

Mr. David Ignatius  
Editor, Outlook  
Washington Post  
1150 15 St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20071

11/27/89

Today's obit on Allen W. Saylor carries me back again to those days you described, I think correctly, as "remarkable."

It describes him as an investigator for an unidentified Senate committee. It was, in fact, the Civil Liberties Committee, and it was a subcommittee of Education and Labor, then one committee. It did investigate antilabor practises, as the obit states, but the title on the hearings and reports is "Violation of Free Speech and the Rights of Labor." Allen was one of the last of us left.

This brief glimpse to you will also serve as a fragment of a substitute for the oral histories the president of local Hood College wanted but for which the proffs have never found time.

His second wife is identified merely as "the former Frances Wheeler." She was the daughter of Senator Bert Wheeler. At the time they met her father's then-famous railroad investigating committee was winding up its work. She volunteered to work without pay on civil liberties. That is how they met. It is also how I met my wife. She volunteered to work free at nights, after she finished her own work. (Earlier she'd worked for the Gerald Nye munitions investigation, some of the staff of which moved over to Wheeler's investigation, and it was to help those old friends that she did her volunteering.) We had a number of principled people who did volunteer work. Our initial appropriation was \$50,000 and we never got much more. Thus I was borrowed from Agriculture where, ultimately, my job was administrative assistant to the director of the Farm Security Adm. I had an office, secretary and phone I never saw! I remained on loan.

That long-forgotten committee had an enormous impact on the nation's economy in a number of ways, one of which was teaching the big corporations that they were hurting themselves with such anti-labor practises as labor spies. I was investigating labor spies in Cleveland and the rubber industry and phony civic associations that augmented anti-labor practises when I was called back to write the brief for our first hearing before I was old enough to vote. Had to be 21 then and I was past that birthday just before that election day. The Post's cartoonist then was named Elderman, and he was good, and he did several fine cartoons on our work.

Another volunteer I remember is the late Charles Clift. He was fortunate in having had a father who helped Woolworth get started. He lived with me until he could find a place of his own that he liked. Another who did is the late Charles Flato, later a gifted medical writer. When bock beer season came Clift and I drove to the old Christian Heurich brewery then near where the Kennedy Center now is and we got 10 cases, just about all we had in that small kitchen in the black ghetto in which my apartment was, at 313 H, NW. We were not home that much, such were our working hours, so that was a plentiful supply. Never hear of bock any more. (If you don't know, it was when they cleaned the vats in the spring.) Clift was later an FCC investigator and something higher in rank and then on the Washington staff of The Reporter magazine.

The late Mike W. Wilson also was an unpaid volunteer. His father and mother were both wealthy. His mother was a mothrop, of the store, and his father a manufacturer. His father gave the government the land on which NIH now is, for medical research. And was listed in Elizabeth Dilling's "hooky and vicious "Red Network," an early extremist attempt at blacklisting.

In those days it was perfectly safe for my wife to come home alone at night, as often she did because of the hours I worked. When a report had to come out I didn't leave the office until it was at the GPO. Several times for five days, other times for less.

Whatever it is now, in those days life on the Hill could be pretty informal. Came a time I needed a proofreader and I was able to borrow one from the GPO. He was Jeff Burnett, from Independence, Mo., and he'd known Harry Truman. One day when he was coming back from lunch he bumped into FDR's first vice president, the reactionary John France Garner, of Texas. They got to talking and Garner invited Jeff into his office for a drink. That got to be so regular an event that Jeff became a liability, not an assistant, and when he left Garner so drunk I had to send him to the Turkish baths in the basement of the Albee Building before he phoned his wife I had to send him back to GPO.

That was after the repeal of the prohibition amendment but Garner still sent his chauffeur, uniformed and in his official car, to West Virginia twice a week to bring back gallons of "white mule," bootleg corn whiskey. He kept them in the open, in a mahogany book shelf. When it got too many rings that showed on those shelves, I inherited that bookcase when I had the office next to Senator Rush Holt's that I mentioned to you when we spoke, where the Nazi propagandist (at least) George Sylvester Viereck used to hang out and write what got into the Congressional Record.

Despite our long hours -no overtime -some of us still found time to moonlight. One effort I remember was countering Republican opposition to the Social Security Act. My job was to research the anti-labor records of the corporations and their executives most active in the opposition. This info was used in the Senate debates, as I now recall.

This reminds me of something else I'll not go into because it will sound like horn-tooting but I'll tell you a story that might amuse you. Nye's name reminded me of it. I'd known him because he had a safe in his office he let us use and I took the stuff there and retrieved it. This story is another aspect of "the other side" I mentioned to you re: the British activities then.

When I was in New York I visited with Newspaper guild people I knew and often went to the press club to drink with them. One night I was introduced to ~~man~~ man named Wellington Roe. He was doing publicity for a new movie, "Confessions of a Nazi Spy." It starred Edward G. Robinson. Could I help him with a promotion in Washington?

Nye then had an administrative assistant named "Spike" Mauvius. He also had a bill pending to restrict uses of uniforms. The Nazi Bund had its own uniform, so I could see a connection for Nye. While Spike and I bent our elbows at the Carroll Arms he came to see it and so did Nye. Spike and I worked out the use of the I think <sup>(phon)</sup> ~~about~~ auditorium, Constitution Ave. main entrance, for a private, advance showing, by invitation only. All sorts of high officials were invited and attended. The hall was full.

Later Nye became an isolationist, maybe, I'm not sure, an America Firster, and he got an investigation going into how, allegedly, the movie industry was getting us into the war. Came a time when he had the Warners on the stand. Now it also happened that I'd known their D.C. flack, Frank La Falce. (He had a brother, Rick.) His office was on the top floor of what then was known as the Earle, later Warner Building. Warner had produced the movie that Nye had sponsored and now was getting major attention in castigating it as war propaganda. And, of course, neither Roe nor La Falce had indicated that they'd had any help. and neither remembered. Well, I lost track of Roe and can't say he was even alive. But Frank flubbed that one. I phoned him and he got real excited. And the next day, at that hearing, when what I encapsulate above came out at the hearing, those hearings came to an abrupt end.

Frances Saylor died, by the way, in the hospital for which Duke Wilson's ~~of~~ father had been responsible, NIH.

Not too long after the Nye movie investigation was aborted a similar but more vicious approach was taken by the Dies committee with The Hollywood Ten. I won't take your time for that unless you are interested in what did not make the papers. In a way I was involved in that - though the guy who turned out to be the stoolpigeon.

In so many ways it was a truly remarkable time in our history.

*Harold Weisberg*

Sincerely,  
Harold Weisberg