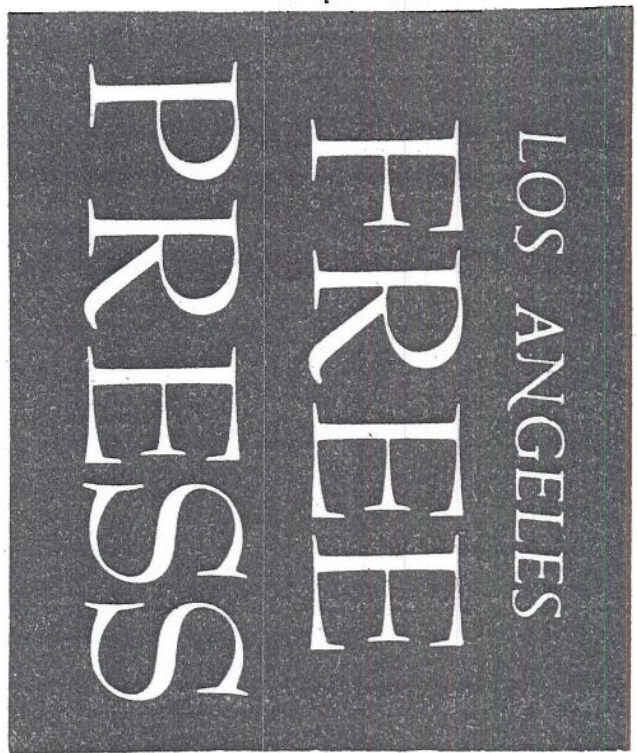


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# Spying on the FBI

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#### SARAH SHAPLEY

*(Unknown persons broke into the FBI office in Media, Pa., last March 8 and made off with its files. Soon copies of the files began arriving in the mail at newspapers around the country. Several newspapers published accounts of the files and, as a result, the FBI was caught in considerable embarrassment. The files revealed that the FBI spent a large amount of its time keeping tabs on political groups and spent very little time fighting crime.*

*Soon after the raid, FBI suspicions turned to the Powelton Village neighborhood of Philadelphia. Teams of unshaven agents, badly disguised as "hippies," attempted to infiltrate the area. Others followed and questioned local residents.*

*In the following article, Sarah Shapley, a resident of Powelton Village, describes the activities of the FBI and how they were countered by the people of the neighborhood.)*

#### SARAH SHAPLEY

**PHILADELPHIA** — Powelton Village is a university-related neighborhood here. It is an old community, having been "renewed" some 20 years ago by a co-op of residents determined to maintain a neighborhood with a mixture as to race, income and character. And very mixed it is — a real inner city, yet tree-lined and spacious — big enough to have three greasy spoons and six churches, yet small enough for word to get around in one evening's stroll.

There are transient apartments and houses that have been a single family's for generations. There are 16-year olds on drugs and 60-year olds on pensions. And running rampant through this body sociologicus is, according to authorities, a virulent and persistent strain of "politicanus activitis."

And it must be admitted that in Powelton Village there are targets attractively concentrated for any political investigation. Locally known as communes, they include the Quaker, Resistance, Co-op, Organizer and Just Plain Friends varieties. All of which suggests ringleaders, foreign agents and free love derring-do to minds of a certain warp and woof.

So it was almost a set piece, last spring's confrontation between FBI dragoons and community resisters. After all, here were people who had in recent years blocked bulldozers and organized schools, who had procured food at co-op prices and city buildings at squatter's prices,

who were used to instant leafletting and sound-trucking. In general, a very alert, aware group of people.

#### A Brief Chronicle

The pressures of surveillance and informers were nothing new to Powelton's anti-war and anti-racism activists. Telephone taps were assumed and avoided. In the past three years the offices of every militant group for social or political justice had been searched and/or destroyed by city police and others.

The FBI, too, were well-known, especially to black liberationists and anti-war groups. The Media files merely exposed what we already knew — the FBI would go to any extreme to monitor any citizen who might at any time in the future challenge any institution with a radical analysis and action programs. FBI suspicions seemed as unbounded as the supposed dangers were undefined.

**PHASE ONE:** FBI cars make passes through Powelton streets and sit within sight of target houses.

Target persons were accosted, sometimes casually, sometimes threateningly, with questions about who went with whom and who went where for what when.

