

21 July 1972

Dear Harold:

A fragmentary and preliminary devil's advocate type reaction to your long 7/16 memo on the Watergate Caper:

On page 2, penultimate graf, in your discussion of your theory that Hunt was Bender, you note there is no indication or report of his having expertise on Southeast Asia. I suggest some of the Who's Who listings we sent you in our last mailing show him with apparent service in the CBI theatre during WW II, with some decoration such as the China Star. Certainly if he served there and mixed with the Kuomintang generals he could have picked up some excellent background if not experience in opium and its derivatives such as heroin.

His age may be another factor which needs resolving. He is listed as born Oct. 9, 1918, which would make him 53 now and 42 at the time of the Bay of Pigs 11 years ago.

In *The Invisible Government*, Ross and Wise (Random House, 1964) say on page 26:

"The CIA's original plan, as it evolved under Bissell's direction, was to build up the underground within Cuba through a long, slow period of guerrilla infiltration by exiles trained in Guatemala.

"The CIA designated one of its most energetic agents, with the cover name of Frank Bender, to be the top agency representative in dealing with the fragmented Cuban exile groups. Bender, whose real identity was carefully protected, became an almost ~~legendary~~ mythical figure to the Cuban refugees. He was rumored to be everywhere -- in New York, Miami and Guatemala -- during the months that followed. ~~During the~~ After the Bay of Pigs, he was said to have been spotted in the Congo.

"Most of the exiles believed Bender was a European who had fought with the French Maquis during World War II. Another account had Bender as an assistant to top allied planners during the North African invasion in 1942.

"Those who met him described the CIA field chief as a man in his fifties, perhaps 185 pounds, of medium build. He smoked a pipe, wore glasses, was well mannered and displayed a good knowledge of history. Bender established headquarters in New York, which with Washington, Miami and Retalhuleu became the four key centers of the operation."

The account goes on to discuss how Bender travelled back and forth among these places, how the operation expanded into a pocket sized invasion, and how the CIA began pumping millions into it, but no more detailed info on Bender. He is mentioned again only once, on page 61, where Raul Roa, accusing the U.S. at the U.N. in New York, says the chief CIA agent in Miami was "Bender."

Unless Bender looked very dissipated at 42 in 1961, the age question seems to present a problem.

jdw