



The FBI Oral History Project

An initiative sponsored by
The Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI
and the Former Agents of the FBI Foundation
www.socxfbi.org



INTERVIEW OF

Former Special Agent of the FBI

DANIEL F. BLEDSOE
Years of FBI Service 1955 – 1980

Interviewed on August 19, 2009

By Brian R. Hollstein

© Society of Former Special Agents of the FBI, Inc. 209

**Interview of Former Special Agent of the FBI
Daniel F. Bledsoe (1955 - 1980)
Interviewed by Brian R. Hollstein
On August 19, 2009**

Edited for spelling, repetitions, etc. by Sandra Robinette on October 30, 2009. Final corrections made by Mr. Bledsoe incorporated by Sandra Robinette on December 10, 2009.

Brian Hollstein/

BH: My name is Brian R. Hollstein. Today's date is August 19, 2009. I am interviewing Daniel F. Bledsoe by telephone.

Before we get started, there are some ground rules for the interviews. First of all, I will send you a copyright release form. Please fill it out and sign and return in the envelope provided. We don't want you to use the name or Bureau designation for any informants. If you want, you can make up a name, just so they are not compromised.

Also, do not mention information that you know to be classified. The Bureau Prepublications Review section will look over the transcript for classified material, but it is best not to have it in the interview in the first place. We also ask that you not discuss sensitive investigative techniques.

After you have looked at the draft of the transcript and the Bureau has approved, we will be storing the transcript in our archives at the National Law Enforcement Museum in Washington, D.C. for the use of scholars and researchers interested in the people of the FBI. We expect that later this year we will be going on-line with access to the public through the NLEM website.

Just to start things off, please tell me where you were born, your education and how you happened to join the FBI.

Daniel Bledsoe/

DB: I was born in Salt Lake City, Utah and reared in San Francisco, California. Upon graduation from Galileo High School, I enlisted in the United State Marine Corps, the 1st Marine Regiment commanded by then legendary Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller. I was a scout-sniper. I fought at Inchon, Seoul, the Chosin reservoir and in two additional campaigns. I was honorably discharged as a sergeant.

I then attended and graduated from the University of San Francisco (USF), receiving a Bachelor in Science degree. Later I received a Master in Arts degree from Pepperdine University, Malibu, California.

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 2

DB: Upon graduating from USF, I was appointed a Special Agent, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and served in Houston, Chicago, Headquarters, Quantico (the FBI Academy) and San Diego.

Upon assignment to Headquarters in Washington, D.C. I had several assignments there. I was on the Fugitive Desk for six years. Then I became a counselor for New Agents at the FBI Academy.

After that assignment I went on the Inspection Staff. The Assistant Director of that staff at the time was Mark Felt. He and I got along very well and I respected him. We had a professional relationship that was one of the best.

After completing my inspection staff assignment, I was assigned to the Major Crimes desk in the Criminal Section of the General Investigative Division. Within my supervisory assignment was the responsibility for the thorough investigation pertaining to aircraft crimes, kidnappings and extortions, and assaults against the President of the United States and members of Congress.

Incidental to my duties during this time frame, I was the Sunday supervisor in the General Investigative Division on June 17, 1972.

Later on in 1972, the new FBI Academy was being staffed and I was a member of the FBI Academy faculty until 1975. I was then assigned to San Diego as supervisor of the Criminal Squad here. I held that position until 1979 at which time I voluntarily gave up the desk because I wanted to retire here in San Diego. I retired in 1980.

Thereafter I worked for two years on the 1984 Olympics. I was instrumental in forming the Equestrian Competition Facility at Fairbanks Ranch, here in the San Diego area. It was a successful assignment. Equestrian-ship was one of my hobbies and I often competed over the years in the same type of equestrian competition that the Olympics maintained but naturally I didn't ride at that high level of competition.

I was also active in fox hunting. I was the Master of fox hounds here in Southern California. I hunted in Maryland, Virginia and England.

BH: Are there actually foxes in Southern California?

DB: No. That is another story. We chased coyotes. When I was hunting in England, I had difficulty explaining to the English that we do fox hunt. They wanted to know whether I rode with a 'knob' on my saddle, western in other words. I said, "No, I didn't do that."

Then they wanted to know if I knew John Wayne. I said, "No, I don't know him."

BH: They wanted it all.

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 3

DB: Then they wanted to know if I had ever seen any red Indians?

I said, "Yes. I saw some just a week before I came to England."

DB: They wanted to know what they ride. I said, "A pick up." There was an intense discussion among these affluent English equestrians as to what breed of horse is a 'pick up'?

I let them swing in the air a little bit. I finally explained that it is a small lorry. It was interesting. I met more fascinating people in my life just because I knew how to ride a horse, which I learned how to do when I was growing up in a private school.

BH: That's great. It is funny how something like that can really open up doors.

DB: Oh, yes. I would love to talk about equestrian experiences but I am not going to do that now.

BH: We'll get back to the Bureau here.

DB: I haven't finished.

