

~~Parker - Hunt - Whitewash~~

The Ervin' Committee's TV spectacular of Thursday, May 24, 1973, when it took testimony from three sensational witnesses, is a perfect model of how not to conduct an investigation, how not to interrogate or, conversely, how to interrogate while running no risk of learning anything), while wowwing them on the tube. Bernard Barker, Hunt's "Macho" of the Day of Pigs, The Watergate and an assortment of other crimes, was sandwiched in between Boston lawyer Gerald Alch, who had been McCord's lawyer and was there to defame and hurt his former client as much as possible - the committee imposed no restrictions on this - and Baldwin, the spook who came in from the cold to confess all.

Barker, thus, was given scant attention. In fact, questions were cut off so Baldwin could be called in time for him to be questioned and still catch a plane.

It was right to call Parker early in the hearings, to lay a basis for questioning those above ~~it~~ him. It was wrong to ~~may~~ play a game of questioning. It was a cruel game because all those hatched to the tube were fascinated by this off-beat, self-important, serious man so strange to most. He was colorful enough, authoritarian enough and odd enough for the spectacle to hide the fact that his testimony was more than without real value. ~~It~~ amounted to a whitewashing.

All those unsolved bag jobs with all the indications his gang was involved? Not a single question about one. The Ellsberg break-in, of which he was operational chief? No questions. Not even the date. The Hoover counter-demonstration? From the date to the 10 he lined up for it, no questions. Their names are not in the testimony.

The lead he volunteered that were not followed are legion. It is almost impossible, even for a spook, to talk without dropping anything. ~~Barker~~ Barker dropped leads. He repeatedly bought airline tickets for his gang on his American Express card. ~~No~~ No sibpena to American Express, no correlation between travel and jobs. The only detective training required not to miss that clue, that prime investigative lead, is an occasional viewing of a Perry Mason rerun.

One of the other inevitable results is that there is also needless infefiniteness where he came up with might have been valuable information. One of these cases may indicate that whether or not he was then officially working as Nixon's spook in residence, Hunt

was plying his old trade months before any official record of it, months before any news story suggests it.

The dates and duration of Hunt's direct White House employment, which was only one of the essential facts in any investigation, had not concerned this committee. The FBI's first Letterhead Memorandum (LHM in FBI talk), carefully undated, with typical FBI precision, was completed. However, the covering letter with which a copy was sent to Haldeman at the White House, is dated June 19, 1973. This is the first working day after the arrests. Because the White House was one of the subjects of the FBI's no-holds-barred investigation, it is only natural that Nixon's appointee Gray send Nixon a copy of the evidence compiled against the White House and Nixon.

It contains these words, that, while much less specific than they could have been are specific enough: "...the FBI conducted a Special Inquiry investigation in July, 1971, for a White House staff position [for Hunt]." Actually, the FBI had taken its Hunt investigation from its files two days earlier and it knew the omitted details. In any event, this says that the Hunt-White House relationship and presumeably the Hunt White House spooking began "in July, 1971."

Barker had given that human-interest testimony about his old Bay of Pigs chief ("the highest Government representative in the Bay of Pigs", with Barker his second-in-command).

"At the time Mr. Hunt returned, 10 years to the day of the Bay of Pigs invasion, I returned home and found a note that says, "If you are the ^{same} Barker I once knew, contact me." They and their wives, with Martinez, had then joined in the celebration of a fiasco.

All the members of the committee and the staff were willing to leave it like this, schmalz to some, rancid schmalz to others. But not Nixon's man Gurney, who had a remarkable capacity for blundering into what he least wanted. He led Barker into a recounting of this reunion and still was not willing to drop it. Investigation is his favorite Senate work, he said and apparently believed.

"Well, not, when did he contact you next?" he asked Barker, who replied at what for him was some length:

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"We kept in contact after that without anything special being brought up. I quite frankly waited until Mr. Hunt would tell me if there was any other reason than social reason - in the hierarchy, remember that he was my boss - and I expected him in his good time to tell me if there was anything else - and eventually he did." Gurney still couldn't drop the hot iron, so when asked Barker placed the time at about "two weeks before the Ellsberg surreptitious entry."

One of the unavoidable meanings of what Gurney led Barker to testify too is that he "expected" an assignment from Hunt, his "boss" in the "hierarchy", "and eventually, "in his good time," Hunt ~~he~~ did" give Barker the anticipated assignment.

If it is not certain, it is possible that Barker here testified that Hunt was into this business, in the ~~practised~~ mind of his experienced second-in-command who knew him so well, on April 17, 1971, when Hunt looked Barker up in Miami. This was almost three months before the FBI began its "Special Inquiry investigation" of Hunt "for a White House staff position."

What is certain is that this was Barker's opinion, an opinion he would never have offered if he had had a copy of this undated FBI LHM Gray was so anxious to get to ~~the White House~~ Nixon through Haldeman. Few people had the opportunity to know Hunt better than his old second-in-command, Barker. Barker's reading is that "I expected him in his good time to tell me, if there was anything else - and eventually he did."

Barker, then, says that Hunt was doing ~~in April~~ or at least preparing to do in April what the official records say he did not start until July.

In turn, this means that the Colson story, that he approached Hunt on the Pentagon Papers case when it was hot months later, was not the beginning of the Hunt connection.

If this were the case, certainly this committee had the obligation to establish it. If it were not the case, the committee was no less obligated to leave a straight record, one not ~~not~~ reflecting unfairly on Nixon, Hunt or any others.

The third possibility, one of which I had informed the committee before it began to organize its hearings, the possibility of the indirect White House employment of Hunt, was not addressed, either.

This is one way to conduct an investigation, but it is not the real "full court press", that sporadic adaptation typically Nixonian replacing "full field investigation."