The FBI cars were all late-model sedans of the Belair or Impala type, with rear radio antennas, two-way radios under the dashboard, and license plates beginning '92' or '93'. They moved slowly when they moved. The drivers all had short hair and wore white shirts with dull suits. They appeared aimless or humorless or fatigued.

Disguised agents tried to fraternize on the block or around the office. Several "interviews" were attempted in homes by "intelligence" agents. It became clear that people's records (arrest, academic, etc.) and the location of their families and their jobs were known to the FBI.

**RESPONSE ONE:** Resisters conduct expose mission.

Resisters made several sallies at the FBI cars, using conversation to engage them and cameras to expose them. In one instance, some "straight-dressed" agents got so upset that they called for help, at which point our cameras got to snap two other crews complete with disguises.

After about a week we had such a file that we could match up the agent with his disguise. Disguises were: "Captain New Beard"; "Hippie-Fake-Hair"; "Bell-Bottom Con-

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# Spying on the FBI

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servative"; "Off-Duty Construction Worker"; or "Aging Fraternity Boy." (Powelton has many frat houses.)

A leaflet was circulated complete with match-up pictures to alert the neighborhood to FBI activity and to beware of strangers asking strange questions.

**PHASE TWO:** They continue.

**RESPONSE TWO:** We decide to present and discuss the situation with local FBI director Joe D. Jamieson.

A leaflet was sent out summarizing matters and announcing a mass visit-plus-demonstration at the FBI's center city office. The demands were: 1) that the FBI get out of the community with all their agents, informers, infiltrators, and wire-taps; 2) that a full public accounting to the community be made; 3) that politically motivated harassment end; and 4) that all political intelligence files and tapes be destroyed.

The leaflet, which was sponsored by nine groups, explained how agents worked in Powelton and how the FBI spend its time in general. The description was based on an analysis of the stolen Media files sent to the Philadelphia Inquirer by the underground Citizens Committee to Investigate the FBI.

The analysis revealed that 40% of the stolen documents (which were all the documents in the office) pertained to surveillance of political groups. 30% dealt with procedural matters. 7% were concerned with military AWOL's and deserters. Another 7% dealt with draft resistance. 15% was concerned with "ordinary crime" and a pitiful 1% dealt with organized crime.

Over 60 people showed up at the FBI office, aiming to bring FBI activities into the open and raise the idea of resistance for the public at large. Also in attendance was the city police civil disobedience squad.

The FBI refused to admit all of us or any of the press. We countered by

asking Director Jamieson to come down to the street. He declined. After much dickering, he admitted two of us but still barred the press. We wanted to get at least some acknowledgement of our demands. As two of us entered the office, we saw a whole pack of agents peering through another door at us and nodding to each other.

Jamieson met us in a bare side room accompanied by two of his men. He would say nothing. After a monosyllabic conversation, he finally acknowledged he had heard the demands and claimed he "understood" our position. As for access of the public and the press to FBI quarters, he said they constituted a "federal reservation."

**PHASE THREE:** They discover a new, lone target and conduct a raid upon same.

Two days after the demonstration, FBI agents knocked upon and then knocked in with a sledgehammer the door of a woman's apartment in Powelton. A member of the staff of the National Action/Research on the Military Industrial Complex at the American Friends Service Committee, she had been researching relations between the FBI and local police. Her report, which had just been sent to the printer, used data from the Media files, copies of which NARMIC had received in the mails.

Within minutes after her apartment was broken into, over 100 people, including a lawyer, had gathered outside the building. The lawyer was not permitted to watch the search or consult with the woman. Meanwhile, the apartment was turned upside down. The woman's papers, address books and mail were examined. The agents were particularly suspicious about a set of Oriental vocabulary cards. Finally they left, taking her typewriter, her stapler, other personal items, and her third-generation (twice-xeroxed) copies of some Media files.

None of her belongings have yet been returned, nor has the landlord's

bill for \$95.97 damages been honored.

**RESPONSE THREE:** We hold a community meeting that same evening and plan tactics for the next morning.

At the Casket Company Community Center (a building reclaimed from the city's Re-Development Authority) a hundred people met and decided to demonstrate at 8:15 the next morning at the FBI office.

Once again there was the same dickering in front of the office building about access, and once again only two people passed through the gray-flannel line of the Civil Disobedience squad. This time Jamieson was a little less monosyllabic. The woman could apply to the U.S. Attorney for her things, he said.

