

# Weicker Files Show Probe's 'Third Front'

By Jules Witcover

Washington Post Staff Writer

In the office of Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-Conn.), a file cabinet of folders bearing all the names made famous and infamous in the Watergate scandal tells the story of what one of his aides likes to call "the third front" in the Senate's investigation.

Most of it is old stuff by now: summaries of closed interviews with Watergate witnesses conducted by that "third front" — Weicker's own investigative team — and by the first two "fronts" — the majority and minority staffs of the Senate Watergate committee. Most of the material long since has been made public in open, televised testimony.

But the files — opened to *The Washington Post* after Weicker's statement during the recent testimony of White House aide Patrick J. Buchanan that his own files are "totally available" — chart the immense amount of work that goes into a senator's participation in a major investigation, especially when he attempts an independent course.

The files include hundreds of random scraps of paper touching on Watergate that in years ahead can give those who peruse them a sense of intimacy with a historic investigation.

Weicker already has agreed to turn over all the files to the Connecticut State Library in Hartford.

In the files, in Weicker's handwriting, are scribbled notes on critical phone calls and conversations with some of the leading characters in the biggest political scandal in American history: L. Patrick Gray III, the deposed acting FBI director; John W. Dean III, the President's counsel who sang long and loud when he suspected he was being made a scapegoat; Alfred Baldwin, the man on the other end of the bugged Watergate phones; the four Cuban exiles convicted in the break-in; and many more.

Folder after folder contains questions that were asked, and some that weren't, that were the product of Weicker's independent investigation, begun almost as soon as he was appointed to the Ervin committee last Feb. 8, and still going on, though more modestly now.

#### Mark of Maverick

That independent investigation, geared at the outset to establish responsibility for what happened in the Nixon re-election campaign, propelled Weicker into the headlines in late March when he charged that Watergate went far beyond the seven convicted conspir-



SEN. LOWELL WEICKER  
... own Watergate inquiry

ators, into the White House itself.

It produced his statement that H. R. (Bob) Haldeman was the responsible figure ultimately, and, under questioning at a meeting with newsmen, a call for Haldeman's resignation. From that moment, the 42-year-old first-term senator had the mark of maverick on him that he still bears within the committee and — even more so — at the White House.

Since those early days, however, Weicker, according to committee staff members, has settled more into the team. One of his investigators, of whom the committee staff was critical, has left, and a Weicker aide accused of leaking to the press has been reined in, they say.

William Shure, a young Connecticut lawyer who was brought in by Weicker as assistant minority counsel and served until last week, is rated by Rufus Edmisten, deputy majority counsel, as "the A-1 staff member, very precise and dogged."

What Weicker's independ-

See WEICKER, F17, Col. 8

ent effort has contributed is a matter of perspective. One committee aide, a Democrat, calls it "tangential," another, also a Democrat, says, "I'm tempted to say, if you give me a week, maybe I can think of something." But a third, also a Democrat, says Weicker's group "has given us some very good leads and has been very helpful."

Weicker is credited by Democrats on the staff as having developed the role of the Justice Department's Internal Security Division as an intelligence-gathering unit for the Nixon re-election committee. He also is cited for disclosure of the memorandum on which Haldeman welcomed demonstrations against President Nixon at a Billy Graham celebration in Charlotte, N.C., in 1971, as a means of stirring up sympathy.

#### Meeting Notes

Weicker himself says his main contribution has been "to keep the committee honest" — to give it credibility by having a Republican who has been as aggressive in trying to ferret out Watergate facts as any Democrat.

Of all the hundreds of documents in Weicker's files, perhaps the most interesting are notes on two meetings he had with four of the Cuban-Americans convicted in the Watergate break-in and imprisoned at the federal penitentiary in Danbury, Conn.

The notes of the first meeting, on Aug. 13, reveal the depth of disillusionment among the four prisoners that they not only were duped, but that they are being forsaken. Bernard Barker, who hired the others, is quoted as saying that I'm not really guilty of anything but being a goddamned fool."

