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J. Edgar vs. E. Julius: A Balkans battle begins

By Louie Barney

Louie Barney has been interested in law enforcement and crime lore since his teenage years. As a practicing attorney for 20 years, he has served as city prosecutor and legal advisor to the Pittsburg, Kan. Police Department since 1980. He has had experience as a prosecutor and an assistant Crawford County attorney during two administrations. He has been an avid fan and collector of Dick Tracy material for much of his life.

In the development of "Horizons of Crime: Confidential," he will present people and events that are less known to mainstream readers. In other words, to reveal a more confidential and secretive side of crime lore, and to explore myths and try to

HORIZONS of
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gain insight into events in the history of criminal activity both well-known, but not fully-explored, -- or those little known at all.

Credit for his first article in Horizons must be given to the assistance of Gene DeGruson, special collections librarian at Pittsburg State University, and to Ralph Beard, retired Pittsburg Police Chief.

Barney welcomes the suggestions and assistance of others, and invites anyone with ideas or materials to write him, care of Horizons.

The man's face grew taut and angry as his bulldog jaw stiffened and his teeth began to scrape together. Sitting in his throne room on the corner of the sixth floor overlooking 10th and Constitution in the U.S. Capitol, the powerful director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was growing livid as he turned each page of the small blue-covered booklet.

He has just finished mini-chapter seven entitled, "Gestapo in Knee-pants," and was storming into the last two pages called, "The American Police State," his outer office door crept open to allow entry to his handsome younger friend an assistant director, Clyde Tolson.

J. Edgar Hoover looked up from his reading pleased to see his aide, who was true to his usual and precise timing. Growling out his words with machine-gun exactness, he made his pronouncement on this latest production of E. Haldeman-Julius Publications in Girard, Kan.

"This piece of trash is riddled with lies

and mistakes of fact," Hoover said. "I can't imagine what has possessed this fellow, Clifton Bennett, to write such an irresponsible pamphlet.

"And furthermore, I cannot understand why Haldeman-Julius would provide a soapbox for such a foul sentimentalist . . . er . . . rabble-rouser, such as this."

Hoover was trying to avoid the list of words and phrases provided as "A guide to Hooverisms" on page nine of Big Blue Book B-730, "The FBI — The Basis of an American Police State," and subtitled, "The Alarming Methods of J. Edgar Hoover." Bennett had listed "foul sentimentalist" as the director's favorite. The glossary had been assembled from excerpts of speeches and writings of two decades, which the author rated on par with Nick Carter, the pulp magazine detective. Hoover bristled at the thought of lending even the slightest credence to Clifton Bennett's accusations.

See J. Edgar, Page 2

J. Edgar -

"I thought we had settled matters in '42 with that small-town firebrand," Hoover said.

Clyde Tolson looked up with a quizzical expression at the boss's words.

"You know, that Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, the pompous little 'sob-sister' who thinks he's some sort of aristocrat with that hyphen in his last name," Hoover said.

Now Tolson knew.

"When our boys visited him about that seditious tripe of Mr. 'Know-it-all,' Joseph McCabe, that he had been printing," Hoover said. "We set him on the straight and narrow then. He pulled all those books he called 'The Black International' that were stirring up the Catholics.

"Imagine, linking the Pope with fascism; so much fiddle-faddle.

"Clyde, get Brantley on the phone," Hoover roared. His fist slammed down on the blue clover lying closed on his gigantic polished mahogany-colored desk that perfectly matched the shining paneling throughout the inner sanctum.

Moments later, Dwight Brantley, special agent in charge of the Kansas City field office was speaking directly with the Man himself.

"See here, Brantley," Hoover spoke into the mouthpiece of the telephone. "I want you to handle this personally. Don't trust this to the resident agents out of Joplin. You go to Haldeman-Julius in

person.

"I want this nipped in the bud. Every last one of those blue barn-burners need to be pulled from circulation."

The voice of S/A/C Brantley was reverent and contrite, as if he had been the offending party.

"Yes, sir," Brantley said, "but what if some of them are already shipped out?"

Hoover responded very briskly. "We can get the help of the post office, you know," the Director said. "We can stop them in their tracks. Don't worry about that. Just do the job I'm sending you to do.

"Don't mess it up," Hoover continued. "Do you understand what you are supposed to do? Do you understand the importance of snuffing out this menace, Mr. Brantley?"

A quiet, but direct, "Yes, sir," came back over the line to the Director.

Hoover cradled the telephone receiver without further comment. Brantley thought

nothing of it, and quickly rose to prepare for his travels to southeast Kansas.

Some surface similarities existed between John Edgar Hoover and Emanuel Haldeman-Julius. Both were shorter than average and each had gained in their girth as the years had passed. And both men chose to substitute an initial for their first names.

Haldeman-Julius did so because he didn't like his first name. Hoover's reason for using an initial was because he had been confused with a bad-check artist years before. He had retained the habit even after John Hoover had been locked up.

But the thinking of the pair

couldn't be further apart. Hoover was straight-arrow Americanism as he defined it. Haldeman-Julius welcomed the free-thinkers of the world to the intellectual womb of his minor publishing empire.

On this bright summer day on the courthouse square in Girard, Kan., with the citizenry preparing for the festivities anticipated for the Fourth of July, 1948, no one could be expecting the thunderstorm on its way down from Kansas City.

Least of all, E. Haldeman-Julius, who was busy at the offices of the Girard Press worrying as always about meeting the expenses of putting out his newspapers and

his blue books. Haldeman-Julius was on the phone seeking newsprint in inexpensive quantity so he might anticipate a degree of profit on his various works. He was a number one proponent of promoting free through, but the prospect of making money in the process did definitely appeal to him. Creative capitalism was not a problem for Haldeman-Julius in the midst of his "appeal to reason."

