

One-eyed jack

'Man, I bought some of my own junk back' from police

BY ZARKO FRANKS

THE CHRONICLE, TUESDAY, OCT. 18, 1954

Chronicle Staff

A black heroin pusher, Earl Voice, told an undercover narc a mind-blowing story. Cops here were selling dope to pushers.

"Man, I bought some of my own junk

Last of three

back from Sidney Smith. One deal was for \$5,000." Voice told W. C. Pool, the narc.

Pool had just arrested Voice on a drug charge. Now Voice, a high-rolling, flashy dresser, was blowing the whistle on old connections.

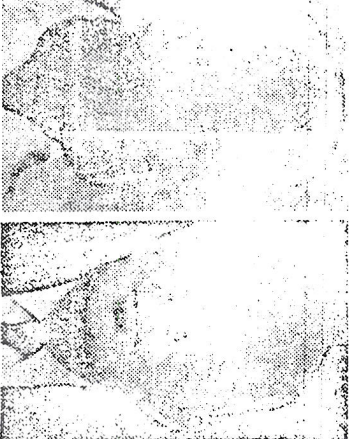
This potato was too hot for Pool. He took Voice to Capt. Joe Clark. Clark listened. How high up did the corruption go? Clark played it safe. He didn't tell his superiors or Chief L. D. Morrison. He took Voice to the county district attorney, Ewing T. Keen.

That was the prelude to perhaps the most infamous scandal within the Houston Police Department. **THE CHRONICLE, OCT. 18, 1954**

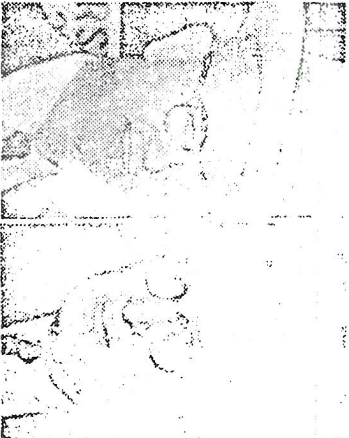
The time: Summer, 1954. Enter George H. White, U.S. narcotics agent, a one-eyed jack, who kept the other side of his face hidden from public view. Only after his death did it become known he had been an OSS spy and CIA operative.

Few people here knew anything about George White that summer 23 years ago. White quietly checked into the William Penn Hotel with two other Treasury agents, Fred Douglas and Harry Giardina.

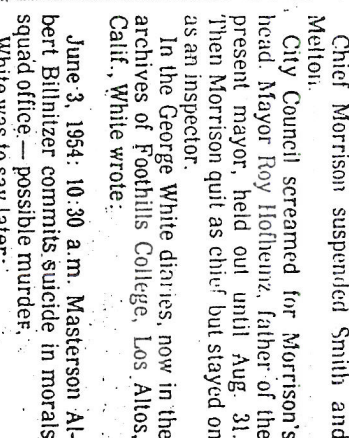
White, balding and moon-faced, was assembled in a bulldozer factory. At the time he carried 250 pounds on a 5-foot-7 frame. He wore a black sports shirt over his formidable stomach. He was a menace.



Smith



Morrison



Melton

Bilinitzer

ing figure. He was to become a hate object in Houston that summer.

Especially after undercover agent M. A. Bilinitzer, 45, was found shot to death with two bullet holes near his heart in a vice squad office of the Police Station at 81 Riessler. Bilinitzer's snub-nosed, 38 Smith and Wesson was near his body.

The night before Bilinitzer had made a 45-minute statement (taken on a tape recorder) to White in which he changed

an earlier statement he had made as to the amount of narcotics seized the previous year at 3306 1/2 Bacchus here. The narcotics, it was learned later, had belonged to Earl Voice.

In his latest story Bilinitzer said more than four ounces of heroin were seized along with a variety of pills. Earlier, he had said about one ounce was taken.

One jar, containing about one ounce, was still in a police captain's desk. Bilinitzer and Voice said two jars had been seized. Where was the missing heroin?

Voice, the peddler, had said Sidney Smith had sold him back some of the heroin taken from Bacchus Street the previous year.

For some unexplained reason, police had never made that narcotics seizure public.

Voice claimed more than \$500,000 worth of dope was taken.

Capt. Foy "Junior" Melton was head of the vice squad then. He was to face a lot of heat along with Sidney Smith, a goat-looking blond undercover man.

