

# The Fortunes of Infamy

By Henry Allen and Rudy Maxa

If you can't be good, be famous. If you can't be famous, be infamous. For one thing, a certain malign American wisdom has it that it's better to be somebody than nobody. For another, infamy has been more than its own reward for a number of Washington figures . . . infamy being a major asset, sometimes, in a town where choosing your enemies can be more important than choosing your friends. It's the old: "If Nixon/Sam Ervin/Ralph Nader/Ron Ziegler hates him that much, he can't be all wrong."

Ernest Fitzgerald won infamy inside the Air Force for blowing the whistle on spending, but he became a hero to the liberal establishment, much as Roy Cohn won infamy in the liberal establishment for blowing a very shrill whistle on Commies, and became a hero to the conservative establishment.

So, succeeding in spite of one's infamy isn't such a tough trick in Washington, where there are usually two to ten sides to every question. What's harder, but much more American somehow, is succeeding because of one's infamy, in the style of the badmen and gangsters—Billy the Kid or Bonnie and Clyde—who would have been

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nobodies if they hadn't been notorious.

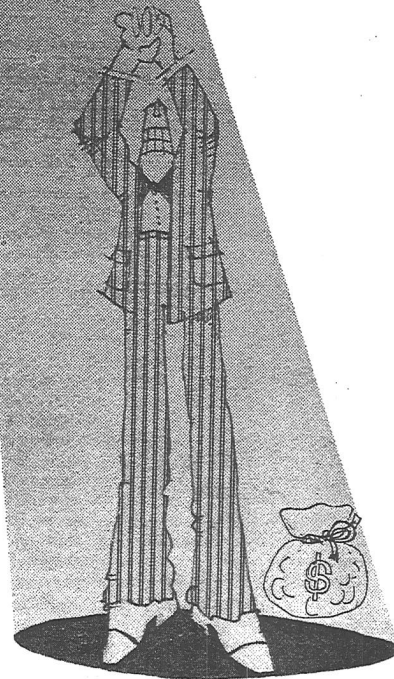
Being "nobody," or "anybody" is obviously a sin in a country that can celebrate talk-show denizens such as Monte Rock III, who is famous for being . . . famous. In "On the Waterfront," your heart really gets rent by the plea of Terry, played by Marlon Brando, that if it hadn't been for his crooked brother, played by Rod Steiger, he could have won his big fight in Madison Square Garden: "I coulda been somebody."

Not that we should lose sight of the fact that infamy, like money, doesn't automatically bring happiness.

But would you rather be a miserable somebody or a miserable nobody?

The following gallery has had brushes with infamy, justly or unjustly, but behind that big cloud was a silver lining of one kind or another. It may have been small, but it was there. "The seeds of crime bear bitter fruit," the Shadow used to say. And then the Shadow used to treat us to a big laugh.

Nobody's about to claim that E. Howard Hunt is glad that Watergate happened, but even Hunt would have to admit, that it has had certain





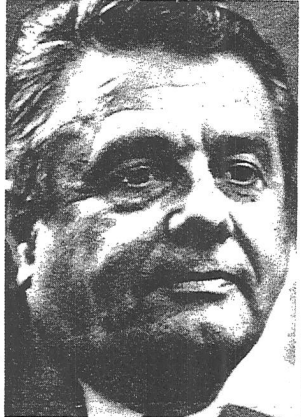
Arthur H. Bremer



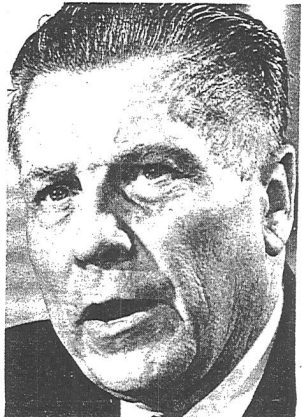
Robert N. Winter-Berger



Roy Cohn



Otto Otepka



James Hoffa

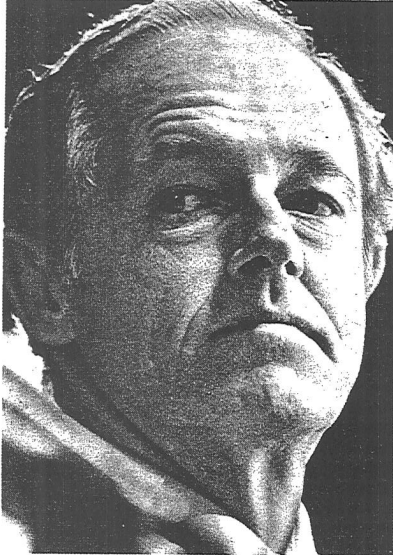
benefits.

