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The Watergate-Five Mystery Thriller Spins Web of Intrigue About Miami

By **DON BOHNING**
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Sherlock Holmes might have entitled it, "The Case of the Bungled Bug." But eight days after the abortive attempt to bug the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington's swank Watergate complex, the solution is far from elementary, my dear Watson.

Instead, each new day brings a development more bizarre than the ones that preceded it in an ever-expanding plot that puts Holmes, Ellery Queen and Eric Ambler to collective shame.

By week's end, a tangled web of intrigue had emerged involving foreign bank accounts, soldiers of fortune, anti-Castro revolutionaries, phony identities, memories of the Bay of Pigs, former top-level CIA employees, the White House and a multitude of other baffling elements.

The Herald team which contributed to this special report includes Washington correspondent Clark Hoyt and staff writers Roberto Fabricio, Arnold Markowitz, Raul Ramirez and James Savage.

It all served to enhance the image of Miami, where much of the action unfolded, as the Casablanca of the Caribbean. But it did little to resolve the one basic and most perplexing question.

Why would anyone expend so much time, money and energy to bug the Democratic headquarters in the first place?

No state secrets are to be found there and neither, presumably, are the most closely held secrets of the Democratic Party thrashed out there. And

even if they are, who could possibly find them valuable enough to make the risk worthwhile?

The unanswered questions presuppose, as the available evidence now seems to indicate, that more people are involved than the five arrested in the sixth floor of Democratic offices of the Watergate at 2:30 a.m. Saturday, June 17.

Police already have said they are seeking four additional unidentified persons who had registered at the Watergate two weeks earlier as part of a group that included four of the five arrested.

Of the four being sought say police, two are from New York, one from Kansas and one from Miami. One is said to have a Spanish surname.

Of the five arrested, four are from

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Miami and one, James W. McCord, is from Rockville, Md., a Washington suburb.

The revelation that McCord, a former high-level CIA employee, was security coordinator for the Committee to Reelect President Nixon, was what spurred the frantic efforts to ferret out further details and fueled furious speculation, some of it as bizarre as the incident itself.

McCord was promptly fired by an embarrassed former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, now heading the President's reelection campaign, who declared that McCord "was not operating either in our behalf or with our consent. I am surprised and dismayed at these reports."

THAT WAS Sunday, a day after the aborted bugging.

By Monday, rumors already were circulating that E. Howard Hunt, writer for a public relations company, White House consultant, spy novelist and another one-time, top-level CIA employee, was also implicated.

Tuesday The New York Times reported that Hunt recently had flown to Miami to meet with Bernard Barker, a Cuban-born American citizen, local real estate man, and an ex-CIA operative known as Macho, who was especially active during the period leading up to the disastrous 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. He also was among the now notorious Watergate Five arrested in the Democratic offices.

Hunt dropped from public view. He was suspended from the payroll of the Robert E. Mullen and Co. public relations firm where he had worked as a writer since 1970 "as an employe absent without excuse."

EVENTS — and non-events — began tumbling out on top of each other.

Among them:

● Democratic National Chairman Lawrence O'Brien filed a \$1-million damage suit against President Nixon's reelection committee.

● The FBI traced some of the \$6,300 cash — mostly in consecutively numbered \$100 bills — seized on the Watergate Five or in their hotel rooms to the Republic National Bank of Miami.

Later in the week it was disclosed that Barker recently had transferred \$89,000 from a Mexico City bank to his account at the same Republic National Bank. He withdrew the entire bundle, in cash, on May 8.

● Short-lived reports of a shadowy, right-wing, anti-Castro organization, called Ameritas, came to light when it was learned that those arrested said they represented Ameritas on hotel registration forms. Ameritas turned out to be a Florida real estate corporation formed in 1969 by Miguel Suarez, one-time unsuccessful candidate for Dade County mayor, staunch Nixon supporter and a Miami business associate of Barker. Suarez said the name Ameritas had been used without his knowledge in making reservations for the group at the Watergate and on hotel registration cards.

