

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION  
With  
Donald Hiss  
re  
Search for Typewriter

December 20, 1951

I had a long talk with Donald Hiss in his office in Washington on December 20th. I asked him particularly to tell me in his own words everything that he knew at first hand about the search for the typewriter which resulted in its being found in April 1949. The following is roughly what he told me, not by any means in his own words. I am using the first person simply as a convenient device for getting the story down.

I knew that we had been hunting for the typewriter ever since Chambers first brought out the letters. My first contact with the hunt was when Mike Catlett came to see me at my home, sometime, I think, in February, 1949. I guess I was out of town at the time. He left word with the maid that he wanted to see me, and she told him to come back a couple of days later.

When he came back I was there. He said to me "I guess you know what I want to talk to you about". I said I didn't. He said "Well, don't you know? Some people have been around to see me".

"Were they our people?", I said.

"Oh, no", he said, "they were the FBI".

I asked him what they wanted. He said they were looking for a typewriter. I said, "So are we. Do you know where it is?"

"Sure, I know where it is", he said. I asked him where it was, and he said it was in his house in P Street, in the closet. I told him that if he knew where it was I would like to get hold of it. He said that was fine, he would bring it right over.

I remembered that Ed McLean was coming down to Washington the next day and I thought it would be better if we got the typewriter when Ed was there. So I told him to go and look in his closet and see if the typewriter was still there, and come back and tell me about it the next day.

He came back the next day. I don't remember whether Ed was there. Mike said, "I looked in the closet, and it isn't there, but I know where it is; it is over at Pat's".

I said "Fine, let's go over and see Pat right away." I got my car out and drove him over to Pat's. When we got there we asked Pat about it. He said he had had it, but that he had given it to his wife to use. She had typed a few things on it, but had found that it wasn't much good. He said he thought that after that he had probably given it to Burnetta. I asked him if he couldn't get some specimens of typing his wife had done on it, and he said he would try.

While we were driving back, Mike said to me, "Pat's wife won't give us any specimens, or talk about it at all. She's just scared".

Then, I can't remember just how soon, Ed McLean came down to Washington. He and I went to Pat's house to see whether we could get any of the specimens. Pat said his wife hadn't been able to find any. He said he was sure that Burnetta had had the typewriter while she was living with Dr. Easter, and that we might find it there. Somebody said they thought that there had been a fellow by the name of Marlowe who had taken Mrs. Easter back to Texas after Dr. Easter died, and that Marlowe probably would know where the typewriter was. Marlowe lived at Logan Circle.

Ed McLean and I drove out to Logan Circle, taking Mike with us. Mike went in to talk to Marlowe. When he came out he said that Marlowe wanted to get some information, and that we had better come back later.

I think that some time before this I had said to Mike that if he really could find the typewriter, I would give at least \$100 to get hold of it. Also, at some time while I was working along these lines, I gave him \$35 in cash to use for cab fares or things like that.

We came back to Marlowe's house a little later; I don't remember whether Ed McLean was with me or not. Marlowe said he still didn't know where the typewriter was, but he put in a telephone call, and talked to somebody he called "Bill". He said, "Bill, you've got that typewriter, and I want it right away". I asked who Bill was, and he said that Bill was the fellow who had moved things out of Dr. Easter's house after Marlowe got back from taking Mrs. Easter to Texas. He said that Bill had taken the typewriter and a yellow washing machine as part payment for the moving job. We asked him where Bill lived, and he told us.

Then--I think it was the same day--I drove Mike over to Bill's. I thought it might not be too easy for a white man to get the answer, so I asked Mike to go in alone. He came out with a young, rather thinnish, fellow, whom he introduced as Bill. Bill said, "I haven't got the typewriter, but I know where it is. I will take you there."

So I drove Bill and Mike over to a house they told me was Lockey's house. Bill and Mike went in. When they came out they said they had talked to Mrs. Hall, that Mrs. Hall said the typewriter had been right there in the house on a table for a long time, but that we would have to talk to Lockey some time when he was in about the typewriter.

The next day I drove Mike over there again. He went in, and when he came out he said that Lockey was a very sick man and couldn't talk about the machine, but that anyhow he had junked it quite a while ago.

As we drove back Mike told me that there were a couple of junk yards fairly near Lockey's house. I told him to check them over, and a bit later he came back and said he had found the washing machine and a typewriter in one of the junk yards. I asked him how he knew it was the washing machine, and he said he knew it because it was a sort of a yellowish color. He said the typewriter was a Royal. I told him to go and buy it out of the junk yard and bring it to me. He did go and buy it, and I kept it for probably six or eight months. I was sure it wasn't what we were looking for, and I told Mike to keep looking.

Some time later Mike came to me and said he had been to see Lockey, and that when he got there he had seen an FBI car outside, and so didn't dare go in. I asked him how he knew it was an FBI car, and he said he had looked at the special little green parking card on the windshield. I told him to go back and try again.

A little bit later he came back to me and told me he had gone to Lockey's house again but that Lockey was still too sick to talk, and wanted absolutely nothing to do with the typewriter.

I can't remember just when it was that Harold Rosenwald went out to Detroit to see Burnetta Fisher. It may have been after I had been to Pat's house and he had told me that he was pretty sure Burnetta had had the typewriter. I do remember that Harold called me and told me to go out to Marlowe's shack, which was opposite Dr. Easter's old house. I took Mike out there, and we found the shack and looked it over, but we couldn't find any typewriter. We

went to the next door neighbors and asked them if they knew anything about it. They said they remembered that it was out in the long grass, and we hunted around in the long grass for quite a while but couldn't find it.

The next thing I remember is that Ed McLean and Harold came down here, the Thursday before Good Friday, I think. They were worried about the inconsistency between Lockey's story and Mrs. Hall's story. They drove off somewhere with Mike, still looking for it. I wasn't with them. On either Easter Sunday or the day before, Ed McLean called me and said that he had gotten the typewriter from Lockey. He asked me to get in touch with the Catletts and tell them not to say anything about it for the present.

I have no particular idea just how Houston was drawn into the picture or whether he was around at the time McLean found the machine.

After the machine was found I remember I gave Mike some small sum of money, because he said there had been some sickness in the family, and I was grateful for the work he had done trying to find the machine. Over all, I am sure I didn't give him more than about \$65 or \$70.

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Addendum by CTL

I asked Harold Rosenwald on December 23rd if he could straighten out the timing of his Detroit trip in relation to the above story. He said he was sure that Donald went to Marlowe's house first, and that Marlowe was drunk and could give no information. This was presumably the time when Donald went to the neighbors and hunted in the grass. After that Harold went to Detroit to see Burnetta; Burnetta confirmed the fact that Marlowe had taken the machine; and Harold called Donald to tell him to try Marlowe again. This presumably occasioned Donald's second visit to Marlowe.

C. T. L.