

An Ex-Spy's Secret Is Told

Washington

Whittaker Chambers, the one-time Communist agent whose testimony sent Alger Hiss to jail in 1950, voluntarily admitted to the FBI in 1949 that he had been a homosexual.

Chambers told his story in detail to federal agents in February, 1949, because he feared that Hiss' defense lawyers would uncover his homosexual activity and use it to discredit him when he testified against Hiss in a perjury trial that year.

"I tell it now only because, in this case, I stand for truth," Chambers wrote in a statement he handed to FBI agents in a sealed envelope. "Having testified mercilessly against others, it has become my function to testify mercilessly against myself."

His secret surfaced this week among papers made public as a result of a suit under the Freedom of Information Act. It is among a small batch of documents that the FBI had insisted were exempt and did not have to be made public.

The information was released in response to a suit filed by Allen Weinstein, who is writing a book on the Hiss case.

Deputy Attorney General Harold R. Tyler ruled that the papers were relevant to the Hiss case and ordered them released.

Chambers, who died in 1961, was a Communist spy in the 1930s, funnelling documents stolen in Washington to a Soviet agent in New York City. In 1948, he identified Hiss, a former State Department official, as one source of the documents.

Hiss was convicted of perjury for saying that he never knew Chambers and had never passed documents to him. He has ever since maintained he was innocent.

Chambers, who was to be the



WHITTAKER CHAMBERS
He revealed his homosexuality

government's key witness against Hiss, was being interviewed almost daily in New York by FBI agents in February, 1949, when he decided to reveal his homosexual encounters. The homosexual activity ceased, he said, in 1938 when he broke with the Communist party.

After one lengthy interview on February 15, 1949, Chambers handed agents an envelope containing a dramatically worded admission of his homosexual life, which even his wife knew nothing about.

"The Hiss forces, of course, will seek to prove that my weakness entered into my relations with Alger Hiss and possibly others," Chambers wrote. "This is completely untrue. At no time, did I have such relations, or even the thought of such relations with Hiss or with anybody else in the Communist party of connected with Communist work of any kind. I kept my secret as jealously from my associates in the C.P. as I did from everyone else."

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