

Jack Anderson's Washington Merry-go-round—With Les Whitten

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WASHINGTON — The sex exploits of the late John F. Kennedy should have been no concern of the FBI. Yet the old bachelor boss of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, kept an avid watch on Kennedy's bedroom.

The Kennedy file was probably the hottest in Hoover's private archives. Only his most trusted associates ever got a peek at it. They have verified its existence, although they disagree over what it contained.

They concur that the FBI stumbled into Kennedy's sex life in late 1941 when he was a handsome, young naval lieutenant on duty in Charleston, S.C. The G-men were investigating a woman suspected of German espionage. Their hidden microphones picked up a true romance between the lady and young Kennedy.

But it wasn't until Kennedy became a power in Washington that the late FBI chief took a personal interest in his boudoir conquests. As a bachelor member of Congress, Kennedy played the field. He had so many girls on the string that he let his secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, arrange the more casual dates. Kennedy often teamed up with a congressional colleague, George Smathers, on these nighttime romps. Smathers recalls that Kennedy, after making the beautiful Jacqueline, told her during a moment of truth about the woman in his past.

This later caused a strain on their marriage, Smathers told us, when some of the women turned up in his future. Jacqueline learned that they had been seen in his campaign entourage and, later, at the White House itself.

During the 1960 presidential campaign, a photographer caught Kennedy at a romantic rendezvous in the fashionable Georgetown section of Washington. The Democratic candidate fired off a letter that the pictures might be used against him in the campaign.

On the October 13 afternoon of a crucial campaign debate with Richard Nixon, Kennedy was so tense that a friend arranged an interlude with a girl to relax him. That candidate took off in the middle of a strategy session, explaining that he wanted to deliver some copies to the city shelter. His friend, waiting downstairs in an automobile, drove him to New York City's Plaza Hotel for the night.

After Kennedy moved into the White House, some of his girlfriends followed him. They would drop by for milk swims and other sports when Jacqueline was away.

Time magazine reports that Jackie once discovered a woman's underwear in the White House bedroom. She is supposed to have told the President, quite calmly: "Would you please stop around and see who these belong to? They're not my size."

Those privy to Hoover's hush-hush files are in dispute over how much of this prurient gossip made its way into the Kennedy dossier. One source said only the early incidents were recorded. Another claimed that Hoover kept a running account of Kennedy's sexual adventures.

We spoke to two women whose names reportedly appeared in the Kennedy folder. Both said they were aware of FBI snooping into their romantic activities. One of them, a former airline hostess, told us that FBI agents questioned her friends persistently about her sexual involvement with the Kennedys.

We were also told about tapes and toll slips of telephone calls between Robert Kennedy and the late sex goddess Marilyn Monroe. A former FBI official said the actress first had an affair with President Kennedy but was later "passed on" to his brother. "It was weird," said the ex-official.

We have no reason to believe that the FBI tapped the Kennedy phones or bugged their bedrooms. More likely, the Marilyn Monroe eavesdropping, if it occurred, was done by the late celebrated private detective Bernard Spindel.

At one time, Spindel was retained by the late Teamster's boss Jimmy Hoffa to investigate the Kennedy's. Spindel's widow told us that he had spoken of

taped telephone conversations between Marilyn Monroe and Robert Kennedy. Mrs. Spindel stressed, however, that she has never seen nor heard the alleged tapes.

John F. Kennedy, like other past Presidents, will be subjected to historical scrutiny. This will include, inevitably, an analysis of his sexual behavior and any influence it may have had on his presidency.

The comment of one Kennedy intimate may be worth quoting: "Jack regarded sex as good, clean fun. He never interfered with his work. He had a remarkable capacity to shut the bedroom door behind him."

But more to the point is the late FBI director's practice of keeping blackmail files on prominent politicians. Certainly Kennedy knew that Hoover had a file on him; intimates heard Kennedy speak of it.

Did the existence of this file influence Kennedy's decisions? His first official act after he was sworn in as President was to phone J. Edgar Hoover and ask him to stay at head of the FBI. Those who overheard the conversation say Kennedy laid it on thick.

Associates of the late President insist he wasn't influenced by the threat of blackmail but by political considerations. Yet clearly, gossip files should be banished from government.