BG: I am sorry.

DB: After participating in developing the equestrian program for the 1984 Olympics, I became the marketing director for a law enforcement training center here in southern California and I held that position for several years. I wanted to have more free time so I resigned from that.

BH: Okay. We will go all the way back to the beginning here. Houston, your first office, you probably did a lot of volume stuff down there.

DB: Just general investigation.

BH: Just general investigation stuff, cars?

DB: No. I was the inside man assigned to an extortion case down there and that was a successful assignment. I was happy down there. The Bureau could have left me down there for the rest of my career. They assigned me to Chicago.

BH: What did you do in Chicago?

DB: I had criminal cases. I also had liaison with the American Bar Association there. I got along with them very well. During this time frame Robert Kennedy was the AG and Byron White was his deputy.

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 4

DB: Byron White came out to Chicago for a few days. I was told to meet him at the air field and orient him to anything he was desirous to know except for the identity of our informants which I didn't know that much about to begin with.

Apparently Byron White went back and spoke well of me. I don't know whether to Kennedy or to the Director but about six weeks later I was transferred to Headquarters. I was thirty years old at the time.

BH: That was a nice move. A nice opportunity.

DB: Yes, but I must be honest. I had a wonderful wife and son and daughter and I have seen so many agents who pay for fame and glory at the expense of their family. I couldn't say that I wasn't interested in advancement so I tried to be a successful failure.

I was successful at it pretty well but you just couldn't tell the powers at SOG that you just didn't want to be promoted, but I really didn't want to be.

BH: They couldn't understand that.

DB: Oh no!

BH: Why wouldn't you want to pay the same price that I've paid?

So you went back to Headquarters and you had a fugitive desk was it?

DB: Yes, for six years.

BH: For six years. That would have a lot of action.

DB: Oh yes, yes. We had several of the Top Ten cases. I won't go into some of those cases. That would be just historical. You know, I was the guy who just handled the paper back at the Bureau.

I did think of several techniques that resulted in the arrest of Top Tens. I was awarded thirty-three commendations and awards.

BH: How many letters of censure?

DB: One.

BH: Not bad, not bad.

DB: You know what that was? I was censured, when I first arrived there, I was put on the Special Inquiry desk. John F. Kennedy was the new President. He was making all of these high level appointments after he received the results of the FBI investigations.

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 5

DB: The procedure was, pressure would be put on the field to go out and do these thorough in-depth investigations in short time periods; no more than a week per case. This is the '161' classification.

BH: Right.

DB: Then the results would come into the Special Inquiry Section, the Special Investigative Division. Then we supervisors would take all that information, assess it, make sure it was thorough and we would then write a summary memo. The memo would be sent over to the President, under a transmittal letter from the Director.

Some of these summary memos would be numerous pages, go twenty to thirty pages. From my desk it would go up the chain of command and then it would go to the Reading Room. Did you ever hear of the Reading Room?

BH: Yes, they would check it.

BREAK

DB: One of my memos got up to the Reading Room and they found a misspelled word. I was censured and my secretary was censured. She was a sweet little girl from Maine.

BH: It must have been just a hard day – they didn't have enough letters to pass out.

DB: Well, it had a ripple effect as far as my grade raises went.

BH: You know, dumb stuff like that was such a problem. If you made an honest mistake and got nailed for it, that is one thing. But one misspelled word is a bit much.

DB: That was the only thing I was censured for.

BH: That certainly was a good career then.

Okay, at what point did Watergate break. Let's go to that.

DB: I had been on the Inspection staff and I was on the Major Crimes desk in the General Investigative Division.

BH: Describe the day for me.

DB: Sunday, June 17, 1972, was a warm clear day in Washington, D.C. As was the normal procedure, I arrived at the Bureau thirty minutes before my time of assuming responsibilities for that assignment.

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 6

DB: I would go in. I would go through the incoming communications, teletypes, etc. that had come in during the night so I could be familiar with ongoing investigations and then I would debrief the supervisor that I was relieving.

At that time, I asked him did anything else occur that I should know about?

“No, there isn’t anything relevant that I can think about,” he said. “The only thing was that during the night about 1:00 in the morning there was a break in over in a facility office space on Virginia Avenue.”

I said, “That’s where the Watergate is.”

He said, “Oh that’s right. That’s where the office space is.”

“What office space?”

He said, “That’s where the Democratic Headquarters is over there and it was broken into. Don’t worry about it. The Metropolitan Police have jurisdiction and they are investigating it.”

I said, “Well, how many did they arrest incidental to the burglary?”

He said, “Eleven.”

I thought that was unusual. I said, “Who are they?”

He said, “They are a bunch of Latin Americans.”

I said, “Incidental to their arrest, did they find anything unusual in the space?”

“The police related that they had found a lot of electronic monitoring equipment.” I asked the person that I was relieving, “Did you open a case?”

He said, “Well, no, I didn’t. I don’t see any jurisdiction.”

I said, “Well, I am going to open a case.”

