

Who's Tommy the Traveler?

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GENEVA, N.Y. (AP) —

About two years ago, a handsome, dark-eyed young man began circulating among students at college across New York State. Somewhere along the way he was tagged "Tommy the Traveler," and the name stuck.

When he arrived on a campus, he sought out the radical students, talked with them of "the revolution," repeated their anti-establishment slogans and spoke of escalating protests. Later, some students would say he really had not been convincing.

"He was a fool politically," said Carlos Baker, a former regional coordinator for the Students for a Democratic Society SDS in Rochester. "He never really seemed to develop his politics, and he never could discuss and analyze. He would take on the line that was best for his purposes at the moment."

TOMMY THE TRAVELER kept drifting and talking until in the predawn hours of June 5 students at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva saw him leading police on a campus drug raid and they knew he was a police undercover agent.

They reacted violently, surrounding police cars and forcing officers to free five students they had picked up.

Tommy the Traveler became a source of public controversy overnight. College officials called him an agent-provocateur. He became an issue in a political campaign, a defendant in a multimillion dollar law suit and a central character in a special state investigation.

THAT INVESTIGATION, ordered two weeks ago by Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller, begins today in nearby Canandaigua with the convening of a special grand jury at an extraordinary term of the State Supreme Court.

The governor's brief announcement ordered the inquiry "into events related to the serious campus disorder" at Hobart and its associated college for women, William Smith. Rockefeller said the unusual step was taken at the request of the district attorney of the country, the mayor of Geneva and the chairman of the board of trustees at the college.

In the wake of the June 5 disorders, President Beverly D. Causey Jr. of Hobart had blamed Tommy the Traveler for creating "an atmosphere of tension" that led to the student-police confrontation, and a candidate for state attorney general, Democrat Adam Walinsky, had claimed Tommy incited campus violence by offering students bombs, guns and lessons in guerrilla tactics.

TOMMY REFUSES to talk about his work, except to tell reporters: "There's a thousands guys in the field like me. Harass them. This is a small-town thing."

Who and what is Tommy the Traveler?

Ontario County Sheriff Ray O. Morrow, his present employer, says he knows but won't say. Morrow told reporters, however, that Thomas "Tommy the Traveler" Tongyai, worked for him as a narcotics undercover agent for about 2½ months beginning in mid-March, and had been highly recommended for the job.

From other sources, it was learned that Tommy was born Momluang Singkata Thomas Tongyai N' Ayudhya on Jan. 14, 1944, in Anniston, Ala. His father, a native of Bangkok, Thailand, was serving in the Army at the time.

THE TITLE N'AYUDHYA designates royalty, but seven or eight generations removed. Tongyai would use this distant royal connection many times in contacts with student revolutionaries, saying he wanted to lead a revolution of his own people.

After World War II, Tongyai's family moved to Warrington, Pa., north of Philadelphia, where he graduated high school in 1962. After an incomplete stint at Delaware Valley College of Science and Agriculture in Doylestown, Pa., marriage, a draft deferment and various jobs, Tongyai moved to upstate New York.

He became a salesman for a veterinarian drug firm and traveled across New York State from August 1967 until May 1969. His earliest appearances at colleges were reported during this period.

MEMBERS OF THE Students for a Democratic Society at Cornell University said he attended summer meetings held by the organization before the 1968-69 school year.

During the 68-69 school year, he showed up at Keuka College where his wife, Margaret Lynn, was a special student for an academic quarter.

Students said he was a regular at SDS meetings in Rochester. He also is known to have traveled with a group of young

persons operating an underground newsreel based in Buffalo, and once showed a film on the movement to students at Auburn Community College, also in this Finger Lakes region.

"The only politics Tom ever spoke of were violence and bloody revolutions; he felt that anything less would take too much time," said Melanie L. Wallace, who was a student at Keuka during the 68-69 school year and claimed to be close to Tommy.

IN MAY 1969, Tongyai changed employers but continued to sell veterinarian drugs, and his campus activities continued. Then four months later he lost his job for reasons shrouded in secrecy.

Sheriff Morrow hired Tongyai two months later, during March of this year.

"For approximately two months he's worked for us strictly as an undercover man and what we call a 'narco' narcotics officer," Morrow said after the aborted drug raid at Hobart.

Students at the school say Tommy's work must have involved more than narcotics. Although the college officials claim there was no hard drug problem, students say heroin and cocaine were available and that Tongyai, if he had been interested mainly in drugs, would have known about shipments.

THE JUNE 5 DRUG raid netted police "some hash pipes, some pills and marijuana," Sheriff Morrow said after the raid.

The students stressed that Tommy appeared mainly interested in politics—the left-wing student movement and "the revolution."

Neal Himelein, a sophomore at Hobart, said he knew Tommy from "secret meetings"—meetings at which Himelein said a small group of students planned to increase pressure on Hobart to end Air Force Reserve officer training on the campus.

Himelein said he and four others got together Sunday night, April 26, two days after demonstrations against ROTC had ended when Dr. Causey announced that the military training program would be abolished as of July 1971.

"I REMEMBERED HIM (Tommy the Traveler) bringing up breaking windows and bringing ROTC files outside and burning them or throwing them into the lake, or something," Himelein said.

The use of explosives also was brought up at that meeting, Himelein said. He quoted Tommy as asking: "Which do you want to use—black powder or firebombs?" and adding: "never mind, we'll test them both."

Tommy reportedly told those involved he would not be able to attend another meeting, set for Thursday, April 30, because he was going to New Haven, Conn.

During the early hours of Friday, May 1, three firebombs were hurled through a basement window into the office of Lt. Col. Homer Merfeld, head of the Air Force training program at Hobart, police said. Within hours two persons were arrested.

ON MAY 6, THERE allegedly was a showing match between Rafael Martinez, now a graduate of Hobart, and Tommy. Martinez filed a complaint with police on that date, charging "Tommy the Traveler," the only name he knew him by, with harrassment.

Martinez charged that Tommy threatened him and attempted to attack him, apparently because Martinez was pointing Tommy out as a police agent. Police did not serve the warrant, claiming later they did not know the identity of "Tommy the Traveler."

Tommy was next seen on the Hobart campus shortly after



TOMMY TONYAI

midnight June 5, leading the small force of city and county police on the drug raid that resulted in the student-police confrontation.

Many of Hobart's 1,100 students swarmed from dormitory buildings, surrounded and jumped on top of two police vehicles, snapped radio antennas from the cars, and broke mirrors from their mounts. Tommy was in one of the cars.

POLICE SAID ANY charges which would have stemmed

from the raid did not warrant the risk of violent confrontation, so they gave in to student demands, and freed the five students arrested.

Reaction in the city and county to the handling of the raid and the agreement was immediate.

Subsequently four students and a faculty member were arrested and charged with obstructing governmental administration and with riot, second degree, both misdemeanors.

But demands for an investigation continued, and the governor's order soon followed.

THREE OF THE STUDENTS charged with riot filed a law suit in federal court against the district attorney, the county sheriff, the city of Geneva police chief, Thomas "Tommy the Traveler" Tonyai and six county and city police officers. Charging that false information had been used in obtaining warrants against them, they asked for damages of \$3.75 million.

The special term of State Supreme Court convening today may last many months.

Meanwhile, Tommy the Traveler Tonyai takes it easy at his Geneva home, just off the Hobart campus, which is nearly deserted for the summer.