confidential interviews for a total of about 16,000 pages. In court documents, the bureau says it would take an analyst 20 months to compile the index.

In late March, Judge Stephen Limbaugh of Federal District Court gave the Government 90 days to compile an index of the first 17 volumes and present it to a magistrate for examination. The Justice Department would not say whether the indexing had begun.

Experts on the Freedom of Information Act say that because of the nature of the case and the inherent secrecy of law-enforcement agencies the odds are against Judge Crancer's succeeding.

"In cases like these, the agency prefers to withhold as much as it can," said Gary M. Stern, legislative counsel with the American Civil Liberties Union in Washington. "And the courts tend to be fairly deferential and sympathetic if the agency makes a reasonable claim."

No Exemptions for Kin

There is no exemption for immediate relatives. "The fact that she's his daughter doesn't figure into the calculus," said Theresa Amato, who is director of the Freedom of Information Clearinghouse and a lawyer for the Public Citizen Litigation Group, a not-for-profit group in Washington.

Judge Crancer questions how serious the investigation has been. Her lawyer, Richard Greenberg, said: "They have not said they have targets or leads or that anyone is even assigned to the case. The only proof that there is an ongoing investigation is that they file papers in the investigative file."

But the Justice Department says no one needs to be reminded that this is no ordinary case.

Mr. Hoffa rose from dock worker to the head of the teamsters, once the nation's largest union. Along the way, he made alliances with the Mafia, locked horns with Robert F. Kennedy and served nearly five years in Federal prison for jury tampering and fraud.

After his sentence was commuted by President Richard M. Nixon, Mr. Hoffa was released on the condition that he not seek the union presidency. He tried anyway, and incurred the wrath of organized-crime leaders who preferred his more pliant successor Frank Fitzsimmons.

"Hoffa was unpredictable," said Arthur Sloane, a professor of industrial relations at the University of Delaware, who is author of the biography, "Hoffa," to be published in June by M.I.T. Press. "He could say no to the mob as well as say yes."

But Judge Crancer, who is 53 years old, remembers a different Jimmy Hoffa, a "loving father, full of life."

Growing up in Detroit with her younger brother, James, she had what she calls "a normal, happy childhood" of Girl Scout meetings and going to picket lines with her father and learning to live with the frequent visits to the Hoffa house of reputed underworld figures. She remembers her father saying, "When you're in labor, you deal with the people you have to deal with."

Barbara Ann Hoffa was Phi Beta Kappa and a member of the literary club at Albion College in Michigan. She was a teacher before marrying and moving to St. Louis in the early 1960's. She entered law school at Washington University here at age 42.

A Republican, she is an administrative law judge, hearing worker compensation cases. Her brother is a Detroit lawyer fighting to win the right to run for the presidency of the union their father headed.

In her courtroom, the truck drivers and laborers seeking damages and back pay for their injuries often get a kick out of it when they learn who she is. On her desk she keeps a black-and-white picture of her father, beaming and proud, with her standing on the podium next to him at the 1961 teamsters' convention in Miami.

A lifetime of hearing jokes and innuendo has girded her for whatever the files hold. "It could be very painful," she said. But she hopes for "a sense of coming to an ending."