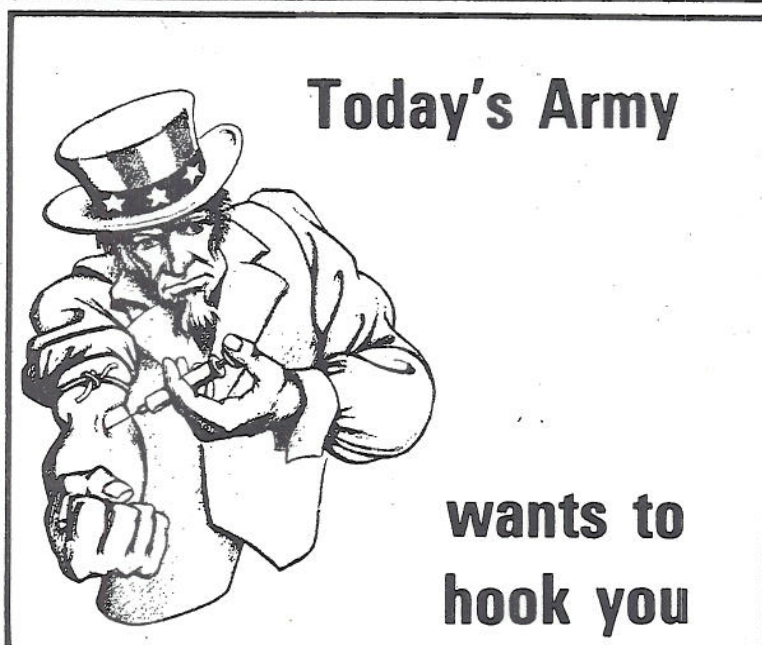
**PHASE FOUR:** They become aggressive, but have to keep moving to keep from being teased or debated out of their cool.

**RESPONSE FOUR:** Neighbors conduct a campaign of conversation-observation, and evidence is accumulated for a law suit against the FBI.

By now everyone on the block knew the score and neighbors started accosting agents if they sat still long enough. Everyone had his own style. While going to pick up their children from school, a group of women congregated and gave some agents a piece of their mind. Others would point fingers, stare, hoot, or yell license numbers. People wrote down the times when they saw the FBI cars passing through the streets. The schedule was extensive: 9:00 A.M., 11:00 A.M., 1:00 P.M., 3:00 P.M., 4:00 P.M., 5:30 P.M., 7:30 P.M., and even 1:00 A.M.

**PHASE FIVE:** They kidnap one of us and are found to have interrogated relatives and employers.

One afternoon several persons from a potter's co-op were attempting to conduct dialogue with some agents sitting in a car. At one point someone offered to clean their windows with Windex spray. The agents jumped out, grabbed him, locked his arms, cuffed his hands and sped away. He was taken to the central



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office for the rest of the day. One interrogator told him, "If you people in Powelton don't stop this circus, this is what you'll get." The man was not harmed. There were other instances of this "tough line" on our streets.

Also relatives and employers were "interviewed." Questions probed for some personal weakness or trouble on the job.

**RESPONSE FIVE:** We institute an airhorn early warning system.

For under \$5 each we purchased four airhorns to be blown in the event of more raids and trouble. They were placed where somebody would be present at all hours and could see the target sites.

**CLIMAX:** We plan a big street party to be called "Your FBI in Action."

Street fairs are a tradition in Powelton. So word got around easily even though all the posters announcing the party were torn down one night. \$130 bought hot dogs and oysters, corn, beer, etc. Baked goods were contributed, as were candles, clothes and records. A jazz group collected in the afternoon and a rock group in the evening. Political leaflets, pamphlets and T-shirts abounded.

But the heart of the affair was

"Your FBI in Action." Doorsized displays were suspended from tree branches and erected in the street. These were large blow-up photographs of agents lounging around Powelton and photostats of the Media files. Later these were auctioned off.

Elsewhere you could play the FBI dart game: score 100 for a Media file, score 25 for a dossier in Washington. Or you could be photographed with a life-size wooden cut-out of J. Edgar himself. There were political education puzzles made from our photographs and a door that was inscribed, "Practice here: Hit me."

### Epilogue

In July, Philadelphia Resistance, the American Friends Service Committee and several individuals filed a lawsuit against the FBI asking for an injunction against harassment of Powelton residents.

But by then, an injunction was hardly needed. After the Fair, which received national publicity, the FBI retreated. It's probably still doing most of the things it's always done, but it's now doing them much less brazenly in Powelton.

—Lancaster Independent Press,  
Leola, Pa.