

Bittman Is Noted For His Tenacity

5/19/73

By Bart Barnes

Washington Post Staff Writer

In April, 1964, as the government's \$20 million pension fund fraud case against Teamsters Union President James R. Hoffa was just going to trial in Chicago, the chief prosecutor became suddenly ill and had to drop out of the case.

It had taken two years for the government to develop that case, and a new prosecutor had to be found who could absorb a complicated set of facts virtually overnight and present them clearly to a jury.

The Justice Department turned to William O. Bittman, then only 32 years old but widely regarded as an aggressive and able assistant U.S. attorney with an impressive record in winning a variety of cases. Two months later, Bittman won a conviction against Hoffa and the Teamsters' president was sentenced to five years in jail.

From Chicago, Bittman came to Washington, where three years later he took charge of the government's prosecution of former Senate aide Robert G. (Bobby) Baker. After winning a conviction against Baker for tax evasion, Bittman left the government for private practice, joining the law firm of Hogan and Hartson, one of the larger and more prestigious firms in the nation's capital.

Since then, Bittman's life style has been similar to that of many lawyers in Washington's legal establishment: a home in Potomac, Md. and an office downtown on Connecticut Avenue. Unlike the days when he was prosecuting Baker and Hoffa, his name was seldom mentioned in the press.

Until last summer, that is, when Bittman was retained as counsel by E. Howard Hunt Jr., a conspirator in the Watergate bugging case. Yesterday, Bittman's name



WILLIAM O. BITTMAN
... Hoffa's nemesis

was raised by convicted Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr. in connection with what McCord regarded as "political pressure" on him to plead guilty to the charges growing out of the Watergate raid in exchange for executive clemency.

A native of Milwaukee, Bittman was born on Aug. 6, 1931 and he was raised and went to school in the Midwest. After two years in the Navy during the Korean War, he graduated from Marquette University in 1956 and went to law school at Marquette and DePaul University.

From law school he went to the U.S. attorney's office in Chicago where he began his seven years as a prosecutor, developing a reputation for being tenacious and uncompromising.

For a year, Bittman directed the grand jury's investigation into the tangled affairs of former Senate aide Baker, a one-time protégé of the late President Johnson. At the time, there were said to be efforts under way in the Justice Department to somehow water down the charges against Baker, but Bittman threatened to resign and denounce the campaign publicly unless the efforts were dropped.