

To
~~Lillian & Hal Weisberg~~

FRANKLY, I DON'T KNOW IF
I SHOULD THANK OR CUSS YOU -- AS
THIS ALL BEGAN WHEN I FIRST HEARD THE
TEAM "WHITE WASH" FROM A MAN NAMED WEISBERG.
WHATEVER THE MERIT OF OUR EFFORTS, HISTORY
WILL RECORD THAT YOU TWO MADE THE MOST
SACRIFICIAL AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS CAUSE.
YOU ARE EXTRAORDINARY FOLKS, INDEED.

Norman Personal Research,
November 1, 1978
in
Everly Hills

he told Christian. "I can't put my finger on it, but this country is going in the wrong direction."^{*}

Christian had reason to recall Smith's disquiet when he became a special consultant to an association of service-station operators who had filed an antitrust suit against a giant trading-stamp company, charging fraud, price manipulation and conspiracy. Although close to \$100 million in damages was sought, the case was eventually compromised and settled out of court for less than one percent of that amount. Christian viewed the token settlement as the consequence of a power play begun several years before. Robert Kennedy's Justice Department had filed an antitrust action against the company—Justice attorneys drew on Christian's store of knowledge in the field of corporate buccancering—but after the President's assassination, Lyndon Johnson's new team at Justice quietly dropped the prosecution. This severely compromised the service-station operators, who were forced to enter their civil suit playing a much weaker hand. If large corporate interests could benefit so decisively from an abrupt change in administration, Christian wondered, could not some cabal among them somehow have arranged for the President's death?

The notion was hardly dispelled by a set of events that began on a quiet Sunday afternoon in April 1967. An erstwhile broadcast colleague named Harv Morgan, who was doing a radio talk show on San Francisco's KCBS station, phoned Christian and asked him to come down to the studio and sit in on an interview with Harold Weisberg, author of a series of self-published books called *White-wash* that were critical of the Warren Report. Weisberg lived in rural Maryland, so the interview was held via long-distance phone. The show was scheduled for one hour but ran on for four, with listeners calling in such numbers that the switchboard was jammed.

After reading the books, Christian called Weisberg in Maryland to discuss references to FBI bungling and cover-up in its investigation of the assassination. Several days later Christian was contacted by an FBI agent who had worked marginally on the trading-stamp-

^{*} Smith's autobiography, *Personal File*, is required reading in many journalism classes. Smith died in 1976.

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company case. "Meet me at Roland's," the agent said, referring to a saloon where the two had occasionally met for drinks.

"Who do you know in Maryland that might be of extreme interest to certain people within the FBI?" the agent whispered.

"Harold Weisberg," Christian answered. "He's the only one I know in Maryland."

The agent confided that he had heard an "inside rumor" that a phone tap had intercepted Christian's conversation with Weisberg a few days before, and hinted that an order had been issued for Christian's line to be monitored from then on.

At first Christian was stunned, then angered. "To hell with the taps," he fumed. "If the FBI is that concerned about the critics, there must be something to the criticism!"

It was against this backdrop that Christian met Turner. Tall and sandy-haired, forty-one-year-old Turner came across as a nice enough guy but hardly the type of push-and-shove journalist that Christian was accustomed to. But Christian noted that he had a capacity for collecting and storing data. His investigative approach was disarmingly low-key, but it seemed to work.

Turner was a Navy veteran of World War II and a Canisius College graduate whose ice-hockey career had been interrupted by appointment as an FBI special agent in 1951. He participated in a number of well-known FBI cases, including the 1959 kidnap-murder of Colorado brewery magnate Adolph Coors, Jr., and as an inspector's aide he reviewed the Los Angeles division's program against organized crime. He was also specially trained in wire-tapping, bugging and burglary—a "black-bag job" on the Japanese consulate in Seattle was one assignment—and did counterespionage work. He received three personal letters of commendation from J. Edgar Hoover.

But by 1961 Turner's doubts about the aging Director's policies had grown to the point where he poked the tiger from inside the cage by seeking a congressional investigation of the FBI. He urged them to look into the Bureau's questionable tactics, softness on organized crime and the stultifying personality cult surrounding Hoover. At the time, Hoover was at the peak of his power, and he was able to discharge Turner as a "disruptive influence" with hardly a murmur of dissent from members of Congress.