● Frank Sturgis, another of the arrested Watergate Five and better known in Miami as Frank Fiorini, long a familiar figure among the area's soldiers of fortune, turned up with a complete set of false identification papers and a Mexican visa in the name of Edward Joseph Hamilton.

● Muckraking syndicated columnist Jack Anderson showed up at a bail hearing Friday to vouch for Sturgis and unsuccessfully plead that his long-time

friend be released in Anderson's custody.

Anderson, who had spoken with Sturgis in jail earlier in the week for 20 minutes, told newsmen he thought "Hunt was the leader."

● In Miami, it was discovered that sometime last year Barker had made an effort to obtain architectural plans for the Miami Beach Convention Center, where the Democrats will hold their national convention, beginning July 10.

When he failed to get the convention center plans, he made another effort, also unsuccessful, to obtain architectural drawings of the center's air-conditioning system, which at the same time would have provided him with the location of attic space.

● Numerous speculative reports appeared linking the whole affair to anti-Castro Cubans and others concerned that the Democrats, if they win the November elections, might decide it's time for a rapprochement with the Castro regime. At this stage, at least, the reports appear to be founded more in guesswork than gospel.

Yet, they only contributed to the mounting mystery that began shortly before 2 a.m. June 17 when Frank Willis, a 24-year-old security guard at the Watergate complex, noticed that a door connecting a stairwell with the hotel's basement garage had been taped so it would not lock.

WILLS REMOVED the tape, but when he passed by about 10 minutes later, a new piece had been put on. He called police.

Three scruffily dressed plainclothes officers, some of whom were described as having shoulder-length hair, from Washington's "Mod Squad," responded.

They discovered that from the basement to the sixth floor, every door leading from the stairway to a hallway had

been taped to prevent it from locking.

At the sixth floor, where the stairwell door leads into the Democratic offices, they found the door had been jimmied.

They discovered, huddled around a secretary's desk in an anteroom just

outside party chairman O'Brien's office, McCord, Barber, Sturgis and two Cuban-born Miamians, Eugenio Rolando Martinez and Virgilio Gonzalez.

A DEMOCRATIC Party official called to the scene shortly after the arrest quoted police as saying the five men were terrified when first caught, and had jumped up yelling, "Don't shoot. Don't shoot." They were said to have appeared relieved when they discovered it was the police, leading to speculation they might have thought it was some other group breaking into the offices.

All five men were wearing surgical gloves. They were all unarmed except for teargas pens.

Police said they had with them at least two devices capable of picking up and transmitting oral and telephone conversations. In addition, police found lockpicks and door jimmies and almost \$2,300 cash. The five also had with them walkie-talkies, a shortwave receiver, 40 rolls of unexposed film and two 35 mm cameras.

Several of the party offices had been ransacked, and paneling in a wall adjacent to O'Brien's office had been removed, ostensibly to place electronic hearing devices, or to remove them as one theory had it.

BY ONE ACCOUNT, the five were in the offices at least 20 minutes before police surprised them.

But what and who brought them there is as baffling now as it was then.

Fewer than 24 hours before they were caught, it was pretty much business as usual for the four Miamians involved.

Sturgis checked in Friday morning, June 16, at the Pan American Aluminum Corp., where he worked as a commission salesman.

Gonzalez, who was born in Cuba but came to Miami 20 years ago, went to work the same morning at the Missing Link Inc., 221 NW 8th Ave., where he worked as a locksmith. He told the dispatcher, however, that he would be quitting at noon rather than at the normal 5 p.m.

BARKER, whose real estate firm Barker and Associates Inc. is located at 2301 NW Seventh St., dropped by sometime Friday morning to see his attorney and associate Miguel Suarez at Suarez's law office on SW First Street.

Barker says Suarez came in to discuss several real estate ventures the two are involved in.

"It was all very casual," said Suarez. "He came in like every day. He talked for a while and then took off."