Reflections

on White 22 1977

THE CHRONICLE this week published a series of stories by investigative reporter Zarko Franks based on the diaries of the late George White, a flamboyant federal narcotics agent and Central Intelligence Agency operative.

The Chronicle's Stan Redding was one of the reporters who covered White when he was here investigating the so-called "police narcotics scandals" of 1954. Here are some of Redding's reflections on White:

"He was entertaining and a fascinating conversationalist, and I had no real anxiety concerning him, but in my opinion he wasn't much of a cop.

"He was arrogant. He had clout and used it.

"George White was short and obese, but he obviously loved fine attire. He affected black silk shirts, raw silk ties and expensive hats and shoes."

During two trials, Redding says, "White would greet me each morning with the comment: 'Got your running shoes on, reporter? I'm gonna get you next.'

"George Seber (then assistant police chief) after several days, told White: 'Leave the kid alone, George.'

"White grinned. 'You have any running shoes, Seber? You might need them, too, you know.' Neither of us ever needed them."

—Bob Tuttt

M. Tuttt (9)

(See PUSHER, Page 8)

Chief Morrison suspended Smith and Melton. City Council screamed for Morrison's head. Mayor Roy Hofheinz, father of the present mayor, held out until Aug. 31. Then Morrison quit as chief but stayed on as an inspector.

In the George White diaries, now in the archives of Foothills College, Los Altos, Calif., White wrote:

June 3, 1954: 10:30 a.m. Masterson Albert Bilinitzer commits suicide in morals squad office.— possible murder. White was to say later:

"I found it incredible to believe that a man with a bullet in his heart and a heavy blow on back of his head, could lie on the

(From Page 1)

floor and shoot himself a second time in the heart."

According to White's papers, a first bullet had pierced Billnitzer's heart. In falling, he struck a filing cabinet so hard that hair and blood stuck to it.

A justice of the peace ruled suicide. And a subsequent grand jury upheld the suicide verdict after an investigation by local authorities and Texas Ranger John Klevenhagen.

White, however, clung to the theory that Billnitzer's gun was switched by his killer. White's files show he was tracing the ownership of the death weapon and a similar weapon owned by a suspect as late as 1958, four years after Billnitzer's death. His findings were inconclusive.

After the Billnitzer death, Police Chief Morrison, a Scotch-Irish professor of criminology and slow to anger, gave vent to his pent-up fury. He called White a "hatchet man" who used "Gestapo" tactics as an investigator.

City Atty. Will Sears fired off letters to Washington to White's bosses and the two U.S. senators from Texas: Get White out of Houston; he's a public menace.

An excerpt from the Sears letter:

"The unscrupulous conduct by White defies proper description. I believe sincerely that this man used threats of indictment against an officer whose honesty can be attested to by persons in federal service, to the point of disturbing the balance of the officer's mind and as a result the officer committed suicide."

Official Washington ignored the Sears outcry.

White, who had won the U.S. Treasury Medal for outstanding service, ignored his critics.

"I believe Chief Morrison needs a long rest," he said.

Behind White were a string of big-league notches on his gun. He had smashed opium and other drug operations in Istanbul, Marseilles, Quito, Ecuador, and the Hip Sing Tong opium pipeline from San Francisco to New York.

The bombshells here came out of the federal grand jury.

Police Capt. Melton and Detective Sidney Smith were indicted on charges of violating narcotics law.

Dr. Julius McBride, Chief Morrison's physician and described by a neighbor as a "saint of a man," was indicted on charges of falsifying his narcotics record and "conduct unbecoming a doctor."

Dr. McBride, an osteopath, said he had given Chief Morrison codeine, a pain-killer, in the name of Billy Jackson, another patient. Yes, he had falsified his records, but it was to "protect the chief."

The chief suffered from a ruptured disc and needed codeine to alleviate his great pain, the doctor said.

The White papers indicate that one assistant U.S. attorney here seriously considered an indictment against Morrison, but that action was not taken.

The grand jury investigation had its serio-comic side.

Minutes of one grand jury proceeding show that the late Larry Fultz, then head

of the police subversive squad, testified that White was under scrutiny by that squad.

From the grand jury minutes:

Q. (To Fultz by U.S. Atty. Malcolm Wilkey)

Your sole reason for initiating activities against George White was that he was investigating the police department and that made him a possible subversive?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did you find any known associations with Communists?

