

420

Hiss file

His investy of WC - Oct 1948

October 20, 1948

INVESTIGATION OF J. WHITTAKER CHAMBERS, ALIAS A. VIVIAN
CHAMBERS, IN NASSAU COUNTY

Your investigator interviewed Mr. Edward Edstrom, attorney at law with offices at 111 Rockaway Avenue, Valley Stream, Long Island. Mr. Edstrom said that Chambers and he had been classmates attending Rockville Center High School together, graduating from this school in the same class. He further said that of all his classmates, he, Edstrom, was probably closest to Chambers during that period.

Another one of the few friends that Chambers cultivated during his high school attendance was Mr. G. Flicke who is now the village engineer in Valley Stream.

According to Mr. Edstrom, Chambers would occasionally engage in outdoor sports, basketball being his favorite sport. Chambers seems to have had a complete disregard for his appearance. Mr. Edstrom says that he would come to school in a brand new suit and at the end of the day the suit would look as though he had worn it out in a year of rain or in a coal mine. The other boys referred to him as "Stinky" and Edstrom said that he did not think Chambers had taken a bath in years. His hair would hang over the collar of his shirt and he would not have it cut for months. He was

✓ 2

not only filthy in his appearance but also in his speech. He was wholeheartedly disliked by the majority of the students in his class. One of the characteristics which Mr. Edstrom seems to remember most vividly was Chambers' fear of altitude. Edstrom and Chambers would walk home together from school and in doing so would have to cross a trestle approximately twenty or twenty-five feet above the ground. Not once during their years of walking home together would Chambers muster enough spunk to cross the trestle. Instead he would wade through a brook under the trestle at the price of wetting his trousers up to his knees.

Mr. Flicke was the valedictorian of the class and the graduation thesis to be read by him was written by Chambers. It was a speech dealing with Bolshevism.

After their graduation from high school, Edstrom lost contact with Chambers and it was not until the recent notoriety which Chambers received that he learned more about the latter's post scholastic life. He also stated that Mr. Flicke had told him about Chambers' difficulties in the New York Public Library but neither Flicke nor Edstrom believed that Chambers was ever held accountable for the disappearance of the books in his custody at the New York Public Library.

Mrs. Chambers' home is located, back to 1925 without discovering any record of any of the occupants of 228 Earle Road among the voters' names.

Mr. Thompson, the Village Assessor, checked the village tax records back to 1925 and found that the payments had been met promptly, mostly by checks drawn on the Lynbrook Bank. The village office files contain no office correspondence regarding the property at 228 Earle Road or the occupants thereof.

The Register of Vital Statistics in Lynbrook, Miss Downes, checked the birth certificates back to 1928 against the names of Ellen and John Chambers, subject's children, and found no record of their births.

The following township records in Hempstead were consulted: The township tax records back to 1925 which again disclosed that taxes on the property at 228 Earle Road had been met promptly, mostly by check drawn against the Lynbrook Bank. The marriage records (which are maintained by the Township Office), checked against the names of the subject and his wife, reveal that they were not married in or about Lynbrook. The hospital birth records which are kept by the Bureau of Vital Statistics of the township were checked against the names of Ellen and John Chambers but were found to be mute on these names.

The following records were checked at the county seat, Mineola: The records of the Board of Elections for state and federal elections, which showed no record of any one of the subject's family or of the subject himself. The pistol permits issued by the Nassau County Police Department back to 1925, which check disclosed that Chambers had no permit to carry a pistol in the county of Nassau. It is significant in this connection that he did not have a pistol permit, although he testified, if your investigator's memory serves him well, that he was hiding in his home in Lynbrook with a pistol by his side for fear of Communist retaliation. If this is true, he certainly violated the Sullivan Law. The records of the Bureau of Criminal Identification in the custody of Sgt. Archer of the Nassau County Police Department which are mute. The confidential records of the Alien Squad in the custody of Detective Sergeant Stevens of the Nassau County Police Department. The Alien Squad also investigates subversives and keeps a subversive file. The card index shows inquiries about Chambers from federal agencies but no investigation was ever conducted into his background by the Nassau County Police Department. The records of the County Treasurer, Mr. Pearsall, with respect to school taxes on the property at 228 Earle Road in Lynbrook which added no useful information. The state census records in the custody of Mr. John Clark of the Bureau of Documents,

County Clerk's Office, Mineola, which disclosed the residence of the subject at 228 Earle Street in 1915 and 1925. The 1935 census was started but not completed in Nassau County.

The records of the Selective Service Board #2 in Lynbrook which are now stored at the Clinton Avenue School at Rockville Center in the custody of Mr. Weisburgh failed to disclose a registration by the subject in the Lynbrook area.

I also located and interviewed a Mrs. P. Phillips who operates an antique shop under the name of "The Horse and Buggy Shop" at the intersection of Main and Old Franklin Streets in Hempstead, L.I., who was formerly associated in business with the subject's mother. Mrs. Phillips appeared to be very cagey and, to a degree, hostile. However, I was able to learn from her that Chambers' wife is a native of New York City and that she was an artist by profession before Chambers married her. Mrs. Phillips also stated that Chambers and his wife had lived somewhere in Nassau County not far from Lynbrook in 1935 but she does not know the address. She claimed to know very little about the subject and his activities.

I also located and contacted Mr. Arthur Frankel whose name had been given to me as that of an informant who had supplied radio commentator Hart in Washington with infor-

mation to the effect that Chambers had posed as a Dutch importer in Washington. Actually, Mr. Frankel is a reporter for Newsday magazine. He lives at 21 Bellmore Road, Island Trees, and he is a war veteran and worked on the Whittaker Chambers case for his paper. He professes to know nothing about Mr. Hart, never to have been in Washington, D.C., but stated that he was contacted by a member of what he described as the Defense for Alger Hiss Committee in New York; that he was in sympathy with Alger Hiss but that he had been able to find out very little about Chambers in Nassau County. Ben White, who is conceded to be the most dynamic and effective newspaper reporter in Nassau County, worked on this case. He covers the county for the Daily News. White, as well as several AP, UP and other wire service reporters spend a great deal of money and time in "getting the Whittaker Chambers story" but had utterly failed to unearth anything worth printing.

I then contacted the resident agent of a government investigative agency in Mineola who told me that the F.B.I. had naturally developed a great deal of interest in Chambers' activities in Nassau County while he was a resident there but they had met with the same obstacles as the investigators of other agencies and the newspaper reporters. We compared notes and it was then discovered that we have actually more information in our file than the government agency has, except that it is the knowledge of my informant that

the subject did undergo psychiatric treatment in Nassau County and that such treatment was given by an individual practitioner, not by an institution. The agency is at this time endeavoring to learn the name of the psychiatrist and the date when such treatment was given.

Respectfully submitted,

HORACE W. SCHMIDL