

WXPPost Nixon's 'Anderson Conspiracies'

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

Winston S. Churchill once said that nothing is more exhilarating than to be shot at—and missed. It is in this spirit that I look back upon the White House plots to ply me with poisons and hallucinogens.

To be sure, these conspiracies had a Maxwell Smart quality. But an organized attempt by the White House to destroy or discredit a reporter should not be airily dismissed because it failed or because the results had a comic side.

No President should be permitted to marshal the awesome powers of government against a reporter, not even for the grievous offense of embarrassing the White House.

I would prefer to write this story about someone else, put since I was the unhappy object of Richard M. Nixon's revenge, it is my story. The full facts, I now feel, should be placed on the public record.

From sources and documents made available to me, here is the incredible story, best told in chronological order:

Oct. 6, 1970—President Nixon, who had grouched about earlier stories I had written, positively exploded over a column about his backstage efforts to get a higher presidential pension.

Not long afterwards, staff chief H.R. (Bob) Haldeman assigned a special White House investigator, Jack Caulfield, to investigate me.

Feb. 11, 1971—In a confidential report to Haldeman, Caulfield revealed that I had "access to intelligence digests and...private presidential memoranda." He called for "an overt firing of a person directly connected with a leak." This would make "the ability of the Andersons of the world to gain White House information both difficult and hazardous," he suggested.

Shortly Thereafter—One witness recalls that Haldeman wanted not only to fire but to jail anyone caught leaking information to me. I have been unable to determine that Haldeman did anything more than discuss this idea. But, in a striking coincidence, the Pentagon began an immediate search for my sources, with criminal prosecution as the objective.

Summer, 1971—White House aide Charles W. Colson came up with a preposterous charge that I had been paid \$100,000 to write favorable stories about the erstwhile Cuban dictator Juan Batista. "It now appears," wrote Colson in a confidential memo, "as if we have the opportunity to destroy Anderson's credibility."

Dec. 14 or 15, 1971—President Nixon, furious over my stories that he

had lied about his India-Pakistan policy, unleashed the notorious White House "plumbers" against me. They set aside their investigation of Pentagon Papers leaker Daniel Ellsberg and scrawled my name on a wallboard in their basement sanctum as their new Public Enemy No. 1.

Dec. 23, 1971—David Young, one of the plumbers, asked Pentagon investigator W. Donald Stewart to trump up a homosexual charge against me. When Stewart refused, Young complained: "Damn it! Damn it! The President is jumping up and down, and he wants this and we're always telling him everything can't be done."

Late December, 1971—The plumbers discussed coating my steering wheel with an exotic poison that they intended to scrounge from the Central Intelligence Agency. This was supposed to penetrate my skin as I was driving home, causing a fatal accident. They got the idea, my sources suggest, from a possible offhand remark by Colson that he'd "like to slip Anderson a mickey." But no assassination order, so far as I can learn, was issued to the plumbers.

Shortly Thereafter—White House aide Jeb Stuart Magruder, referring to me at a staff conference, grumped: "Boy, it'd be nice if we could get rid of that guy." Plumber G. Gordon Liddy thought he had been instructed to kill me. He was stopped after an aide apprised Magruder of Liddy's intent.

January, 1971—The CIA, in violation of U.S. law, sent men with binoculars and walkie-talkies to keep my house under surveillance. They also tailed me and kept two of my reporters under observation.

March 9 or 10,

1972—President Nixon told aides at a meeting in the Oval Office: "We have got to get the goods on Jack Anderson." He instructed John D. Ehrlichman to call FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover and ask for any dirt the FBI might have on me.

March 18, 1972—White House counsel John W. Dean III delivered to the President an FBI summary of its Jack Anderson file. Nixon was so disappointed that he scribbled a handwritten "Dear Edgar" note to the FBI director, asking for more details.

March, 1972—The Justice Department's Internal Security Division, the Republican National Committee and the Committee for the Re-election of the President were enlisted in the campaign against me.

Summer, 1972—Haldeman sent a message to the Justice Department urging that I be nailed for some crime, any crime.

Jan. 31, 1973—My associate Les Whitten, in the act of helping to return documents stolen by militant Indians, was arrested on a Washington street by eight FBI agents. The charge against him: "possession of stolen goods." Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen later acknowledged that they had expected to nab me. A federal grand jury, incidentally, refused to indict Whitten.

This is the bare bones of the story. W. Donald Stewart has said the Pentagon alone conducted "at least" 11 investigations of me. FBI agents picked up my telephone records, which the courts later compelled them to return. The Internal Revenue Service also spent a full year auditing my tax returns.

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