A. No, sir.

Later, White was to say in interviews:

"Cops were handling dope in Houston like salted peanuts."

And: "I wouldn't live in Houston if they gave me every oil well in Texas."

White was vindicated of the charge that he browbeat or hounded Billnitzer to his death.

The tape recording of Billnitzer's session with White and two other federal agents was played later before U.S. Atty. Wilkey and the district attorney here, the late Ewing Werlein. The questioning was calm. At times Billnitzer laughed.

Dr. Julius McBride, 46, was convicted and sent to a federal prison. He died of multiple sclerosis in a nursing home here in the early 1960's.

Foy Melton, 53, acquitted by a jury of any wrongdoing, shot and killed himself on the parking lot of the criminal courts building here on Feb. 2, 1967.

Sidney Smith, 44, who was convicted and got three years for narcotics violations, turned to the needle. His body was found wrapped in a blanket, dumped in the woods in the 600 block of DeBoll on Sept. 9, 1968. Official cause of death: overdose. Acute narcotism.

Chief L. D. Morrison, 73, died of a heart attack here last year.

Detective W. C. Pool was fired in the winter of 1954 on charges he was drunk.

George White helped to get him a job as police chief in North Las Vegas. Pool was convicted there of beating a prisoner and sentenced to federal prison. He last wrote George White from prison in 1958. He was last reported working as a dealer in a Nevada casino.

Earl Voice, 63, the black peddler who blew the whistle, died of cancer of the bladder in state prison May 8, 1975. He was buried in Houston in a cemetery named Paradise.

And George White, 67, soldier, spy and CIA operative and narc non pareil, died of a heart attack in Stinson Beach, Calif. He was the town's voluntary fire marshal.

WHO'S SHADOWING WHO?

T-Man Bristles, Says He Was Trailed

THU JUN 10 1954

A thin man with a bulge under his red corduroy jacket trailed a bull-shouldered figure into the Greyhound Bus Station.

The trailer was Detective James McAfferty of the police department security squad. His target was George White, roving supervisor for the Federal Bureau of Narcotics.

White didn't know McAfferty was a cop.

Ducking into a phone booth, the federal agent called the police department.

A patrol car arrived moments later and several officers identified McAfferty as a policeman.

"What's the idea of following me?" Agent White asked Detective McAfferty.

"I was looking for the men's room," replied McAfferty.

"How silly can a guy get?" Agent White, an old hand at hunting the hunted of the underworld, vows that he was being shadowed.

"The man followed me from the William Penn to the bus station," he said.

Was McAfferty really trailing the federal agent?

McAfferty says no. Lt. Larry Fultz, boss of the security squad, says he didn't order the detective to tail the agent.

"If we had assigned a man to shadow him," says Fultz, "neither White nor anyone else would have known it."

6/10/54 - 6/17/54

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George White
Federal Agent
June 10, 1954

Probe to Go On, T-Man Asserts

Demands That U. S. Call Off Dope Agent Apparently Ignored

How deep are federal agents digging into the Houston narcotics scandal?

They're not talking yet, but the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Bureau Agent George White, target of sharp criticism from Police Chief I. D. Morrison and City Attorney Will Sears, did announce to reporters Thursday that "We're going to be in town for a while."

On Deaf Ears
His statement was an indication that Mr. Sears' demands to halt a dozen Washington officials—including White's boss, Treasury Secretary George Humphrey—that White be pulled off the Houston investigation, have fallen on deaf ears.

These were the latest developments Thursday in the case:

1. Agent White and Treasury Agent Fred Douglas were closeted for two hours behind closed doors with United States Assistant District Attorney Carlos Watson, Jr., and John Snodgrass.

2. City Attorney Sears huddled with Lieutenant Larry Fullz of the police department for an hour.

3. District Attorney E. W. Werlein is preparing the

Related news on Page 2, Section B.

state's case for the Harris County grand jury.

Information Turned In

Agent White told newsmen: "We have turned some information over to the United States attorney."

He would not elaborate on the nature of the information.

Asked if he had experienced

any repercussions over the charges of "scandalous misconduct" hurled at him by Attorney Sears and Police Chief Morrison, White laughed.

"If I've been fired," he said, "nobody's told me anything about it."

After the conference with the agents, Mr. Snodgrass said: "No decisions have been made

yet. The agents will remain in the city until the investigation is completed. This was a routine conference."

Meanwhile, the police department, stewing in the current scandal, will try to rebuild its shattered morale tonight.

