

Detective Reveals Role in Md. Probes

12/27/73

By Charles A. Krause
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John (Fat Jack) Buckley, a veteran political gumshoe whose cover was blown during the Senate Watergate hearings earlier this year, played a key role in a candidate's investigation that led to the eventual indictment and conviction of former Prince George's County Commissioner Jesse S. Baggett on a bribery charge.

Buckley, a 53-year-old former FBI agent, says he undertook a 1966 probe of Baggett for Lawrence J. Hogan, now the Republican congressman from the district that covers the northern part of Prince George's County. Hogan acknowledges Buckley's help was "invaluable" in the 1966 campaign.

This was not the first nor the last time that Buckley aided Republican candidates in investigating allegations of Democratic corruption, but it wasn't until the Watergate hearings last fall that he came to public attention.

During the hearings, it was revealed that Buckley had spied on Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) in the 1972 presidential campaign. Buckley, according to testimony, passed on photographed documents from the Muskie campaign to the Committee for the Re-election of the President. His contact man from CRP was E. Howard Hunt Jr., later convicted as a Watergate conspirator.

In an interview last week, Buckley agreed to discuss the shadowy world of political surveillance in which he has worked over the past decade and the events surrounding his investigation of Baggett, a Democrat, who was convicted in 1971 of having accepted a bribe from a Washington area developer in 1966 in return for zoning favors.

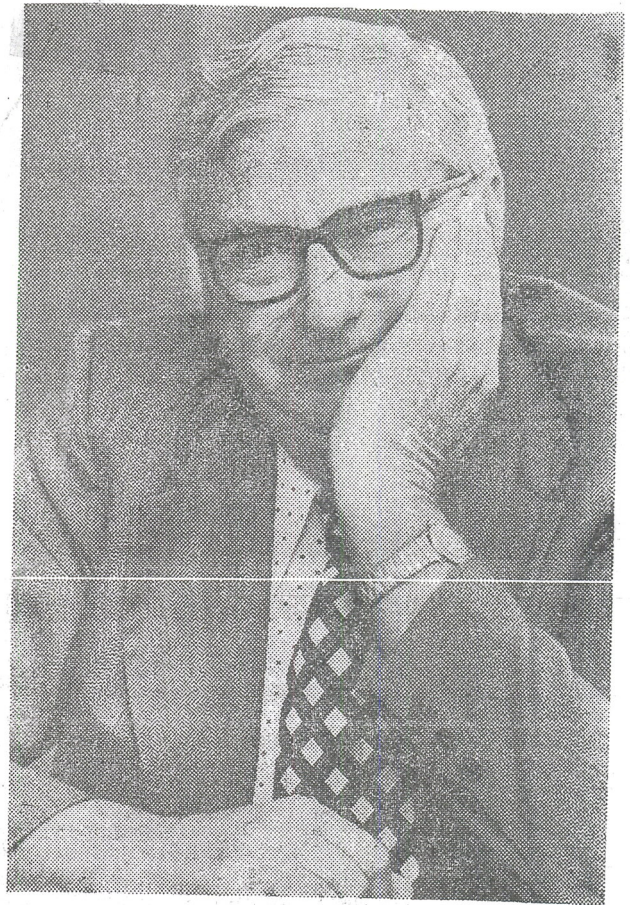
Buckley said he began his investigation of Baggett at the behest of Hogan, a former FBI agent himself who was waging an uphill—and ultimately unsuccessful—campaign for Congress in 1966.

One of the central issues in Hogan's first congressional campaign was Democratic corruption and he asked Buckley to help investigate several allegations centering on Baggett, then regarded as the most powerful figure in the county's Democratic Party.

Hogan gave the information Buckley verified to the Justice Department and the county state's attorney's office as the campaign progressed, winning free publicity and a reputation as a reformer.

Although Hogan lost the election, the information he supplied the Justice Department led a federal investigation and eventual indictment and conviction of Bag-

See **BUCKLEY, E4, Col. 1**



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

Veteran detective John (Fat Jack) Buckley reminisces.

BUCKLEY, From E1

gett. Buckley's role in the investigation never was revealed publicly although Hogan last week acknowledged that Buckley "was an invaluable help to me" during the 1966 campaign.

The publicity Hogan gained in 1966 made him the county's leading Republican politician, and he won election to Congress in 1968 and was re-elected easily in 1970 and 1972.

Since 1964, when Buckley resigned from the FBI, Buckley said that he has worked in four Republican campaigns.

In all but one of them — that of Cecil Underwood, who ran for governor of West Virginia in 1964 and lost — Buckley said he worked for free. And in all but the Nixon re-election effort, Buckley said, he concentrated on investigating alleged corruption rather than on spying per se.

"If there's one issue in an election that turns me on and off," Buckley said, when asked why he usually works for free, "it's corrup-

tion. I do like to work corruption."

Buckley said that he never once met Buckley during the three-month investigation. But Buckley recalled last week, sitting in the Washington law offices of Leonard and Cohen, where he now works as a part-time investigator, that Baggett had a reputation as "a powerhouse guy."

"I have nothing against powerhouse guys," Buckley quickly assured a reporter. "As long as they don't take money."

Buckley said there were basically two sets of allegations concerning Baggett, who served as a county commissioner from 1954 to 1971 and who ruled Prince George's politics with an iron grip during most of that time.

The first allegation was that a local property owner, Daniel Tessitore, built an addition to Baggett's Calvert County farmhouse in exchange for Baggett's help in obtaining a favorable zoning ruling from the county commissioners for Tessitore.

Buckley said that he sim-

ply went to Tessitore, interviewed him three times and obtained a sworn statement that Hogan presented to a county grand jury that eventually indicted Baggett for accepting a bribe from Tessitore. Baggett was tried and acquitted of this charge.

The second set of allegations were "much more complex," Buckley said, and involved alleged systematic payoffs to Baggett by local developers in exchange for favorable zoning rulings.

Buckley said that he would contact developers and ask them whether they had ever paid for a favorable zoning ruling. Many said they had but none was willing to sign a sworn affidavit, Buckley said.

Asked why these developers would admit to Buckley that they had bribed a public official, the former FBI agent said: "I just don't know." He said he identified himself "as an investigator." If they asked me who my principal was I would indicate Hogan," Buckley said.

Although he obtained no hard proof of systematic payoffs, Hogan passed along

Buckley's information to law enforcement agencies—including information about a tractor that Baggett obtained for his farm, Hogan said.

Baggett was convicted in 1971 of accepting the tractor from Ralph D. Rocks, a wealthy Washington area developer, in return for favorable zoning rulings. Hogan credits Buckley with uncovering the initial information that led to a full scale federal investigation of Baggett and, ultimately, to the former commissioner's trial and conviction for accepting a bribe.

Buckley, who is a lawyer, has held a succession of jobs since leaving the FBI in 1964. He headed his own private investigation firm until 1965, when he became minority counsel for the House Education and Labor Committee. In 1969, he was appointed director of inspections at the Office of Economic Opportunity and remained at OEO until last June, when he retired shortly before he was named publicly as a political spy for CRP.