The cheery mood of the day seemed to change abruptly as the door opened to the imposing figure of Dwight Brantley's entry on the premises. As he was announced to the newspaper boss, Haldeman-Julius' mouth tightened on the stogie he had been nurturing through the morning.

A cold staleness filled his throat as he realized the cigar had gone cold. He fumbled for a match as his visitor was ushered into his office. He was suddenly overwhelmed with a memory of a night six years earlier when well dressed men had invaded his home, with proper search warrant in hand, to scour his castle, his

very private places for evidence of a threat to the nation. Even his personal library had not been sacred--men in search of his very thoughts.

"What can I do for you?" Haldeman-Julius relit the stogie as he spoke. The impressive credentials held in front of his eyes by Agent Brantley quickly answered his query.

"Mr. Hoover had asked me to talk to you about a certain pamphlet you have published," Brantley said. "He feels that it gives a very misleading impression of the FBI."

"What pamphlet are you referring to, sir?" The publisher was going to make the G-man do his work.

Brantley pulled a notebook from his pocket and recited book and verse the title and the publication number.

"So, the Director has a problem with Mr. Bennett's book?" Haldeman-Julius said. "Did he give you a list of his complaints? Or does he just dislike anything that he might consider criticism of his sacred Bureau?" The eyes didn't flinch even though his cigar smoke was curling back over his face.

Haldeman-Julius intended to hold his ground this time. This was not the dark of night, there was not a war looming in Europe and he was not rattled and shaken awake as before.

Bartley smiled pleasantly, letting the harsh words roll over him as he quietly, but firmly replied, "May I sit down while we talk?" He was no amateur at this game.

Haldeman-Julius nodded as the FBI man seated himself. "Given time, we would be happy to detail the errors in Mr. Bennett's writings, however it is the concern of Mr. Hoover, and indeed of the Bureau that much damage could be done in the meantime if this pamphlet were to be generally distributed. I'm sure that a man of your experience in this business can understand our

concern."

Dwight Bartley waited for a reply.

Haldeman-Julius could sense a new approach being used on him. More subtle, less threatening than in those war years when the cloak of "national security" excused much. Perhaps, a different tactic was called for on his part. Perhaps the edge needed to be dulled a bit in the confrontation.

"Mr. Brantley, what say I take another look at Bennett's book

and see what I think. Maybe there are a few errors that need to be reviewed. In the meantime, most of the books are still here. Publishing is sometimes a slow process."

"It may have May, 1948 on the cover, but the actual print date may be much later. That gives us some time to consider this matter, don't you think?"

He waited for the G-man's reaction.

Brantley paused as if in reflection of what had passed between the two. Then he rose abruptly, extended his right hand and spoke with an air of assurance.

"I believe Mr. Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation can live with those terms."

As a firm handshake was exchanged, Brantley continued, "I suggest you frame a letter to the Director indicating your intentions in this matter as soon as you have had an opportunity to review the situation. That should set the record straight, don't you think?"

The G-man turned and left. He didn't wait for an answer to his words.

Months passed. Events occurred occupying the energies of the FBI and its director as plots against the country were being investigated in the mood of the Cold War days following World War II.

The Communists and their "fellow travelers" in this country were being sought out by the

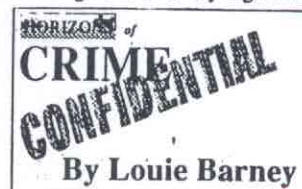
vigilance of the Bureau under the watchful eyes of its dominating boss. Something had to come to his attention that would side-track J. Edgar Hoover from other appointed rounds in this first week of February, 1949. Hoover and Tolsen were once again closeted in the confines of the big headquarters office on the sixth floor of the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.

"Clyde, it has come to my attention that our free-thinking friend in the plains is still up to his old nonsense," Hoover said. "One of our patriotic associates out there has been so kind as to let me know that the Bennett Blue Book is still on the advertisement list of the Haldeman-Julius Publishing Company. Even after he had assured us that he was pulling these from distribution."

Tolsen, by experience, waited for further instructions without comment.

"I want you to compose a very strong letter to Mr. E. Haldeman-Julius advising him that his

breach of promise will not be tolerated," Hoover said. "I want this to go out over my signature



after my approval. Do you understand?"

Clyde Tolsen rose and bowed slightly to indicate acknowledgement of his orders. "Do you want to sign personally?" Tolsen asked.

Without looking up, Hoover replied, "Just have the machine sign the letter after I read it. No need to be that personal with this man."

Tolsen understood and removed himself quietly from the room to do his work. Hoover had resolved what he needed to do.

Later, as he read the letter

composed by his trusted confidante, the Director looked up, catching Tolsen by surprise. "Make arrangements for me to deliver the commencement address at that little teacher's college down there. You know the one."

"I think it's called Kansas State Teacher's College," Tolsen dutifully replied.

"That's the ticket," Hoover said. "Gives me a reason for being there. Can't let this man think he's so important I have to handle

him myself. Even if that seems the case. Arrange a meeting with Haldeman-Julius as a side trip."

"Yes, sir," Tolsen knew not to argue—even if he thought they were stomping on a flea with a sledge-hammer.

"Oh, by the way," Hoover continued, "see if the ponies will be running at Hot Springs on that weekend. We might as well take advantage of our time down there."

"Sure thing boss," Tolsen smile in anticipation. "Shall I make the regular arrangements with the hotel?"

Tolsen didn't really need to wait for a reply from Hoover.

TO BE CONTINUED