The rank and file of the Houston Police Officers Association meets at 7:30 p.m. at the police station.

"We want to bring an end to the rumors and bickerings within our ranks," said Officer E. R. Goodnight, association president.

Punish Gully

"We'll try to adopt resolutions asking that the mess be brought into the courts, where it belongs, so the guilty can be punished and the innocent cleared."

Three Key Issues

The investigation hinges on three key issues:

1. The alleged sale of narcotics by a city detective to a convicted peddler.

2. The whereabouts of a part of a heroin seizure with an estimated retail value of \$75,000, which was dug up in a Houston back yard last August.

3. The reported suicide of Detective M. A. Billnitzer.

Chief Morrison was closeted with Mr. Werlein for two

hours Wednesday. After that meeting the two men said the case will be given to the grand jury "as soon as possible."

Mr. Werlein said Wednesday he had considered exhuming the body of Billnitzer to check out rumors that the detective may have been murdered, but he announced Thursday that the exhumation will not be necessary.

The doubt in the suicide rested in the fact that the detective was shot twice through the heart.

"Leading medical men have assured me that's possible," said Mr. Werlein. "It's not common, of course, but possible."

He said he was certain Billnitzer shot himself.

As Mr. Werlein prepared the case for the Harris County grand jury, federal agents here—targets of criticism from Chief Morrison and Mr. Sears—strengthened their investigative force. There are four here now.

A new agent in the city is Paul Gross.

"He's here to work on this case," said George White, the moving supervisor of the Federal Narcotics Bureau from Washington.

Two other police officers lined up Wednesday night, with Chief Morrison and Mr. Sears in their depiction of Agent White as an ogre whose sharp questioning intimidates Houston's law enforcers.

"Malleous and Obnoxious"

Detectives B. S. Baker and G. H. Larue, who have been questioned by White, heaped more criticism on the federal agent in statements to the police department Wednesday night. They described him as "malleous and obnoxious" in his methods.

Mr. Werlein and Federal Grand Jury Foreman T. C. Brennan have said they think Agent White is a "fine, efficient officer."

They are two of the men who heard a tape recording taken by federal agents during White's questioning of Billnitzer, and found no evidence that Billnitzer was "intimidated."

TO CIRCULATE

George White
Federal Agent
June 10, 1954

Agent White Has Broken Many Narcotic Rings

A moon-faced, balding federal agent stands today as the most controversial personality in Houston's narcotics story.

San Francisco-born George White has been called here a "hitlerman." He's been accused of "unscrupulous tactics." City Attorney Will Sears has asked top Washington brass to remove him from the case.

Police Chief L. D. Morrison accused White of mauling the reputation of a dead detective.

Is Agent White really an egre who's been terrorizing the police department?

Here's His Record

Here's his record from Washington and other sources who know him:

White is one of the most brilliant investigators in the narcotics bureau. He has broken narcotics rings in this country, Europe and Asia as an undercover man.

He was a newspaperman on the West Coast. He's 46 years old.

As one federal agent here said, "White is a big-time agent. He's sent where there's something big. He doesn't have to make a reputation. He owns one now."

Agent White has been profiled in several national magazines.

"White has a very fine record and has received several commendations for his work." George W. Cunningham, deputy commissioner of the narcotics bureau, told The Chronicle Washington Bureau. "He has a reputation for conducting investigations in a fair manner. I have faith in his integrity."

From a source who knows White well, came the story that White once spent a year of his own time to free a man he had helped to convict.

Treasury Medal

"He had sent that man up," his friend said. "When White learned the man was convicted through false information he finally cleared the man."

White's record shows investigated this nation's racketeers to the Kefauver committee.

And he holds the Treasury Medal for Exceptional Service for wiping out dope rings in the Middle East and Europe.

Former Army Colonel

White was a one-time colonel in Office of Strategic Service, the army's elite espionage corps.

George White

Federal Roving Narcotics Supervisor---

June 17, 1954

T-Man White Liar, Charges Police Chief

Morrison Denies He's Unavailable for Talks

THU JUN 17 1954
Angry, red-faced Police Chief L. D. Morrison Thursday called roving Narcotics Supervisor George White a liar.

He said White's statement that he was unable to talk to Chief Morrison is "a premeditated falsehood and designed intentionally to mislead."

"The statement is a continuation of White's known practice of untruths and half-truths," the chief told reporters.

