

Key Watergate Figure

James Walter McCord Jr.

NYTimes

Special to The New York Times,

MAR 29 1973

Worked as F.B.I. Clerk

WASHINGTON, March 28 —Ever since the police arrested five men inside the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee headquarters last June, investigators and the curious have been asking questions about them — particularly about the chief of the break-in squad, James Walter McCord Jr. Who was McCord working for? What was his role at the Committee for the Re-election of the President? How much did he know about who ordered the Watergate operation? Where did he come from?

Only a few of the questions about the Watergate affair and about the man have been answered. Presumably some of them were asked again today when McCord testified in private before a select Senate committee.

McCord was an employe of the Central Intelligence Agency for more than 20 years. Some say he was just a technician, a subordinate whose days were consumed assigning guards, guarding safes and generally securing the C.I.A. headquarters hidden in the woods at Langley, Va.

Reputed Security Chief

Others say he was the chief of all security for the agency. "He was the No. 1 man," L. Fletcher Prouty, a retired Air Force colonel, asserts.

"I was introduced to McCord by Allen Dulles [the former C.I.A. director] who said, 'Here is my top man,'" recalls Mr. Prouty, who has just written a book, "The Secret Team," about his years in intelligence work.

The introduction came at a meeting concerning an investigation of the shooting down of a United States Air Force plane over the Soviet Union in 1959.

McCord was such a good interrogator, Mr. Prouty says, that, from the questions he asked the crew when it returned, he was able to find a picture and identify the Soviet intelligence agent who had questioned the airmen.

Mystery also shrouds McCord's private life. He was born somewhere in Texas—those who know will not say definitely where or when.

When he was arrested on June 16, 1972, McCord told the police he was born Oct. 9, 1918. He did not give the place. Later, bail records indicated he was born July 26, 1924. These data would make the baldish McCord, who has kept his sturdy physique, either 48 or 54 years old.

Reports have floated around Washington that he and his wife, Sarah, are both graduates of Baylor University, but officials there say he never attended the school.

The first concrete bit of James McCord's biography begins with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, where he began as a clerk in 1942. He was still a clerk when, in 1946, he left, for what reason has not been determined. In 1948 he returned to the bureau as a special agent.

Aid for the Handicapped

McCord joined the C.I.A. in 1951 and is believed to have played a role in the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. Little else is known of his work in either agency.

More is known about McCord's life after his retirement in 1970.

He went to his pastor, the Rev. Walter C. Smith of the Rockville United Methodist Church in suburban Maryland, and said he wanted to spend half a day each week working for the church. Mr. Smith, who said McCord attended church every Sunday with his family before he was jailed, set up a program for older members of the congregation to meet once a month for a "social fellowship."

McCord, who has a retarded daughter, Nancy, also spent many hours working to help handicapped children. He was the chairman of a group called Concerned Citizens for Exceptional Children, and he volunteered to help get a new wing for his daughter's school, the Kennedy Institute, in Washington.

"They are just a lovely family, and wonderful neighbors," according to one housewife living on the cul-de-sac in Rockville where the McCords reside in their \$38,000 brick home.

Taught at College

The neighbors say the McCord's son, Michael, is a junior at the Air Force Academy and that their other daughter, Carol Anne, attends the University of Maryland.

McCord taught at nearby Montgomery College for two semesters in 1971. The course, "Industrial and Retail Security," was described in the school catalogue as "the historical, philosophical and legal basis of government and industrial security programs in a democratic society."

McCord now has a new secret. During the 16 days when he was on trial he spent hours writing in a spiral notebook in the courtroom. When asked what he was writing, McCord, a gregarious man, even during the trial, would smile but would not answer the question.

7 Winder Ct., Rockville
(18may73 testimony)

* Birth date taken from false ID ?
In his testimony before Senate Watergate Committee on 18May73, McCord said he was "born in 1924, at Waurika, Oklahoma...." and spelled out Waurika, a small town just above the Texas border northeast of Wichita Falls, Texas.