

Subject : Atlantic City Raids in 1937

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In the first place, the date of August 28, 1937 is correct, although I had had the Saturday before Labor Day in mind, but the news article in this instance seems to be accurate. Secondly, there must have been an FBI office in Newark at that time, because most of the information developed to bring about the raids was secured by a group of agents assigned to that area, including Abe Dickstein, who was still assigned to the Newark Field Office when I assumed the duties of Special Agent in Charge in September 1939.

At that time in 1937 I was an Agent assigned to the Cleveland Field Office, designated as the Resident Agent at Akron or Toledo, Ohio. On a day prior to August 28, 1937 apparently I was told to report to the New York Office on that particular morning, supposedly by my SAC, who at that time was Newt Stapleton. Perhaps another agent was ordered to New York with me, but I don't recall. I do know that when we met on Saturday morning in the New York Office on Foley Square there were a very large number of Agents present, many of whom had to be from out of town like I was. Now I knew Paul Cotter pretty well, but it is my recollection that the whole program might have been directed by E.J. Connelly. Perhaps I think of E.J. Connelly because he did quite a bit of major work for the Director.

Regardless of who was in charge, and it probably was Paul Cotter, the whole Atlantic City picture was outlined to us in minute detail on that Saturday morning. There were TEN houses of prostitution to be "Hit" and we were shown addresses, photos, drawings, sketches, etc. on each house. We were told that ten Agents were to be assigned to the raid on each house and that one agent would be in charge of that raid. Incidentally, the main subject in the WSTA case was (?) Charles "Nocky" or "Nucky" Johnson of Atlantic City who was known as the kingpin of prostitution in South Jersey.

We were also informed that all the girls working in the houses were to be taken into custody and that busses were being provided to transport them to the Federal Building in Trenton, New Jersey, about 75 miles away. One bus was to make the pickup at two houses, remove the people designated to go, and then be escorted by a certain number of Agents aboard the bus. In addition we were instructed to "drift or filter" into Atlantic City individually or in pairs, so as not to draw ANY attention to our presence. In other words be casual and "tourist", in our movements around the city prior to getting into position for the raids.

As we left the meeting in the New York Office that afternoon the exact time of moving into each of the ten houses was established. I have in my mind the hour of 1AM, but right now that time seems too late, so it possibly could have been 11PM. Each house was supposed to have ten girls working, and this being the vacation season, a full order of customers (johns) could be expected. Every agent was made aware of what his particular position would be at the start of the raid, his movements thereafter, and his part at the conclusion.

The house that I was assigned to had a store front on the ground floor with a door on the left side of the building enclosing a stairway leading to a second floor. I was the agent selected to be the first to gain entry. (Probably naive and gullible looking) At the top of the staircase was a door with a curtained window, attended by a black maid who looked over each prospective john. As I knocked on the door, it opened and I was reviewed. I stepped inside to a parlor, meantime signalling to an agent at the foot of the stairs that I was in. As I moved over to the side at least six agents had followed me in, with our identity announced, with instructions for all in the parlor to remain as is. With Agent J.B. (Buster) Dickinson I went to a room down the hall, where a girl inside refused to open the door. We "opened" the door and inside was a girl dressing, and the john trying to hide under the bed. Agent Dickerson lifted the bed, and the rollers and other pieces made loud noises as they moved around the floor. We brought the girl and the man back to the parlor where arrangements were being made to transport the girls to Trenton, New Jersey. In some instances some of the customers were taken into custody when they became unruly, boisterous or obstreperous.

I rode in the bus with the ten girls we brought from the house I have described along with a number of agents and at least ten girls from the second house where we made a pickup. It is a long ride to Trenton-about 75 miles---that time of the night and some of the girls felt it necessary to relieve themselves. I don't recall if we made any legitimate stops along the way, but it seems to me we did; however, some of the girls did find it to our discomfort to squat down in the aisle and urinate down the floor. When one of the other busses approached or reached Trenton, one of the girls got into a scuffle with Agent Leo Laughlin, biting him on the hand. Mr. Hoover was incensed and ordered Agent Laughlin to a hospital right away. I did hear later the girl did turn up positive on a Wasserman test.

I really don't know for certain, but I would seriously doubt that Mr. Hoover ever participated or was present at one of the whore house raids in Atlantic City, as a headquarters post had been established on the outside of the immediate vicinity. If he had been in Atlantic City it is my thought that he drove directly to Trenton. In an incident that was discussed among the agents (I have no direct knowledge of it) Agent Lloyd Arms supposedly called the headquarters post and asked for Mr. Hoover. The man answering stated "This is Mr. Hoover." Agent Arms allegedly responded in sharp and curt tones --- "Get off the line you big            I want to talk to the Director. The answer came "Mr. Arms, this is ~~the~~ Director Hoover"Arms' reply was not given.

As you might realize we were in Trenton for many hours, but eventually I did return to Cleveland.

You may ask ---How do you remember fifty years ago? Well, it was the first raid of its kind, it was special, and I'm sure you can understand we talked about it many, many times.

It seems to me John ~~RENNER~~ L. Brennan, a Past President of the Society, who now lives in Cranford N.J. would possibly have some background information about the political climate in N.J. at that time. The Asst. U.S. Atty., later U.S. Atty. and subsequently U.S. District Judge, William Smith was a very good friend of the Bureau and undoubtedly played an important role in setting up the legal arrangements before and after the raids.

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