

Chief HUAC Investigator Dies

By Jean R. Hailey

Washington Post Staff Writer

Louis James Russell, 61, a former chief investigator for the House Un-American Activities Committee, died yesterday after a heart attack at the home of a daughter in Calvert County, Md.

Mr. Russell, who was perhaps best known for his role in the famous Alger Hiss case during the 1940s, had suffered a heart attack March 23. He had been in the Washington Adventist Hospital but had been released about 10 days ago to go to the home of his daughter.

An investigator for many years, first with the FBI and then with the House committee, Mr. Russell had worked since 1966 as a private investigator and had been connected at times with McCord and Associates.

He was a friend of James W. McCord Jr., the convicted Watergate conspirator who opened wide the Watergate case in March. Mr. Russell brought McCord and his present lawyer, Bernard Fensterwald, also a friend, together and played an important role in May in raising bail for McCord.

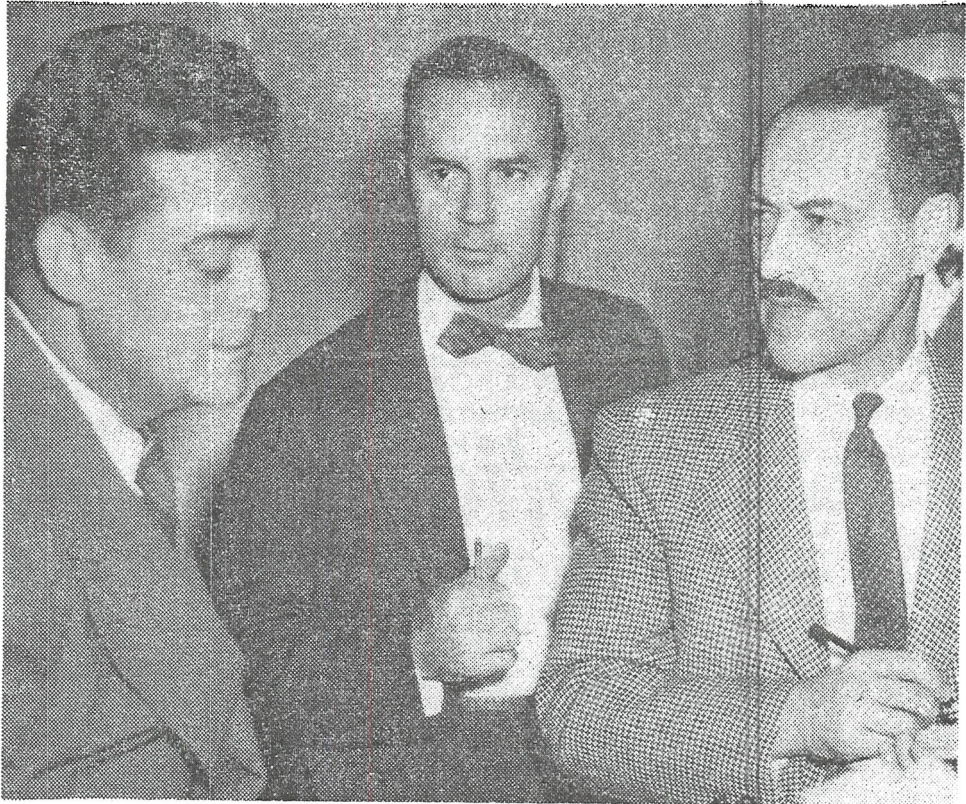
Mr. Russell was questioned by the FBI in connection with the Watergate case but was never implicated in it.

Yesterday, District Court Judge John Sirica granted McCord permission to attend the funeral today for Mr. Russell in Mutual, Md. Under terms of his bond, McCord must remain in the Washington area unless granted court permission to go outside of it.

Mr. Russell had served with the House Un-American Activities Committee from 1945 until he was fired in 1954 during a "house-cleaning" of the staff. Both the staff members and members of the committee had become sharply divided.

Two years later, Mr. Russell again was placed on the staff of the Committee, where he remained for another 10 years.

At the time of the Alger Hiss hearings, Mr. Russell



Louis Russell, left, with B. L. Livingston, right, of AP and unidentified reporter.

was an assistant investigator. Hiss had been accused by the late Whittaker Chambers of being a member of the Communist Party while employed as a high-ranking government official.

At that time, a freshman congressman, Richard M. Nixon, was serving on the committee. In his book, "Six Crises," Mr. Nixon called the Hiss case the first "major crisis of my political life."

Both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Chambers, in his book, "Witness," told how Mr. Russell intervened when at one point it looked as though Hiss was about to strike Mr. Chambers.

Mr. Russell was questioned extensively at the hearings about the investigations he had made in the case.

Robert K. Carr, a Dartmouth College professor, later wrote of Mr. Russell in a book on the Committee:

"Through the years, Russell's assignment has been conducting the actual work

of field investigation. In his own background of training and experience, and in his attitudes toward the Committee's work, Russell has been typical of the kind of man who has served upon the Committee's investigative staff. . . ."

He wrote that Mr. Russell had been "efficient, hard-working and conscientious. But when it comes to an understanding of the larger significance of the Committee's work, or of the implications of an undertaking by a democratic government to control subversive activity, it is not unfair to say that Russell is an unsophisticated person."

He said Mr. Russell identified all Communists simply as "bad" men to be discovered and exposed. At the same time, Mr. Russell "revealed a certain basic sense of fair play," Carr wrote.

Born in Louisville, Mr. Russell was the son of a long-time FBI agent. He graduated from Columbia University, now part of Catholic University, with a

bachelor's degree in accounting.

He worked for the FBI for 10 years, specializing in investigating bank robberies. It was noted that although he carried less bulk, he had a resemblance of sorts to the late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. A good memory was considered one of his greatest assets.

Mr. Russell also excelled in sports. He was a star baseball outfielder during his school days and after leaving school he turned professional, playing right field in the Triple A League.

He left the FBI just before World War II to handle security work for the Sperry Gyroscope Corp. After the war, he joined the House Committee and was named its chief investigator in 1949.

He is survived by four children, all of southern Maryland, Jacqueline Leah Dixon, at whose home near St. Leonard he was staying at the time of his death, Jean Marie Cooper, John Robert and Joel Alan, and six grandchildren.

*the day McCord's letter to Judge Sirica was read in court.