

6 p.m. news:

[17 DEC]

...Last Sunday two federal marshals seized the briefcase of an attorney who was representing the Gainesville Eight after the attorney had already passed the metal detectors and was aboard the plane awaiting takeoff. The Gainesville Eight is a group of Vietnam Veterans Against the War who are accused by the federal government of conspiring to disrupt the Republican National Convention in Miami last August. We spoke with Michael Oliver, a representative of the VVAW in Gainesville:

Oliver: (voice) On Sunday at 5 O'clock p.m. EST, Larry Turner and his wife -- Larry is an attorney for the Gainesville Eight and lives in Gainesville, Fla. -- He was sitting in the plane, he had passed through the ~~metal detector~~ metal detector. He was in the first class section of Eastern Airlines Flight flight to Gainesville, Fla. He had a large briefcase with all his files concerning the Gainesville case, the Gainesville conspiracy case in his possession. He asked the air line stewardess if it would be okay for him to carry it between his legs. She said no, she would strap it to an empty seat. And she said don't worry about it until we start taxiing and I'll take care of it. Approximately three or four minutes later two people -- federal agents -- who were running the metal detector on the outside of the plane came on the plane, walked directly to Larry, and asked for the briefcase, saying that they would have to put it in the hold. Larry explained to them that the stewardess was going to take care of it. They told him that was not going to be good enough, there were not going to be any extra seats on the plane and they would have to take it. Without any other thoughts Larry gave them the briefcase.

When the plane was in flight, Larry got up and looked around, and there extra seats, a number of extra seats, and he also saw at least three individuals in first class, three men who had briefcases of the approximate same size he had, either between their legs, on the floor or under the seat, etc. And it was then that he finally realized that they wanted his briefcase. When they arrived in Gainesville, he presented the ~~baggage check~~ baggage check that the two federal agents gave him, to the Eastern Airlines representative in Gainesville, and the representative told him that while all the rest of his baggage arrived, his briefcase was misplaced in flight. I believe that was his quote. And, we could do absolutely nothing about it, and Larry did not get his briefcase back until 2:15 p.m. EST Monday afternoon. And the air line has not explained the misplacement or loss of the brief(case) or anything like that. The fact is that the briefcase, with all of his files pertaining to the Gainesville conspiracy case was in the hands of federal authorities for 21 hours.

Announcer: Was his briefcase, or the contents of it still intact, or were they disturbed in any way that he could tell?

Oliver: He really couldn't tell. It's a large briefcase, and there were numerous files in it, and being an attorney, he doesn't keep files in exact order, and so he could not tell. He --there was nothing missing. He knows that. There was nothing missing; insofar as things being disturbed, he knows that.....

[Oliver continued that the Eight's attorneys are preparing two motions, one for an investigation to determine whether the briefcase incident was deliberate, and to dismiss all charges]

VWaw/ Larry Turner 12/29/72 One should not chuckle about such a thing, but it reminds me, this transcript I'm glad to have from KPFA 12/21/72, of what Jim Mesar once told me, that one of the larger voids in legal education today is that the lawyer emerges from all education without the slightest education in or understanding of investigations. Bud, who was a law prof and ran a Senate investigating committee, is a first-rate example. Alas, so is Turner. As soon as magnetometers started to appear, as soon as I got to an airport and checked in I asked for the marshals at the right gate so they could go over my attache case, which always held metal and always a tape recorder and recorded tapes. I always did this in advance, saying I had two reasons: their peace of mind before a press of passengers and my concern that my tapes not be erased. (I never could remember that one airport after another told me that the magnetometers do not erase!) I never parted with my attache case and there was no reason for Turner to. There is something wrong or missing. Bags say that you can carry on what will fit under the seat. So, after learning this, I got a larger attache case, as large as will fit. Generally they let me carry the t'write on and put it under another seat (more). Now you can carry on luggage that will hang, saving time at the end of the flight. When I learned this, I got such a flight bag. They now come with in-plane hangers attached. So, I can now and last may did travel with enough clothes to go two weeks without laundry, three suits and slacks-jacket sets, and t'writer and attache case and never check luggage in. Really speeds things up. I had clean clothes left at end trip. This was a very amateur business by Turner, which is not criticism, but says he lacks political-police experience. He should have known better. Besides, hostesses regularly check extra things, like a photographer's bag, which can go under seat and aren't be trusted to baggage smashers. Matt Herron's was so heavy he dragged in inside airports, but it never went into baggage. I've met him at airports and know. However, this happened to my checked luggage several times that I can recall, once leaving Minneapolis and once leaving Dallas, the first costing me the VOA tape recorder and a brand new t'writer, both wrecked with the most thorough professionalism. In both cases the airlines people were frank and told me that they could not believe what they'd been told. I probably told you about both. If I didn't, will. It is only on taking off and landing that brief cases, etc., must be under seats. recent years I've been typing in flight, too. 12/29/72