

# Burning of McCord Items Recounted

By Jack Anderson

News accounts of this week report that a CIA operative stood by while Mrs. James McCord, wife of the Waterbugger, burned papers following the arrest of her husband inside the Watergate.

We have now learned that there were two incinerations in the McCord fireplace. The first fire, indeed, caused smoke damage after the damper closed and the smoke billowed through the house.

CIA consultant Lee Pennington attended the second burning. He swears that Ruth McCord burned only old magazine articles, letters and clippings but not any Watergate-related documents. Two folders with CIA material in them, one merely retirement papers, were intact when he saw them, he told us.

But two days earlier, we have now learned, she destroyed a tangle of old typewriter ribbons in the fireplace. These had been removed by McCord, an ex-CIA agent, from President Nixon's campaign headquarters.

An expert could determine from the ribbons what had been written on the typewriters. Because the ribbons fouled the campaign committee's famous shredders, McCord had taken them home in paper bags to destroy.

When he was arrested during the Watergate break-in, his loyal wife was worried over what to do with the bag stuffed with typewriter ribbons. She decided to incinerate them in the fireplace, rather than leave them in the trash for the FBI to find.

Pennington told us he didn't learn until later about the burning of the typewriter ribbons. He saw the smoke damage but assumed it had been caused by the second fire, he said.

Like a good agent, he reported the burning to the CIA. His secret report, which he insists was badly garbled by the time the CIA got it into memo form, lay in CIA files for 18 months until it was turned up by a CIA employee a few weeks ago. The CIA then turned it over to Watergate investigators.

They seem satisfied no papers were burned in the second fire that tied the CIA to the Watergate break-in, as they had originally suspected. But they wonder what evidence, if any, was destroyed on the typewriter ribbons.

Footnote: The CIA refused comment. Pennington spoke candidly with us of his visit to the McCord home. McCord's attorney, Bernard Fensterwald, confirmed that our account of the incident was "basically correct."

**MYSTERY CONGRESSMAN:** Attorney General William B. Saxbe titillated reporters recently by telling them about a mystery congressman who came to him seeking clearance for Jimmy Hoffa to engage in Teamster union politics.

We have now been able to identify Hoffa's mysterious errand boy as Rep. Larry Williams (R-Pa.). Our sources say Williams not only approached Saxbe but buttonholed President Nixon at a White House Christmas party.

The irrepressible Hoffa, whose prison sentence for jury tampering was commuted by the President, is eager to regain his old post as Teamsters chief. The government claims his presidential pardon bars him from involvement in Teamsters politics, but Hoffa insists that it became unconditional after March 10, 1973.

To press Hoffa's case, Williams sought an appointment on Feb. 4 with Saxbe and showed up with a Hoffa ally, Al Cohen. Earlier, Williams twice cornered President Nixon and talked to him about Hoffa at a Christmas party. Sources with direct knowledge of the incident tell us that, the second time, the President told Williams with some irritation: "Larry, I got your message."

Williams denied to us that he

Hoffa but confirmed he attended the party. Williams also confirmed that "a representative of the Teamsters union, Al Cohen, asked me to set up a meeting" with the Attorney General.

A spokesman for the Attorney General told us that Saxbe was unaware that the congressman was bringing Cohen along.

**HOT MESSAGE:** As evidence that the snooper mentality is still strong inside the government, the Veterans Administration on March 22 relayed a secret message over its hot line to regional directors to report to Washington "any intelligence" about possible veterans' demonstrations.

"Some information has been received," states the message, "to the effect that the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Winter Volunteers Organization and similar organizations may demonstrate at VA hospitals and regional offices on or around March 29."

"Confrontations may occur in regard to amnesty and upgrading of military discharges and may include demonstrations and sit-ins... Any intelligence gathered should be reported to Mr. Bill Rettew, Ext. 3093, home phone..."

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