Two of the four, according to the notes, expressed considerable suspicion of convicted fellow-conspirator James W. McCord Jr., suggesting at least by implication that he had wanted the group to get caught, that he may have been a double agent.

The Watergate burglars were discovered when a watchman found tape over the lock on a door, removed it, and then returned, saw that the lock had been taped again and called the police.

According to the Weicker notes, which are not verbatim, convicted conspirator Eugenio Martinez said "that when they made their entry they were in all right, but because McCord was late, they had to put tape on the door the second time. And when he finally joined them, they asked him whether he had removed the tapes when he came up and he said he had. But the fact

of the matter is, he hadn't, and that's what led to their getting caught."

Frank Sturgis, the second convicted conspirator, "presented a series of facts concerning McCord's involvement which he implied certainly cast some question on whether or not McCord had a different role than the one they thought he did," the notes say.

#### McCord Was Late

"For example," he said at the outset, "McCord got us equipment that didn't work. Baldwin was stationed across the street but when the police were searching the building the men inside had not been warned and tipped off. McCord came late to the rendezvous and not only came late but told them he had taken the tape off the door when it turned out he had not."

"It's also strange," Sturgis said, "that three policemen were cruising in that very area, three policemen in plain clothes. McCord was the first one after they were all caught to open up and spill the beans. And yet it's all very strange that McCord is walking around free and we are in jail. McCord was the one who had ordered them all not to talk."

(According to a committee source, the four Danbury prisoners were brought to Washington in the last few weeks, in advance of the public testimony of E. Howard Hunt, Jr. to review their account of the break-in and Hunt's role. On this occasion, too, the source said, they questioned McCord's conduct and implied that he had been a double agent. But the committee has dismissed the possibility, he said. The prisoners currently are being held at the Montgomery County Detention Center in Rockville.)

Barker also told Weicker, according to the notes, that he and the other Cuban-Americans wanted to plead guilty only to the attempted theft of documents, but not the bugging of the phones, which was McCord's responsibility, but that "the judge insisted that we plead guilty

See WEICKER, F18, Col. 1

#### WEICKER, From F17

to all of it." Barker insisted this was "extremely unfair because they had clearly nothing to do with the bugging whatsoever," the notes say.

Martinez also told Weicker, the notes say, that the Watergate team was scheduled to break into the headquarters of Democratic candidate Sen. George McGovern "the same night, that is the same night that they did Watergate and got caught."

The interview indicates that the Watergate break-in and the earlier break-in of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office were presented to the Cuban-Americans not only as matters of national security, but emphatically as operations that in the long run would contribute to the

downfall of their mortal enemy, Fidel Castro.

#### Cuban Operations

Barker told Weicker, according to the notes that when Hunt first approached him to organize the team, "Hunt talked about the possibility of re-summing raids on Cuba in the future and even the possible assassination of Castro."

When Hunt later approached him to organize a group of Cuban exiles to gather information on the Democratic convention and to counter radical demonstrators at the Republican convention, the notes say, Barker "said he started laying the groundwork and was told that the group, the cadres, should be all Cubans."

"He had been told by Hunt that out of this group might eventually come the group that would go back into Cuba someday, and that they would be in preparation in a sense for the new phase of Cuban operations."

Virgili Gonzales, the locksmith, said he was told "this was something that was eventually going to help get Castro," and Martinez, according to the notes, said, "Hunt told us he was the most knowledgeable man in the White House on Cuba. He said I'm the expert on Cuba and that when the Vietnam war is over and . . . it had been settled down, they'd be going back to Cuba and he would be the top guy in the White House in charge of this."

All the prisoners said they had received no promises of clemency or rehabilitation after their jail sentences, but all have had plenty of job offers or their own businesses to return to. In promising that they were going to be eventually working toward bringing down Castro, Martinez said, according to the notes, "maybe that's why they looked for Cuban dummies to pull this job."

