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BERRIGAN WITNESS FORWARDED MAIL

Nun Says She Sent Letters
From Priest to Defendant

By HOMER BIGART

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HARRISBURG, Pa., Feb. 23—A nun testified for the Government today that she had served as a "mail drop" for one of the defendants accused in an alleged antiwar conspiracy to kidnap Henry A. Kissinger, blow up the heating systems of Government buildings in Washington and raid draft boards.

Sister Judith Savard, a teacher at Marymount Manhattan College, said she received mail for Sister Elizabeth McAlister at a time when the Government contends that Sister Elizabeth, the Rev. Philip F. Berrigan and five others were plotting to kidnap President Nixon's adviser for national security affairs.

Three or four letters clandestinely intended for Sister Elizabeth but addressed to Sister Judith at her residence at the time, 14 West 127th Street in New York, were received in late July and August of 1970, the witness said.

Father Berrigan, described by the Government as mastermind of the alleged conspiracy, was then serving a six-year sentence at the Federal Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pa., for destruction of draft records at Baltimore and Catonsville, Md.

No Return Address

There was no return address on the letters, Sister Judith said. The Government contends that an F.B.I. informer, Boyd Douglas Jr., also a prisoner at Lewisburg, smuggled the priest's letters out of the prison and sent them on to Sister Elizabeth.

Sister Elizabeth and Sister Judith are members of the religious of the Sacred Heart, a teaching order of Roman Catholic nuns. They were attached to its provincial headquarters in New York.

Sister Judith said that, in the summer of 1970, Sister Elizabeth asked her in a casual manner if she would receive some letters postmarked Lewisburg.

When the letters arrived, Sister Elizabeth had said, she could simply cross off her own name on the handwritten addresses, write in the name of Sister Elizabeth and take the letters to the provincial house. They were subsequently picked up there by Sister Elizabeth.

She said she had asked no questions of Sister Elizabeth. When asked by a defense attorney if she knew that "the convent was under surveillance," Sister Judith replied: "Yes, I felt a certain sense that some mail was being looked at."

Sister Judith was a reluctant Government witness who made no secret of her sympathy for the antiwar activists. She said that, following raids on three draft boards in early 1970, an action charged to the defendants, she willingly added her name to a petition whose signers accepted responsibility for the raids.

She said she was aware that one of the motives for the petition was to accumulate so many signatures that the real perpetrators of the raids could not be detected.

This morning, four Government witnesses who were said to have unwittingly aided Mr. Douglas, the F.B.I. informer, refused to testify against the defendants, invoking Fifth Amendment protection against possible self incrimination.

They were Jane Hoover and Mary Elizabeth (Betsy) Sandel, former Bucknell University codes who were dated by Mr. Douglas and who allegedly helped transcribe letters from Sister Elizabeth into a notebook that Mr. Douglas carried to Father Berrigan inside the prison, Mrs. Zoia Horne Galloway, a former librarian at Bucknell, and Patricia Rom, chief reference librarian at Bucknell.

Federal District Judge R. Dixon Herman delayed action on Justice Department application for the granting of full transactional immunity to the four women. The offer of such sweeping immunity, carrying a guarantee that the women could never be prosecuted on the basis of their testimony here, would force them to testify or face jail for contempt.