

# Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr. D. M. Ladd

FROM : H. B. Fletcher *NBI [Signature]*

SUBJECT: JAY DAVID WHITTAKER CHAMBERS, was, et al  
PERJURY; ESPIONAGE - R

DATE: July 8, 1949

- Mr. Tolson
- Mr. Clegg
- Mr. Glavin
- Mr. Ladd
- Mr. Nichols
- Mr. Rosen
- Mr. Tracy
- Mr. Egan
- Mr. Gurnea
- Mr. Harbo
- Mr. Mohr
- Mr. Pennington
- Mr. Quinn Tamm
- Tele. Room
- Mr. Nease
- Miss Holmes
- Miss Gandy

Reference is made to the attached teletype from the New York Office dated July 7, 1949, which summarized the morning session of Federal Court during the trial of this case on July 7, 1949. Defense Attorney Stryker, in his remarks to the jury, referred to the testimony of Special Agent Courtland J. Jones of the Washington Field Office with regard to Perry M. (Pat) Catlett, Jr., and the fact that a statement had been taken from him only three days before the trial began on May 31, 1949; also, that he had been brought to the FBI Office twice and once on Sunday night. Stryker inquired as to why he was brought there three days before the trial and wanted to know if it was to try to check him or whether an effort was made to impair the testimony of a witness. The Director penned a notation, "What are the facts re this incident?"

### Interviews with Perry M. (Pat) Catlett, Jr.

Perry M. Catlett, Jr. (Negro) is one of three sons of Claudie Catlett, a former maid of Alger and Priscilla Hiss.

Perry Catlett was interviewed by Agents of the Washington Field Office on February 2, 1949. This interview was for the purpose of determining the termination date of his mother's employment as a maid for the Hisses. On this occasion he could not recall anything concerning any typewriters or other belongings of the Hisses; however, he admitted that he had worked for the Hisses doing odd jobs while they were residing on 30th Street, N. W., and Volta Place, N. W.

He was again interviewed on February 4, 1949, concerning the specific date of his mother's employment as a maid by Alger Hiss. On this as well as the previous occasion he was extremely nebulous as to dates.

He was again interviewed on February 9, 1949, concerning certain discrepancies in dates he had furnished concerning his employment. A signed statement was obtained from him containing information relating to his various employments during the time he was working for Alger Hiss and subsequent thereto.

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On May 13, 1949, it was learned through an interview with Claudie Catlett that an old Woodstock typewriter was located by the Hiss attorneys. She stated she recalled that Alger Hiss gave her family a typewriter which she believed

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was the same one that the Hiss attorneys had located. Thereafter interviews were conducted with her sons, Perry, James and Raymond Catlett, which confirmed this information and indications are that they withheld this information from Bureau Agents because of their friendship for the Hisses. Perry Catlett was again interviewed on May 13, 1949, concerning the Woodstock typewriter mentioned by his mother. During this interview he was extremely uncooperative and evasive. He admitted that Alger Hiss or his wife had given him or his mother a typewriter on or about January 1, 1938, when the Hisses moved from the 30th Street address to the Volta Place address. He said that he attempted to have it repaired at a typewriter repair shop located on the corner of Connecticut Avenue and K Street, N. W. When asked why he did not furnish this information to Agents when he was interviewed on previous occasions, he stated, "I figured it was unimportant."

Perry Catlett was again interviewed on May 16, 1949. At this time he admitted that he had lied when he was interviewed on previous occasions. He admitted that he had discussed the typewriter with members of his family and the defense attorneys and had likewise viewed the typewriter in the presence of the defense attorneys. He said that he could identify it although he did not know how he would go about doing this.

In previous interviews Perry Catlett had claimed that he received an old Woodstock typewriter from the Hisses on or about January 1, 1938 (taking it out of the Hisses' possession during the period that the Chambers' documents were typed, that is January through April, 1938), and that he, Perry, had taken it to a typewriter repair shop on the Northwest corner of Connecticut Avenue and K Streets, N. W.

Investigation in the meantime had disclosed that the only typewriter repair shop that was ever located at the Northwest corner of Connecticut and K was a Woodstock agency which occupied these premises from September 15, 1938, to September 15, 1940.

on May 28, 1949,

With this information at hand, Perry Catlett was again interviewed in order to possibly obtain from him an admission that he had received the typewriter later than he had previously claimed. A signed statement was obtained from him and he advised that he did not recall if the typewriter was given to him during the move from 30th Street to Volta Place, N. W. on January 1, 1938, or

after the move. He said that the Hisses could have resided on Volta Place for several months before they gave him the typewriter. Concerning his attempt to have the typewriter repaired, he stated that he is sure this trip to the typewriter repair shop occurred in the warm weather and that he could have taken the typewriter to be repaired anywhere from a week to three or four months after he received it.

This information would tend to establish the belief that the Hisses gave the typewriter to the Catletts after April, 1938, and that Perry Catlett could not have taken it to be repaired at this shop earlier than September 15, 1938, because it was not, in fact, in existence until that date.

It is pointed out that Perry Catlett was never brought to the Washington Field Office on a Sunday night as alleged by Attorney Stryker. All of the interviews were conducted with him at the Washington Field Office with the exception of the one on May 28, 1949, which was held at his home at 733 Howard Road, S. E., Washington, D. C.

#### Observations:

It is believed that Defense Attorney Stryker made particular emphasis on this phase of the Bureau's investigation since it tore down to a great extent their defense. The defense has contended that the typewriter was turned over to the Catlett Negroes prior to the time that the Chambers' documents were typed and when Perry Catlett testified as to his possession of the typewriter, he was uncertain as to exactly how it came into his possession, although he appeared to be coached that he received it prior to the time that the Hisses moved to the Volta Place address on January 1, 1938.

Perry Catlett was insolent and made a very poor witness for the defense. He has consistently lied during the various interviews with him. The fact that he finally admitted that he could have received the typewriter sometime after January 1, 1938, as indicated in his statement to Special Agent Jones on May 28, 1949, was a blow to the defense and because of this, a special attack was made of the interview with him on that date.

Attachment