The prisoners also told Weicker that the break-in was marked by incredible bungling from the start. Martinez said, according to the notes, that "had they not been caught he had already made up his mind that he would not do any more missions for this group (of) . . . highly unprofessional bunglers."

#### Disenchantment Capped

For the Watergate break-in, Martinez said, he was told to buy 60 rolls of film, each with 36 exposures, or 2,160 pictures. He cited this, the notes say, "as an example of the idiocy of the whole adventure, saying it would be totally impossible ever to take that many pictures on a covert operation such as this."

Martinez, the notes say, "said he was totally disgusted with all of this and very puzzled. He couldn't understand the amateurism and the sloppiness and was very concerned about it. But he said he kept being reassured that they knew what they were doing, that they were the experts, that they were the leaders and that they knew what they were doing."

All this disenchantment is

capped, the notes indicate, by a belief by the Cuban-Americans that they have been abandoned—"just small little guys who are the pawns in the whole thing . . . idiots who were suckered into this and who are used."

Compared to the huge amount of funds provided to Hunt for his lawyers' fees, the prisoners told Weicker, they received only \$12,000 from Hunt's late wife, to be divided among the four of them, plus \$35,000 in posted bonds and legal fees. Their families can't visit them at Danbury for lack of funds, they said.

Although Weicker campaigned loyally for the President's re-election through 1972, his files show that he

was disillusioned very early with the Nixon campaign tactics.

He bowed out of membership on a congressional advisory committee to the Nixon campaign's young voters committee when an aide reported to him that the youth campaign in the New Hampshire primary was out of tune with young people.

#### N.H. Overkill

A memo dated Feb. 9, 1972, from Kenneth Reitz, head of the Nixon youth operation, to Jeb Stuart Magruder, deputy campaign manager, says Weicker quit because he couldn't have complete control and "he felt his reputation was at stake."

Weicker says he went to New Hampshire himself,



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... files go to library

saw the same over-organization and overkill, with no reaching out to people that

marked the whole Nixon campaign in 1972, and pulled out. "It was unreal," he says. Instead of trying to recruit New Hampshire youth, he says, the campaign bused them in from three nearby states as a show of strength.

Weicker says he also was turned off when the Nixon administration wrote off Republicans running against Southern Democrats favored by the White House, particularly Gilbert Carmichael, who ran and lost against Democratic Sen. James O. Eastland in Mississippi.

Weicker campaigned for the party but in three October speeches he began to talk about the erosion of public confidence in politics resulting from a number of

factors, including Watergate.

But when he was named to the Senate Watergate committee on Feb. 8 he was not generally pictured as a severe administration critic. In fact, he was among those who argued strongly that the committee have an equal number of Republicans and Democrats, instead of the eventual 4-3 lineup favoring the Democrats.

While the committee was establishing its own investigative team, Weicker was off on a survey of the Committee for the Re-election of the President. His staff got the names of all employees and set about interviewing them. The objective was simply to find out who really had been running things. It was from this ef-

fort that his fingering of Haldeman as the responsible figure came, though at that time he did not accuse Haldeman of any wrongdoing.

Both the chairman, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) and the vice chairman, Howard H. Baker (R-Tenn.), criticized Weicker, and in ensuing weeks attempts were made by the White House to spread phony stories about his own campaign funds in 1970.

A peak of sorts came in June, when former White House aide Charles W. Colson, who Weicker said tried to plant the story, went to Weicker's office to smooth things over and Weicker threw him out.

The gesture didn't surprise those around Weicker. When he first went after Haldeman, former Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst, in a taped phone conversation with former White House aide John D. Ehrlichman, called him "an excitable kid."

A key aide on the Watergate committee says today: "That's the most apt description I've ever heard. But I think his excitement is neutralized by his sincerity. He drove us crazy at the beginning with his own investigation, and his attention span is rather limited. But I think that's because he's got so many ideas floating around."

In the files of Weicker's "third front," historians will find many of them.