Hunt was one of the Watergate break-in conspirators, an ex-CIA spook, ex-White House consultant and spy novelist who wouldn't have gotten out of jail till the fall of 1975 if it hadn't been for a complicated appeal ruling that sprang him at the beginning of the year.

Associates recall that despite the fact that he'd written 44 spy novels under pen names such as Robert Dietrich, David St. John, Gordon Davis and John Baxter, and despite his 21 years as a clandestine agent, he still felt impelled to tell everyone about it, still had to make sure you knew he'd been a spy.

The Watergate hearings made sure everyone knew that, as he told the committee: "I was an intelligence officer—a spy—for the government of the United States." One point for Hunt. Despite the ludicrous image of him in the "ill-fitting red wig," that got so much attention during the baring of campaign dirty tricks, Hunt's fame was sufficiently appealing that 19 of his books, including 17 spy novels long gone from the little wire carousels in drugstores and airports, have been re-published—and under his own name, yet. Ah, fame.

His *Berlin Ending*, just published, has sold out of two editions, a total of 18,000 copies, and there are more still to come



E. Howard Hunt

out, according to his agent, whose name is Donald MacCampbell, he wants everybody to know, especially after a previous Washington Post article misspelled his name, he claims. "You go kick that reporter in the tail for me," he said. Ah, fame.

Arthur Bremer had this plan, see, about how he was going to rise from the status of being a 21-year-old ex-busboy with a fondness for pornography to being, yes, famous.

So Bremer shot and paralyzed Gov. George Wallace of Alabama in Laurel in May, 1972, after stalking both him and President Nixon from speech to speech until he got a shot at one or the other . . . it didn't matter . . . politics were irrelevant . . . just fame. The smirking, sunglassesed loner kept a diary, which he hoped to sell for large amounts of money, then appear on television talk shows, according to court testimony. His passion for fame was such that he once tore a newspaper into shreds in a rage of frustration at having missed a chance for a shot at President Nixon. (It turned out the chance had never existed, but that was the sort of loathsome irony that has constituted his life.)

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Anyhow, it's unlikely that the diary of an ex-busboy would have been worth much if it hadn't been for that day in Laurel. After that day in Laurel, the diary became worth "more than \$7,500 and less than \$20,000," according to Larry Freundlich, editor-in-chief of Harper's Magazine Press, which published *An Assassin's Diary*. It has sold 7,500 copies in hard cover, and Pocket Books has printed 150,000 copies of it in paperback. Bremer gets a percentage of the price of every book sold.

"Bremer was a very shrewd bargainer," Freundlich recalls. "He doubled our initial offer and added \$1,000. And he asked for control of the foreign rights."

**F**ormer Teamsters President James Hoffa may be better off than he ever was before his jail days. After all, for those who always thought he was guilty of *something*, Hoffa has now paid his penance with a jail term for jury tampering. For those who thought he was being unjustly punished, well, as he gears up to try to take back the reins of his old union, he is ever more of a martyr.

A well-to-do martyr, however. Hoffa tucked a \$1.7 million pension in his pocket when he left the Teamsters, his wife and son are still on the union payroll for various reasons (reportedly to the tune of \$100,000 yearly), and Hoffa himself is said to be putting together Florida land deals from his luxurious Miami apartment.

His notoriety has not diminished any more than his wallet. He has been plugging prison reform on talk shows and stumping for a Washington ex-con organization called the National Association for Justice. Two Washington speakers' bureaus estimate if Hoffa wanted to get serious about making the lecture circuit he could command \$2,000 per speech, especially if

he talked about the man who orchestrated his prison stay, former Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

**R**oy Cohn says if he had not come to Washington for a few years he would have avoided a half-dozen grand jury appearances later in life, three criminal trials (that ended in acquittal) and other legal hoopla that formed what he calls a "nine year reign of terror" at the hands of former Attorney General Robert Kennedy and New York U.S. Attorney Hans Morgenthau.

He might also have avoided wealth and notoriety had he yawned through life as a New York Democratic pol instead of playing it fast and loose by coming to Washington as counsel to Senator Joseph McCarthy's Communist-hunting committee.

Two books and one "reign of terror" later, Cohn at age 46 sits atop a successful law practice, makes speeches but refuses fees, and teaches law school. Money, he says, is not all that important to him so he'd prefer not to correct the income figures others attribute to him: a worth of a couple of million, yearly paycheck of \$250,000. His two books, *McCarthy* and *Fool for Client*, sold well enough in hardback to be bought by a paperback house and Cohn says he received income in the middle five-figures for them.