Martinez, who works for Barker and

who recently separated from his wife, showed up in Circuit Court at 11:45 Friday morning, June 16, for a divorce hearing. The hearing broke up about 12:15.

Police say Sturgis, Baker, Gonzalez and Martinez arrived at Washington National Airport that afternoon.

There they picked up a black Chrysler with Virginia plates renting at \$18 a day and 17 cents a mile and leased in the name of Bernard L. Barker from the Avis Car Rental agency.

LATER THE same day they were to register at the Watergate Hotel under fictitious names. Police sources say the same quartet also had stayed at the Watergate May 26-29 as part of a group that included the four other people police now are seeking and perhaps one woman who was not registered. Coincidentally, an attempt was made May 28 to unscrew a lock on the door of the Democratic National Committee offices.

While the motivation of the Watergate Five remains a mystery, their backgrounds, plus that of Hunt, become increasingly exposed to public scrutiny.

It seems likely that the paths of all six, with the possible exception of Gonzalez, may have crossed in Miami during those swashbuckling, anything-goes revolutionary days of the late 1950s and early 1960s when the U.S. government was actively engaged in trying to oust Fidel Castro.

HUNT, WHO retired from the CIA

in April 1970 has been described as one of the top CIA figures involved in the Bay of Pigs invasion and who used the code name of Eduardo.

McCord, who also retired in 1970 after 19 years' service with the CIA and prior service with the FBI, also is said to have been involved in the Bay of Pigs operation.

It is widely acknowledged in Miami's Cuban community that both Barker and Martinez were involved in activities leading up to the Bay of Pigs, with the Cuban-born Barker apparently playing at least a middle-level role as the liaison with Manuel Artime, the invasion brigade's civilian leader.

And Sturgis, if not directly involved in Bay of Pigs activities, long has been involved in South Florida's revolutionary subculture.

Only in the case of Gonzalez is there no public indication of a past involvement in revolutionary activities.

FRIENDS, acquaintances, co-workers and neighbors see all six from varying perspectives, with Hunt emerging as the most puzzling character in the cast, and McCord and Gonzalez the most unlikely.

Hunt, 54, was hired by the Mullen company in 1970, shortly after he retired from the CIA "in good standing."

He listed three references on his job application. They were: Richard Helms, the CIA director; conservative columnist William F. Buckley and White House special counsel Charles W. Colson who also recommended Hunt for the White House consultant's job.

White House assistant Kenneth Clawson says Hunt was employed as a \$100-a-day consultant beginning July 6, 1971. He worked 63 days in 1971 and 24 days this year, the last of which was March 29, according to Clawson. He is still considered a White House consultant until the fiscal year ends.

HUNT HAD, according to Clawson, two White House assignments, both of which he completed. The first was to assist in declassifying Defense Department material after the Pentagon papers scandal. The second was to evaluate intelligence on drug traffic coming in from various departments.

Hunt apparently joined the CIA in 1949, a year after he entered government service as an attache at the U.S. embassy in Paris.

He lists himself in the 1969 edition of Who's Who as retiring from government service in 1965 to join the business of Littauer and Wilkinson, 500 5th Ave., New York City.

But the New York telephone company has no listing for a Littauer and Wilkinson, and it is known that Hunt did not leave the CIA until April of 1970.

ONE OF THE more interesting aspects of Hunt's nonprofessional career is the proliferation of pulp novels he turned out, 45 of them, running the gamut from near pornography to spy thrillers, adventure tales, war stories and science fiction.

Some were written under the name of Howard Hunt, others under pen names, one of which was John Baxter.

His last book entered in the Library of Congress file is "Gift for Gomala," the tale of a small, imaginary African nation, written in 1962 under the name of John Baxter.

In a remarkable coincidence, several of the aliases used by suspects in the bugging case come close to names of characters in Hunt's novels.

THE HERO of "Bimini Run," an adventure story published in 1949, is an ex-Marine drifter-gambler named Hank Sturgis.

In "Stranger in Town," a book written in 1948, one of the characters is a French Resistance girl named Jeanne and another is a woman named Mathilde Valdes.

