

SEChronicle

DEC 28 1976

FBI Captures an Urban Planner

Washington

The only thing Michael J. Kane, a 29-year-old urban planner with the President's Council on Environmental Quality here, had on his mind when he left his hotel in Cleveland last week was to add a few nice pictures of that city's skyline to his photography collection.

Kane, looking for a good view, selected the 31st floor of the federal building, where he found an unused conference room with large class windows. He shot city hall, the football stadium and the sunset.

When he was finished, Kane discovered he had a little problem: he had to go to the bathroom.

He did not see one nearby, but one flight below, through an open door, and down a long hallway, he found what he was looking for, a door with the words "men's room."

When he came out, Kane thought his problems were over.

Actually, they had just begun. Nearly a dozen men were waiting for him, some wearing guns. "My God," he thought. "Where am I? What have I done?"

The men demanded identification.

Kane produced his driver's license, American Express card, and a White House pass. The men examined the latter with some suspicion. "This looks like it's been tampered with," one said. "It looks like one photo was removed and another glued on."

Kane was beginning to panic. Someone asked him to hand over the case on his shoulder. "What's in it?"

"It's my camera," Kane said. "I was just taking some pictures of Cleveland."

"Sure," the man said. "C'mon fella, why would anyone want to take pictures of Cleveland?"

The men, who by now had revealed themselves to be FBI agents, escorted Kane to a small office and ordered him to empty his pockets. Out came some money, rental car keys and an address book.

One of the agents began thumbing through the address book. "This looks funny," he said. "Everything is in the same ink color. It looks like it's been copied over."

Kane ventured a weak chuckle:

"That's right," he said. "You got me."

"Keep your hands out of your pockets," one of the agents snapped.

They questioned him about his background, his education, his place of employment, and the names of his nearest relatives and immediate supervisor. They wrote down several telephone numbers.

Finally, in what was to be the crucial test of Kane's innocence, they called his boss in Washington, Tom Clark, acting staff director of the Council on Environmental Quality. "Tell us one fact that only Mr. Kane would know," an agent asked Clark.

"Ask him the subject of the last memo he wrote me," Clark said. "If it's Kane, he'll say it was a controversial highway project in Milwaukee called Park Freeway West."

An agent handed Kane the receiver and then picked up an extension. "What was the subject of the last memo you sent me?" Clark asked Kane.

Kane hesitated. "HUD housing impact statements?"

"Wrong, Michael," Clark said. "Try again."

A nervous Kane thought some more. "Park Freeway West, Milwaukee," he said.

"Right, Michael, you can go home now," Clark said.

Clark spoke the truth.

Kane was released after John Guido, one of the agents, explained to him that he had accidentally penetrated a secure area of the bureau's Cleveland field office, an area that should have been locked to the public.

"But we had an obligation in light of things that happen — bombs and bomb threats — to verify his story," Guido told the Los Angeles Times in a telephone interview later. "It's just not acceptable to have strange people wandering through our offices. His White House card, for example, looked phony. I'm sure it gets him in anywhere in Washington, but in Cleveland we don't know what those cards look like."

Guido laughed. "Tell him he's welcome back here anytime," he said.

Kane may not be so eager to return.

Los Angeles Times