"I attribute my success basically to the enmity of The Washington Post and New York Times," Cohn laughs. Newspaper publicity and the exposure he gained on afternoon television during his McCarthy days earned him clients, some of whom were "far too prominent for me to have known otherwise," Cohn says.

Those clients included Lewis Rosenstiel, head of the Shenley Industries, for whom Cohn handles both corporate and matrimonial affairs; the large and powerful nationwide distributor of magazines

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and books, Union News Co.;  
the late, great restaurant of  
New York, Sherman Billings-  
ley's Stork Club.

Friends threw a dinner for  
Roy Cohn the other day in the  
grand ballroom of the Bilt-  
more to celebrate his 25th  
year of practicing law. Speak-  
ers ranged from Abe Beame  
to William Buckley. The af-  
fair was a "fantastic success,"  
chuckles the man some peo-  
ple loved to hate, because The  
New York Times blasted the  
party editorially the next day.

Otto Otepka might  
have served his years  
and retired with a  
government pension like so  
many other no-name bureau-  
crats before him if a massive  
stroke of bad luck hadn't in-  
tervened.

In 1963, Otepka, then chief  
security officer at the State  
Department, was accused of  
leaking secret documents to a  
congressional committee.  
Rather than slinking into ob-  
scurity, Otepka claimed the  
charges were politically moti-  
vated and thereby began a  
struggle to regain his position  
that became a cause celebre  
among conservatives around  
the country.

Otepka was never success-  
fully fired but instead spent  
the six years he was fighting  
his dismissal doing Foggy Bot-  
tom make-work. The issue  
was made moot when Presi-  
dent Nixon appointed Otepka  
to one of the six seats on the  
Subversive Activities Control  
Board in 1969. Otepka dou-  
bled his salary (to \$36,000)  
and, perhaps, his fame before  
he retired in 1972.

"I like to feel I persevered  
because of the absolute truth  
that confronted my adversar-  
ies who were using a psycho-  
logical game against me,"  
Otepka says today. Now, after  
36 years of government serv-  
ice, he does gardening and

carpentry around his Silver  
Spring house and receives two  
or three lecture requests a  
month to speak on internal se-  
curity. He says he rarely re-  
ceives a speaking fee.

His six years of troubles left  
him with no regrets, Otepka  
says, preferring to think that  
he will go down in history as  
one man "that same dirty sys-  
tem that produced Water-  
gate" tried—but failed—to do  
in.

*The Washington Post/Potomac/January 27, 1974*

When the nation  
hears about the  
exploits of a  
Washington political fixer,  
the story is usually in the con-  
text of that person's recent re-  
tirement. But one man who  
earned a living arranging fa-  
vors in the capital city for  
clients wrote a kiss-and-tell  
book and apparently earned  
some big bucks while many  
around him either faced court  
action or at least emerged  
with some egg on their ties.

Robert N. Winter-Berger  
first surfaced during the 1969  
federal influence-peddling in-  
vestigation of House Speaker  
John W. McCormack's lobbyist  
pal, the late Nathan Voloshen  
(who pleaded guilty) and Mc-  
Cormack's assistant, Martin  
Seig (convicted of perjury). It  
looked like Winter-Berger,  
who had sometimes sought fa-  
vors through McCormack's of-  
fice as well as House Minority  
Leader Gerald Ford's office,  
might go down the tube, too.

But no. The flamboyant  
publishing house of Lyle  
Stuart printed and heavily  
promoted Winter-Berger's  
first-person tour through the  
sewers of political Washing-  
ton, a book called *The Wash-  
ington Pay-Off*. Lyle Stuart is  
reluctant to release figures  
but sales were apparently not  
peanuts: Dell bought the pa-  
perback rights for \$150,000  
and cranked up the press to  
run 650,000 copies.

Just when sales began to  
lag, Winter-Berger appeared  
before the congressional com-  
mittee considering Gerald  
Ford's nomination as Vice  
President to testify about  
some of the uncomplimentary  
things he said regarding Ford  
in his book.

No one was particularly im-  
pressed with Winter-Berger's  
charges, but the bespectacled  
lobbyist had his name and  
book title spread across the  
nation's front pages. Like  
P.T. Barnum, who said he  
didn't care what anyone said  
about him as long as they  
spelled his name correctly, a  
sales executive at Dell reports  
Winter-Berger's Hill testi-  
mony was just what the doc-  
tor ordered for book sales.

Meanwhile, the now-fa-  
mous Winter-Berger may  
have burned out his useful-  
ness as a lobbyist, but he is re-  
portedly working on "other  
projects" that could include a  
book. Which proves that  
nothing succeeds like a good  
Washington failure. ■