Martinez, one of the five men arrested in the Democratic offices, first gave police the phony name of Jene Valdes.

In "Maelstrom," a Hunt adventure story written in 1948, the central character uses the alias of Martin in fleeing from the United States to Mexico to es-

cape a Senate investigation. When McCord was arrested, he first gave his name as Edward Martin.

Hunt, who lives with his family in the affluent Washington suburb of Potomac, Md., is described by one acquaintance as the perfect spy.

"HE'S EXACTLY the kind you'd pick for a spy because nobody'd ever look at him twice. If you tried to de-

scribe the man you couldn't do it."

It is borne out in practice.

A co-worker described him as about six feet tall, medium build, light brown and greying hair and a conservative dresser who wore mostly white shirts mixed with an occasional blue.

"Really nondescript. Just an ordinary guy."

Another acquaintance described him as being of slight build, about five foot, six inches tall with sandy, thinning hair.

A resident of the estate area of Potomac where the Hunt family lives in a one-story, red brick, rambler-style home on a two-acre plot dubbed "Witch's Island," says of the Hunts:

"I don't think anybody in the neighborhood know them well. They are very, very stand-offish. They studiously have avoided the neighbors."

DURING THE four years the Hunts have lived in Potomac, they have employed a series of Spanish speaking maids. Mrs. Hunt reportedly works as an English language translator for the Embassy of a Spanish speaking country.

Robert Bennett, Hunt's boss at the Mullen company, says Hunt is a Republican but one he couldn't categorize as either a conservative, a moderate or a liberal.

Not far away, in suburban Rockville, Md., lived James W. McCord, the GOP security man arrested in the Democratic offices and who, until two years ago, had been one of the CIA's highest ranking security officials.

Friends, co-workers and former associates all express shock and amazement at the 53-year-old McCord's involvement in the bizarre episode.

"Usually you can spot fellows who will have trouble in the future," a former security official who worked with McCord at the CIA, told a reporter last week.

"This guy moved up the ranks to higher and higher responsibility. He had good fitness reports, he was not a wheeler-dealer, he always made a nice appearance. People had a lot of confidence in him and he was liked and respected."

THE IMAGE of McCord projected by friends, neighbors and co-workers was that of a sensible, rational, calm individual, congenial and approachable, sensitive to local neighborhood issues and a man who devoted a great deal of time to his children and civic activities.

Although he is said to have had a broad background in the security field with the CIA, his primary concern reportedly was protection of the CIA plant.

McCord, a native of Texas, graduated from Baylor University in Waco as did his wife, Sarah. A son, Michael, is enrolled in the U.S. Air Force Academy, and a daughter, Carol Anne, will be a sophomore next year at Madison College in Harrisonburg, Va.

The couple also has a slightly retarded 14-year-old daughter with whom neighbors says McCord spends hours playing and helping her to read and write.

McCord retired from the CIA, in 1970 to set up his own security consult-

ing firm, McCord Associates Inc., with offices in Rockville. He was hired as security coordinator for the Nixon campaign beginning Jan. 1 of this year at a take home salary of \$1,209 a month. He had recently been in Miami to check out security for the Republican convention to be held in August. It was disclosed in court Thursday that he has rented two apartments in Miami although their addresses were not given.

ANOTHER UNLIKELY character in the cast is Virgilio Gonzalez, 45, the locksmith from Miami who came to the United States to make his permanent home in 1952, well before the influx of

either anti-Batista or anti-Castro refugees began arriving.

With him came his wife, Celia, daughter Maria, then nine months old, and his wife's son by a previous marriage. The couple now has another daughter, Iliana, 13. They have lived at their present NW 23rd Street residence for more than 13 years.

Gonzalez has worked at Missing Link since the 1950s except for a four-year period in the early 1960s when he was lent to the Florida Safe Service.

His wife, Celia, says he left for work as usual about 8 a.m. the morning of June 16. She has not seen him since.

