

Hanoi Taub's Latest Paper

Practices of a Non-Lawyer

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Nobody who meets William L. Taub ever forgets him.

There are judges, lawyers, policemen, businessmen, actors and actresses, impresarios and agents all across the United States—and in several other countries as well—still shaking their heads, chuckling and muttering about their encounter with this "fantastic guy" during the past three decades.

But this week, a number of key officials in the federal government and the Teamsters union are trying hard to forget Taub, who came within a hair of flying off to Hanoi with the union's paroled ex-president, James R. Hoffa.

How the two got together is still not entirely clear—"I met him in Miami," Hoffa told the Associated Press on Tuesday—but Taub apparently had full authority

from Hoffa to "represent" him in arranging a visit to North Vietnam to discuss the prisoner-of-war issue.

Taub was convincing enough over the past few months to get appointments with, among many others, presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Deputy Attorney General Ralph E. Erickson.

Some thought he was a lawyer, and Taub never bothered to correct that impression.

Not only does it turn out that he is not a lawyer, but also that there apparently never was any invitation for Hoffa to go to North Vietnam.

Aides to Kennedy claim they "checked him out" and within an hour of his session with the senator had decided that Taub was "a fraud."

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sions in New York, where the default case had been moved, Taub was held in civil contempt by U.S. District Court Judge Edmund L. Palmieri (later the subject of vituperative Taub attacks).

Records confirm that Taub spent 13 days in the federal House of Detention in New York in December, 1963, on the contempt conviction, but not before federal marshals knocked down the door of his Park Avenue apartment with an axe in order to find him.

He was released only after his mother put up her house in Atlantic City as security for payment of the \$32,000. Several years later, the

judgment was paid when the lawyers foreclosed the elderly Mrs. Taub's mortgage.

At one point, a federal appeals court ordered Taub to turn in his passport while a case was pending.

But he didn't, and a little later he turned up in Europe again. ("That man used to travel back and forth to Europe the way I commute to Manhattan from New Jersey," said Katz.)

Official records in Connecticut indicate that at an earlier stage in his career, on Oct. 2, 1947, Taub was arrested by the state police and charged with attempted bribery. He was convicted on Feb. 4, 1948, and sent

enced to six months in jail, with three months suspended. But nobody seems to recall the details of that, and some of the documents have since been thrown away.

Yesterday, administration officials were calling Taub "a very clever con man." Teamsters officials and Hoffa's son, James Jr., were not answering their phones.

Taub was in Paris, telling the Associated Press he soon hoped to have "results." His hotel there, however, said he had checked out at 6 a.m., destination unknown. His sister Beatrice, reached in Atlantic City, said she had not "heard from him recently."

It took the White House, the Justice Department, the FBI, the Secret Service and the State Department a little longer to discover that they all had thick files on Taub, files that would tend to weaken his credibility as an agent of international diplomacy. his credibility as an agent of international diplomacy.

It's not as if Taub did anything illegal during his meetings with officials on the proposed talks in Hanoi. He was too careful to do that, and the various departments are unanimous that there is no way the law can touch him.

"That's typically Taub," said one New York attorney as he reminisced in a tele-

phone interview.

There are Taub stories galore.

There was the time he received a "Golden Globe" award in Los Angeles as a co-producer of the film "Z" (he wasn't); the time he told European newsmen that he was a close friend of President Nixon (he isn't); and the time he showed White House aides a film on "Mao's China" that he said he had the rights to distribute (he didn't).

But one of the favorites involves his "representation" in the early 1960s of singer and actress Josephine Baker.

Albert B. Gins and Melvin J. Katz, New York lawyers who represented Miss Baker—as legal counsel, that is—provided this reconstruction yesterday:

Taub "lured" Miss Baker and her troupe to the United States from France, saying he had lined up "all sorts of engagements." There was a single performance in Los Angeles, but when she got to San Francisco for the next stop on the tour, she drew a blank.

Miss Baker and a San Francisco producer went to federal court, where they obtained a default judgment of \$32,000 against Taub. But collecting it was another matter.

"He led us on quite a merry chase," recalled Gins, saying that there were new suits and counter-suits, slander accusations and count-

er-accusations, appeals and cross-appeals.

Taub had "about nine" different lawyers in the matter, recalled Gins, who himself had represented Taub in an earlier dispute with actress Margaret Sullivan. Katz put the figure at "20 or 30" lawyers.

Some of the confusion arose from the fact that Taub occasionally represented himself in court, but filed long lists of attorneys on his legal papers. One former Attorney General, Herbert Brownell, had to go to court at one point to disavow his alleged "client."

Eventually, when he failed to appear at court ses-