



By Oliphant in the Denver Post

'Annoyed, I think, at not making the President's political enemies list'

William Raspberry

'Bill, Why Aren't You on the List?'

My wife Sondra hung up the phone that had just awakened us early Thursday morning, The Day the List Came Out.

"That was Jim," she said. "He just read the paper and he says your name isn't on the list. He wanted to know why. Frankly, Bill, so do I."

"Aw, come on," I told her. "It's just a short little list—a dozen names, maybe." I had heard the night before that the White House list of "political enemies" had included a handful of top Democratic senators, a couple of black congressmen and a reporter or two.

"That's not the list I'm talking about," Sondra told me. "There's another, longer list, and it has all the black congressmen on it. More to the point, it has a lot of newsmen on it. Bill, why aren't you on the list?" She started to cry.

I was by then wide awake and gearing up to put on my brave front, but before I could say anything, the phone rang again. It was Charlie.

"Man, I thought you had some influence in this town. I've got just one thing to say to you." He said it, laughed, and hung up. Seconds later, the phone rang again.

"You call yourself a hard-hitting newspaperman, and you can't even make that jive cat's list," someone

said. I think it was Chet, but he hung up before I could be sure. I left the phone off the hook and told Sondra what was happening.

"It's all right," I tried to reassure her. "It's nothing, really."

That's easy enough for you to say," she said uneasily. "But I have to face the neighbors all day. What am I supposed to tell them."

"You can tell them that maybe I'm not on Nixon's list," I quipped, "but he's been on my list for years."

"Bill Cosby's already used that line," Sondra said. "He's on the list, you know. And so is Mary McGrory and Carl Rowan and Tom Braden and a lot of people I never heard of."

"Sweetie, those are syndicated columnists," I said. "That's the difference. What do you say let's get some breakfast."

"Bill, you have to stop pretending there's nothing wrong," she practically screamed. "Jim tells me there's maybe 50 names of media people on that list, and I don't believe they're all syndicated columnists."

"You told me there was nothing to worry about when Agnew was attacking all the journalists in the world except you. You told me there was nothing to worry about last month when the telephone man swore there was no tap on our line. Well, let me tell you, there is something to worry about, and you'd better start doing some of the worrying."

"I'm the one who has to explain it to the children. I'm the one who has to face the neighbors. Dan Schorr gets a full-fledged FBI report on him, and you . . . Bill, I haven't even seen a strange car in the neighborhood recently. It's apparent they don't think you're worth the trouble."

"Now really, Sondra, that's not quite fair . . ."

"Some big-time newsman you are," she went on as though I hadn't spoken. "You can't even get a lousy pair of season tickets for the Redskins."

The thing had gone too far, and it was clear that I had to come up with something.

I thought for a couple of minutes.

"Sondra," I said at last. "I had hoped I wouldn't have to go into this, but you leave me no choice. As you know, the list that came out yesterday had approximately 20 names on it. That was List B. And the one that came out today has 10 times that many. That's List C."

"What you don't know about is the third list—the first list, really—List A. That's the list with the really heavy hitters on it. Those are the people the President is really afraid of." I paused for effect. "That's the list my name is on."

"But why hasn't it been released?" she asked hopefully.

"Sondra, did it ever occur to you that this stuff you've been reading is just the stuff they left lying around?"

"What do you suppose they put in the shredder?"