When he arrived at work, he told the dispatcher that he would be quitting at noon and, according to the dispatcher, he did, although she is not certain what time he left.

ALTHOUGH GONZALEZ was due at work Saturday morning, his boss Harry Collot says he didn't call him because Saturdays are slow days and he wasn't needed badly. Collot did find it unusual that he hadn't called in.

Gonzalez is described by friends and relatives as a quiet, unassuming man who seldom talks politics and seemed, as one neighbor phrased it, "the last person in the world that would get involved in something like this."

"You couldn't ask for a better person," says Harry Ehrlich, who lives in a duplex next door to the Gonzalez' pink, two-bedroom home.

Ehrlich, who has known Gonzalez since moving in next door 13 years ago, was a witness for Gonzalez when he obtained his American citizenship last year.

Mrs. Gonzalez, Collot and other friends and neighbors say they had never heard Gonzalez mention any of the men arrested with him.

Collot describes Gonzalez as a "very, very, good worker. He has a very natural mechanical attitude and is very capable."

HE SAID Gonzalez' job is "primarily that of a safe mechanic" and his most important function with the Missing Link company is rebuilding burglarized safes.

Gonzalez' safe-opening skills, said Collot, are "maybe average, maybe not even that." Neither, said Collot, is Gonzalez particularly adept at picking locks.

Collot said he never discussed politics with Gonzalez but, "I feel he's hawkish, in a way a typically Cuban-American . . . he's pro-American, pro anything that the administration does fighting against communism, and anti-Castro."

Bernard L. Barker's participation in whatever it is he was participating in is

much easier to understand.

Barker, like Sturgis and Martinez, has been immersed for more than a decade in the atmosphere of intrigue that has been as much a part of South Florida as palm trees and coconuts.

The 54-year-old Barker was born in Cuba of American parents and, before Castro, had spent much of his life on the island.

DURING World War II, however, he joined the U.S. Army where he reached the rank of captain. He was a prisoner of war of the Germans for at least the last year of the war. It was during this period, says one long-time acquaintance, that Barker became a super patriot.

He returned to Cuba after the war, where he reportedly became a member of the Buro de Investigaciones or the Cuban Bureau of Investigation under the Batista government.

After Castro took over, Barker apparently set up his own underground railroad, helping political refugees escape the Castro regime. Among the escapees was Artime, the civilian leader of the Bay of Pigs for whom Barker was later to become a liaison man with the American intelligence community.

BARKER, it is believed, was a frequent visitor to the Bay of Pigs invasion force training camps in Guatemala and, at the same time, was active in clandestine missions directed at Cuba. Presumably during this period he gained at least a middle-level position with the CIA.

By 1963, when the exile activity, subsided, Barker was making a living as a clerk in a Cuban clinic in Miami. It is there where he first met Miguel Suarez, a Cuban refugee fresh out of the University of Miami law school who was working in an administrative capacity at the clinic.

Suarez said the two hit it off and have been friends since.

Between 1964 and 1970, Suarez said he saw Barker off and on, with Barker holding a variety of jobs. In 1969 Barker obtained his real estate license and early in 1971 formed his own company.

AT THE SAME TIME, he formed an association with Suarez who became the attorney for Barker Associates, collecting legal fees from closings by Barker Associates.

In addition to the routine home and small apartment sales, the Barker-Suarez combination has collaborated in several major transactions, including the Biarritz Towers, a 27-unit building in Normandy Isles and The Sixty One, a 16-unit apartment building on Collins Avenue in Miami Beach. They also are developing a 45-unit building in Hialeah and a 27-unit building in North Miami.

Most, but not all, of Barker's friends and acquaintances describe him as a staunch anti-Communist with idealistic motives.

At the same time, he is described by some as "a Lord of the Manor" type who shoves his weight around.

LOCAL EXILE GROUPS say Barker and Sturgis had actively sought support in the community for President Nixon's decision to mine North Vietnamese ports.

