

Dear Jim,

12/13/78

The only reason I'm sending you this clipping is because one of the villains in it is my cousin. I'm not sure how close. I can tell you far.

Willie Weisberg's father, Shimon (Simon) was one of the warmest, happiest, friendliest most loving of people. He had a furniture store on Frankford Avenue in Northeast Philadelphia under the elevated tracks. He was ~~either~~ the cousin of my grandfather, as I recall. It may have been a closer relationship. I could not have been much over 10 years old the last time I saw him. I don't know if I ever saw Willie. If I did it was by accident. The family was very close. There was no such thing as a distant relationship. But Willie was never present.

The story in the family is that he was a good boy, a loving and loved son, and he could not take what happened to his father. Every week he was robbed and beaten up and the cops could never do anything. Or so it seemed.

Willie finally decided that if his father could work so hard, be so good, never hurt anyone and have someone come along and with no work get the benefit of it and if the cops could do nothing, that was the way he'd live, not as his father did.

Or at least this is what I remember of the few stories I heard when I was very young.

I don't remember the names of the others in his family. I know there was a brother who didn't see it that way. He rose to be an executive of a large merchandising company, department stores, which he managed earlier. I don't remember him either.

Fact is I don't know if any of them is still alive.

I'd heard that Willie rose to close to the top in Philadelphia crime.

This column seems to indicate it.

But the hate he exudes did not come from his father.

Have to remember to ask Howard if he recalls any stories. There must have been many in the Philadelphia papers.

The Sunday

XB

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Mafia Talked of Bomb in Bobby

Washington — "Life itself contains loose ends," sighed Chairrnan Louis Stokes (D-Ohio) as the House Select Committee on Assassinations — mercifully, I thought — came to the end of its hearings on the death of John F. Kennedy.

After all the trauma and drama, after listening to Fidel Castro, Marina Oswald, John Connally, Richard Helms and others, the committee came back to square one: That Lee Harvey Oswald was probably the lone gunman in the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination.

Yet, on the last day of its hearings, the committee left one tantalizing loose end dangling. It could not discount the theory that the Mafia — which had been hired to eliminate Castro — had not also been involved in a plot to kill the former President.

"It (the Mafia) had the motive, opportunity and means," said Chief Counsel Robert Blakey. "The possibility cannot be dismissed."

Sandy Grady ... An Opinion

Okay, the conspiracy freaks can debate the Mafia-Kennedy theory for another 15 years. What was intriguing, if you had a strong stomach, was hearing transcripts of Mafia phone conversations wiretapped by the FBI in the 1960s. It's like turning over a damp rock.

THE FBI TAPES show the Mafia under intense heat and fiercely hating the Kennedys — although the mob clearly resented Robert Kennedy, then U.S. attorney general, more than the President. They had a name for RFK: "The Mad Dog."

As a typical example, here is a February 1962 conversation between Angelo Bruno, alleged Mafia chief of Philadelphia, and Willie Weisburg, who was reputedly a center-city

henchman of Bruno's.

"See what Kennedy done," raves Weisburg. "With Kennedy, a guy should take a knife and stab and kill the (obscurity) where he is now. I hope I get a week's notice. I'll kill. Right in the (obscurity) White House. Somebody's got to get rid of this (obscurity)."

Bruno is philosophical. He tells a long Italian anecdote, the point of which is, "One king is bad as another," Bruno says if "something happens" to Kennedy, the next guy will be just as relentless.

ON TAPE AFTER TAPE, though, other mob figures speak of being personally haunted by the Kennedys. The bitter profanity is right out of "The Godfather."

"Bobby Kennedy won't stop until he puts us all in jail, all over the country," says Michelino Clemente, of the New York Cosa Nostra. There is talk of putting a bomb in Kennedy's golf bag.

Kennedy's Golf Bag

"I'd like to hit that Kennedy in the kisser with a bomb," says Eddie McGrath, another New York racketeer, on May 2, 1962. "If I could just hit Bobby Kennedy, I'd gladly go to the penitentiary the rest of my life. Is that too much to ask?"

The mob rages at the FBI ("they knew our business better than we do, they know all the families"). They rage at Frank Sinatra ("he's just a procurer of women for the Kennedys"). Repeatedly, there are threats of violence: "They should kill the whole (Kennedy) family, the mother and father too," says Stefano Magaddino.

Then, abruptly, the mood changes on the tapes. When John Kennedy is assassinated, the mob's relief is vengeful.

"Good! Too bad his brother Bobby wasn't in that car too," says one gang figure talking to Angelo Bruno.

"THEY KILLED the good one," says Russell Buffalino in northern Pennsylvania.

"They should have got the other little guy."

With chilling professionalism, Sam Giancanio says of Oswald: "He was a marksman who knew how to shoot."

With the death of Jack and departure of Bobby you can hear the mob's spirits rise. One mobster says Lyndon Johnson "is gonna be good for America." The heat was off. Exults one Mafia don: "The FBI's gonna be like it was five years ago. We'll open up the whole town."

So far there's no hard evidence — despite Jack Ruby's shady connections — that organized crime was involved in a Kennedy death plot. But something else rankles, reading these dialogs of hate. At the same time, the CIA was "hiring" the Mafia to do its dirty work in Cuba.

It is still incredible that the U.S. government was mixed up with these vermin.

(Sandy Grady's opinion column also appears on Tuesday and Thursday.)