"So angry that he clenched his fists, the chief declared: "The federal investigators have a standing invitation to come over and talk to me. I'll even furnish transportation."

White had "no comment" on Chief Morrison's blast.

The chief last week attacked White's role in the local investigation. He accused the noted investigator of browbeating Detective M. A. Billnitzer before Billnitzer shot himself to death in the police station on June 3.

It was Billnitzer's suicide which brought the scandal into the open. Mayor Roy Hofheinz and City Attorney Will Sears have joined Chief Morrison in criticism of the federal investigator.

Other Federal Men Chief Morrison also said Thursday that he had, in fact, talked with federal men other than White.

"I talked with Henry Giordana. He asked me to come to the hotel room. It was the day of the atomic bomb raid," Chief Morrison said.

The chief said he proposed a Tuesday appointment, but Giordana said that the investigators would be "busy."

Chief Morrison wanted the men to come to his office with District Attorney Ewing Werlein present.

"We couldn't get together on the time, so I asked them to call me when they had time to meet with me," Chief Morrison added.

"Never Called"

He said they never called. Mr. White had no comment at the chief's statement.

Meanwhile, former Burglary and Theft Detective Sidney B. Smith appealed to the civil service commission for reinstatement.

Smith, who was fired two weeks ago, claims that the city is trying to deprive him of the chance to make a living without due process of law.

On the federal front, the United States marshal's office was serving the last of 50 subpoenas for the recalled federal grand jury which opens Monday.

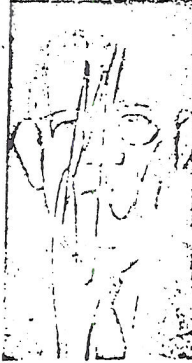
Some 30 of the people summoned to testify are police officers.

The investigation is to find

out what happened to part of a \$75,000 cache of heroin dug from a back yard in a local Negro district last August.

Part of it has disappeared. Part of it was kept in Assistant Chief George Seber's desk and was turned over to federal agents June 1. More was turned over to the agents June 3. This portion had been held by Vice Squad Capt. Foy Melton, who has been relieved of duty pending further investigation.

RETURN TO CHRONICLE MORGUE



CHIEF L. D. MORRISON "Premeditated Falsehood"



GEORGE WHITE "No Comment"

9/54 - 6/10/54

HITE, GEORGE ED. AGENT

blamed in Billnitzer Suicide

City Attorney Will Sears Wednesday asked top Washington officials to remove Federal Agent George White from the narcotics investigation here.

Attorney Sears' attack on the agent came on the heels

Morrison Statement Text
on Page 10-A

of Police Chief L. D. Morrison's bitter denunciation of White late Tuesday night.

In a wire addressed to Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey, Sears assailed the methods used by Agent White, White, a roving supervisor for the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, is subject to orders from the Treasury Department.

Copy to Hoover

Attorney Sears wired copies of the telegram to F. B. I. Chief J. Edgar Hoover, United States Senators Landon Johnson and Price Daniel, and United States Representative Albert Thomas.

"The unscrupulous conduct by White defies proper description," Attorney Sears wire said. "I believe sincerely that this man used threats of indictment against an officer to the point of disturbing the balance of the officer's mind and as a result the officer committed suicide."

"This was in obvious reference to the suicide last week of Detective M. A. Billnitzer."

Call Wire "Ridiculous". "The telegram is ridiculous," White said. "We have been in direct communication with Washington all the time."

This investigation will continue.

While Sears and Morrison criticized White's investigative methods, Harris County District Attorney Ewing Werlein said he didn't believe federal agents had intimidated Detective Billnitzer.

Mr. Werlein has listened to a 45-minute tape recording made by federal agents during the agents' questioning of Billnitzer.

"Abuse Not Indicated"

He said the recording did not indicate that federal agents had abused the detective in questioning him.

"I do not think Billnitzer was intimidated," the district attorney said.

Attorney Sears, in his wire, accused Agent White of maligning the character of a dead detective before he was even buried.

The wire was in the form of an official protest against the manner of White's investigation.

Mr. Sears asked the assignment of "some other impartial official of the Treasury Department to continue this investigation and at the same time investigate White's conduct."

United States Attorney Malcolm Wilkey—in Galveston on official business—made this comment on Attorney Sears' bid to remove Agent White:

"I would not—from what I now know—recommend the withdrawal of White from this case."