They helped organize a 200-truck parade through Miami of Cubans supporting the blockade. At the time they said they were representing a captive nations organization.

Barker generated some antagonism

among the exiles by what one Cuban activist leader described as his "lack of manners" and the fact that he had "too much to say."

Barker's friendship with Sturgis apparently dates to the pre-Castro period.

His daughter, Mrs. Maria Moffett, 25, a former secretary of Florida Congressman Claude Pepper and now a resident of Bethesda, Md., said at bail hearing last week that she had known Sturgis "ever since I was a child."

OF THE FOUR Miamians involved in the bugging incident, it is Sturgis who is best known publicly, but under his former name of Fiorini.

His name has been in local news columns as an adventurer for nearly two decades. There is some suspicion that not all the exploits he has been associated with actually have taken place.

Sturgis is believed to be about 48 years old and has given his hometown as Norfolk, Va.

He has said he became involved in revolutionary activities when he traveled with his bride to Miami from Norfolk for a honeymoon and attended a rally by Fidel Castro who was then drumming up support to overthrow the Batista government.

HE WAS, said Sturgis, impressed by what he heard and eventually joined the Castro movement as a pilot. He broke with Castro in mid-1959, about six months after Batista's fall.

Since joining the anti-Castro effort in mid-1959, Sturgis has been involved in a variety of revolutionary activities but is not known to have been active with any of the major Cuban exile groups.

Presumably, he did at one time have at least some tenuous associations with the CIA but even that is uncertain.

In 1960 Fiorini, as he still called himself, was stripped of his U.S. citizenship and ordered to leave the country for his role as an active participant in the Castro revolution and his later anti-Castro efforts, including a leaflet drop over Havana in July 1959.

WITH FORMER Florida Sen. George Smathers and others coming to his assistance, citizenship was restored and Fiorini legally changed his name to Sturgis.

Whether as Fiorini or Sturgis, he has continued to be a would-be full-time revolutionary and part-time employe at a variety of jobs that have ranged from selling used cars to, most recently, selling aluminum windows.

In the early 1960s, Sturgis organized the International Anti-Communist Brigade, which, at one point in 1963, he claimed had 5,000 members of which 700 were actively training to combat communism "wherever it exists."

His most recent revolutionary escape of note came in 1968 when a dozen others were seized by British Honduras authorities and held for 11 days.

THE SEIZURE, Sturgis claimed, thwarted what was to have been a commando attack on Cuba.

One long-time acquaintance of Sturgis calls him "a nice person, a fine person but he never got over being up in the hills fighting in Cuba . . . that's

what he wants to keep doing."

Others aren't so charitable, including one Cuban exile active in the local revolutionary movement who says that Sturgis "is distrusted by serious revolutionary groups."

For the past 18 months or so, Sturgis, in between whatever else he is involved in, has worked as a commission salesman for the Pan American Aluminum Corp.

William J. Keefe, in charge of the company's Miami sales, said that Fiorini had been in Friday morning, June 16, "and we went over some orders that he had taken."

Keefe declined to discuss Sturgis personally but said that he was not "one of our better salesman."

HE COULD NOT, on what he sold for Pan American, make a decent living, said Keefe.

As a commission salesman, Sturgis could do as much or as little as he liked and his time was his own.

When he registered as a Democrat in 1962, after his citizenship was restored, he gave his address as 2515 NW 122nd Ave. in Miami, and Sturgis and his family continue to live there, in the slightly run-down white house with its unkept yard at the edge of the Westview Golf Course and Country Club.

A teenage girl who answered when a reporter knocked on the door last week, acknowledged that it was the home of Frank Sturgis "but we don't know anything about it . . . you'll have to talk to my mother."

At television Channel 23, where she works, Mrs. Sturgis declined to discuss her husband's case.

THE LAST OF the Miamians is Eugenio Rolando Martinez, 51, who once was active in the anti-Batista underground in Cuba. Later he turned against Castro and fled to the United States. For a while, according to local exile sources, he ran a weapons shuttle, presumably under U.S. sponsorship, back to anti-Castro elements on the island by mid-1960.

