

Loudmouths Fill Secret Service Files

By Jack Anderson

The Secret Service, apparently, has been protecting presidential aspirants from the wrong people.

A fanatic with a handgun had no trouble infiltrating within a few feet of George Wallace at a political rally. But such unlikely assassins as comedians Groucho Marx and Tony Randall would have come under Secret Service scrutiny.

The Alabama governor was gunned down at a Laurel, Md., rally, and Arthur Herman Bremer, a pistol in his hand, was wrestled to the ground. He is being held on \$200,000 bond.

Yet Bremer's name appears nowhere in the Secret Service's computerized file of 180,000 suspicious individuals.

Those who wind up in the file aren't likely to shoot off anything more lethal than their mouths. Most came to the Secret Service's attention because of some intemperate remark. Many are prominent in politics, the arts or the entertainment world.

Of the 180,000 suspects, only about 300 are considered dangerous enough to warrant regular surveillance, and many of

these have already been hustled off to prisons or asylums.

Those who make threatening remarks about office-holders blow off steam, relieve the pressure and, therefore, usually don't resort to violence. More likely, a loner, unknown and obsessed, would attempt a political assassination.

This is the view of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence after studying 18 assassination attempts against prominent office-holders. The commission found that "it is difficult to prevent a determined assassin from killing a political figure, particularly when a mentally disturbed person acts alone to avenge some real or imagined wrong."

The presidential contenders don't have to worry about being shot by the likes of Groucho Marx or Tony Randall. But the Secret Service took their intemperate cracks seriously and considered bringing action against them.

The incorrigible Groucho was quoted by a West Coast underground newspaper as saying that "the only hope this country has is Nixon's assassination."

Groucho immediately dis-

everything," he said, "because I never tell the truth. I lie about everything I do or say —about men, women or any other sex."

The Secret Service, however, wasn't buying Groucho's denials. Confidential memos zipped between Secret Service headquarters in Washington and its West Coast offices.

In a memo dated June 9, 1971, Washington Special Agent In Charge Ronald C. Towns noted: "On this date, I discussed this matter with SAIC Powis, Los Angeles, concerning the need for further investigation to determine if an offense did occur."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Elgin Edward turned thumbs down on prosecution. But Groucho was assigned file number CO 2 39700 09205 and programmed into the Secret Service computer. He is now officially recognized as a threat to the President of the United States.

Tony Randall also wound up in the data bank because he made "oral statements" the Secret Service didn't like. A memo dated March 25, 1968, explains that the Philadelphia field office "had received a telephone call from Congress-

man James Byrne (D-Pa.) concerning Tony Randall."

"Congressman Byrne stated that Randall has opened an office in Philadelphia on March 21, 1968, for Senator McCarthy. In Randall's remarks to newspapermen on March 21, 1968, he called the President the 'murderous bastard in the White House' and stated that 'the SOB lied to us.'"

Byrne wanted to know whether Randall's "derogatory language" violated the law. A subsequent memo notes that "Congressman Byrne was advised that there did not appear to be a federal violation involved."

Nevertheless, actor Tony Randall, file number CO2 39700 00174, is still carried in the Secret Service's computerized file as a potential assassin.

Rather than waste time with harmless loudmouths, the Secret Service would be more effective, in the opinion of experts, if it raised obstacles in the way of potential assassins. Such measures have been suggested as spot searches of suspicious loiterers and the use of bulletproof plexiglass barriers.

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