No Punches Pulled

Chief Morrison—usually a temperate, slow-to-anger man who chooses his words with care—pulled no punches in heaping his wrath on the federal men in general, and on George White, a roving supervisor for the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, in particular.

In his prepared statement, the chief referred to Agent White as a "hatcheyman." And the statement was rich with

words such as "propaganda experts" and "gestapo."

The chief's blast widened the gulf between police and federal investigators trying to unravel the mystery of how a \$75,000 cache of heroin, seized last August, was handled by police.

Worked on Macco Case

Chief Morrison, a one-time narcotics undercover man himself reportedly began seething over the federal questioning of Detective Billnitzer.

His anger mounted when federal agents began to question the suicide verdict in Billnitzer's death despite apparently conclusive evidence, including paraffin tests, that the detective had shot himself.

Prepared Statement

Late Tuesday night the chief stepped out of his office and handed newsmen his statement, in which he accused Federal Agent White of undermining the Houston police department and threatening of Detective Billnitzer.

Agent White's comment, "The chief's statement is hard to understand. I do not know why he would make such statements. I think he needs a long rest. There is not a word of truth in what he says."

Had federal men "browbeaten" Detective Billnitzer as the chief has charged?

The Chronicle learned Wednesday that at least four officials heard a 45-minute tape-recorded statement made by Billnitzer to federal agents the night before his suicide.

The men were District Attorney Ewing Werlein, Assistant District Attorney Een Morris, Federal Grand Jury Foreman T. C. Brennan and Harris County Grand Jury Foreman Harry Burkett.

Werlein Statement

Asked if he thought Billnitzer had been "intimidated," Mr. Werlein said:

"I want to make it clear that Chief Morrison has been most co-operative. I consider him a most efficient, capable chief. I accept his word at par. I am not going to take issue with him."

However, it seems to me the federal men are efficient and competent and are objectively seeking irregularities in the handling of narcotics.

"I have not seen or heard evidence of them intimidating anyone. I don't think Billnitzer was intimidated. It was a question-and-answer record, Billnitzer laughed once."

Federal Grand Jury Foreman Brennan, who also heard the Billnitzer tape-recording, threw his weight in support of Agent White.

"I have the greatest respect for Mr. White," Mr. Brennan said. "I have no reason whatsoever to believe Mr. Billnitzer

was intimidated in any way by federal agents."

"What did the detective say in the tape-recording?"

Implicated No One. "He (Billnitzer) did not incriminate anyone or implicate anyone," Mr. Werlein said.

"He just stated what has already been in the papers about the disposition of seized narcotics."

United States Attorney Malcolm Wilkey said he could refute some of the chief's allegations. He said he did not want to elaborate on this.

"Close to Home"

"Concerning other allegations," he said, "I would draw the conclusion that the treasury investigators are pretty close to home," he added.

The chief accused Agent White of implying that Detective Billnitzer may have been murdered "with the clear implication that fellow officers, including superiors, may have been guilty."

United States Attorney Wilkey said he will not lay the case before a federal grand jury "until the investigators complete their reports."

Earlier Tuesday Chief Morrison mailed a letter to the civil service commission. This letter pinpointed the reasons why the chief has fired Detective Sidney Smith. One of the charges is that "Sidney B. Smith had been implicated in the unlawful transfer of narcotics."

Charges Denied

Smith, who has refused to answer the chief's summons to appear for questioning, sent the chief a wire Tuesday in which he branded the charges a "tissie of falsehoods." He offered to make sworn-written statements to "personally face a grand jury."

Chief Morrison also charged that Detective Smith had been guilty of association with Earl Voire, convicted narcotics peddler.

Voire has made statements to the

that he made narcotics buys from "a city detective."

Smith has denied all charges made against him. He has called Voire "a liar."

Attorney Bernard Golding and C. C. Davine, representing Smith, have said Smith will make a statement in which he will implicate other police officers "who are not guilty, but officers who will prove Smith's innocence."

Commenting on the Morrison-Sears injection of the F. B. I. into the done investigation, George Burton, Houston agent in charge for the F. B. I., said Wednesday:

"I have no comment, except that I have received nothing on this matter indicating any violation of a federal law over which we have jurisdiction."

The F. B. I. does not usually conduct investigations in Houston.

As disseminated by the city rank and file, the district attorney here delivered a copy of the file of Detective Billnitzer from police reports.

Shortly after the filing, Chief Morrison, in the office of Werlein, went on

visit to the