One exile activist calls Martinez "one of the most valiant and courageous men in this fight, and as the other true heroes he is mostly not known."

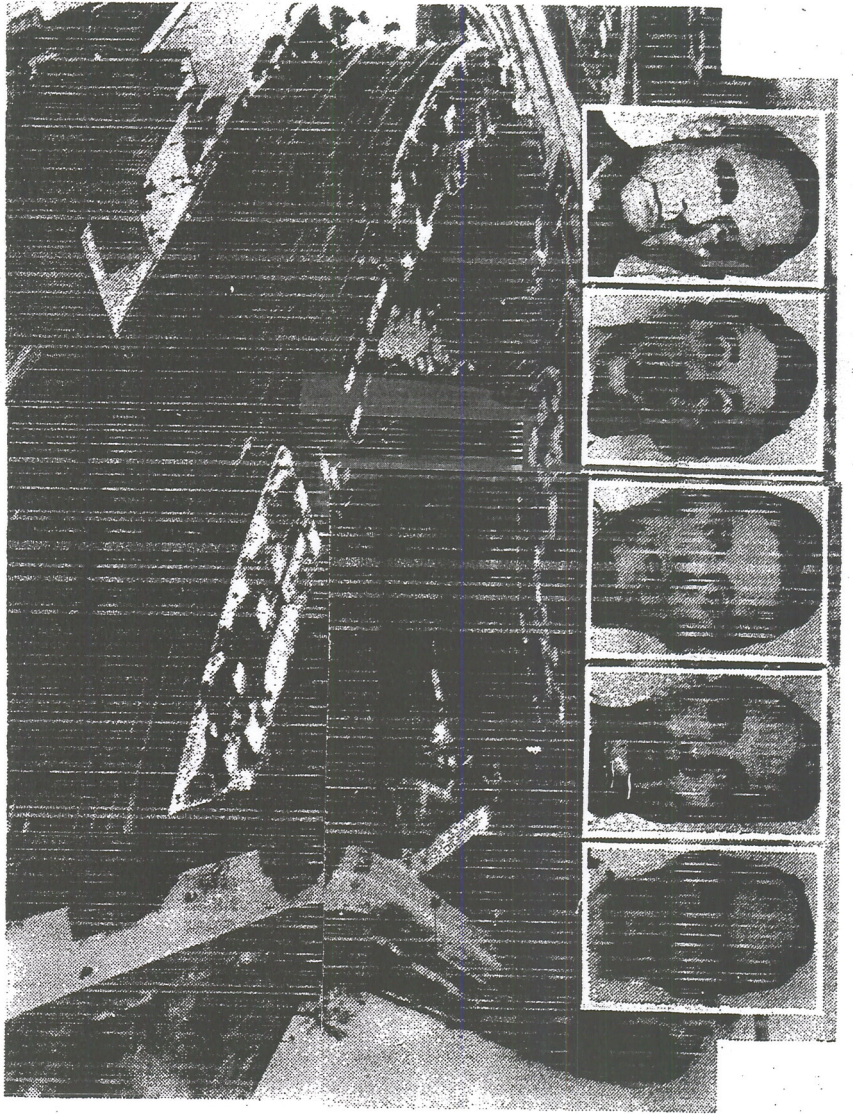
Another calls Martinez "an idealist . . . he is not the kind of guy to do something for the money in it and the charge that he may be a mercenary is wrong."

Martinez' recent history remains somewhat obscure but it is known he obtained his real estate license in 1970 and has been working for Barker for the past year.

He has been living with a married daughter since he recently separated from his American-born wife of five years.

Hunt, McCord, Gonzalez, Barker, Sturgis, Fiorini, Martinez.

The Watergate Five plus one, but they add up to far more than six. Just how much more nobody yet knows.



Washington's Watergate Complex, Focal Point of Expanding Mystery
... key figures, inset, from left, Barker, Gonzalez, Sturgis, Martinez, McCord