He said, “Under what classification?”

“These people had no business in the space to begin with and then they had all of this monitoring equipment. It might be some sort of espionage effort and we should really look into it under the Illegal Interception of Communications statute.”

The agent volunteered to stay and open the case but I said no, you have had a long night, go home and I’ll open up the case.

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 7

DB: So I dictated a memo stating what occurred to my secretary and then I began to maintain a running log on yellow lined legal size tablet paper.

I called Washington Field and told them to break out a detachment of agents, send them over to the jail, and interview these people to find out their name, background, nationality and citizenship status and to call all of that information into me. They complied.

I called Bob Kunkel at home. At the time he was the SAC in Washington Field. I think he is now deceased. I told Bob that I had asked some of his agents to do some work on Sunday and I wanted him to know about it. And I told him what I had just related to you (the break-in, etc.).

The agents reported back that these Latin Americans were Cuban, living in Miami, and there was one American incarcerated with them. There was someone by the name of Al Hunt on the outside trying to get them out on bail.

So I got all the names of the Cubans and I asked, "What was the name of the Caucasian with them?" He said, "G. Gordon Liddy." I thought well that is unusual. There is a fellow by that name who sat next to me in a two day seminar here at the Bureau back in 1962, ten years prior to Watergate.

Anyway, I said to just keep interviewing these people and find out who they are and why they were in there.

Then I called Kunkel and I told him what I just related. He endorsed everything I did and said to just keep him up to date.

At that time the Acting Director was L. Patrick Gray. J. Edgar Hoover had just died the prior month. L. Patrick Gray was the Acting Director and the Associate Director was Mark Felt. L. Patrick Gray had been a career Naval Officer. He is a graduate of the Naval Academy: well regarded by we subordinates at Headquarters. He was not in Washington at the time. He was up in his home in Connecticut so Mark Felt was in charge of the FBI.

I called Mark at home. Mark lived over in Virginia in Fairfax or Annandale. I told Mark what had happened and what action I was taking. I said that I had opened the case under 'Illegal Interception of Communications'. Right now files are being pulled and I have come up with two Anglos and about 9 or 10 Cubans. As soon as I look through the files, I will call you back.

He said, "Fine. Keep up the good work." So the files came. We had a closed main '67' file on G. Gordon Liddy. I looked at his picture. I said, "You know this is the guy that sat next to me."

BH: Help me out here. A '67' – what is that?

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 8

DB: That is the FBI applicant file, your personnel file. At that time, a '67' file was the Bureau personnel file for agents and support personnel.

Then I got a file presented to me on Hunt. It was a closed applicant file indicating that he was employed by the CIA. I thought this is unusual.

Once again I asked the field agents what else was new and they were telling me that this guy Hunt was outside trying to get them out on bail. It was Sunday. He was trying to contact the U.S. magistrate to see if he could get them out.

I said, "Well, I don't want these guys released from jail today. They can just sit in jail until Monday." So then I called SAC Washington Field, Bob Kunkel, and after that I called Mark Felt and gave him a summary of all of this. I thought it was unusual that these people would be in the Democratic Party space and have all of this monitoring equipment. He couldn't understand that either.

Up until I heard about Liddy and Hunt being involved, I thought this might be a Cuban intelligence operation directed by the KGB in Cuba. But once these two people, Hunt and Liddy, surfaced in the investigation, I honestly didn't know what to think. I still wanted to know why they were in there with all of this electronic equipment.

So this goes on. Of course there was other ...

BH: Would there have been a way for you to check to see if this had been a Bureau operation of some kind?

DB: You know I never thought about checking it from that way because I would have known about it, just by the nature of my assignment as supervisor. The supervisor in the Domestic Intelligence Division would normally call over and say "this is what is going on."

I didn't get any call from the Domestic Intelligence supervisor so. I was too busy handling everything else.

BH: Oh yes. I was just curious.

DB: No, that's the way I want you to ask these questions. Frankly I never even thought about calling the Domestic Intelligence Division to see if this was their operation.

BH: They would have called you the moment it blew I would assume.

DB: They would have called my predecessor that night because it happened at 1:00 in the morning.

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 9

DB: Anyway I was following events and keeping a running log (on paper) about who called, the time, date and their reports. Then I would add another entry showing exactly what I had asked them to do and why. There were a few pages filled up during the day of things that were going on.

At about 4:00 in the afternoon, my secretary answered the phone and told me, "It's the White House." Well, that wasn't unusual. The White House would call us on various matters and we would try to respond as candidly as we could.

So I wasn't overly concerned when someone said the White House was on the phone. I picked up the phone and I said, "This is Agent Supervisor Dan Bledsoe. Who am I speaking with?"

He said, "You are speaking with John Ehrlichman. Do you know who I am?" In a belligerent tone.

I said, "Yes. You are the chief of staff there at the White House."

He said, "That's right. I have a mandate from the President of the United States."

I said, "Yes."

He said, "The FBI is to terminate the investigation of the break-in over there on Virginia Avenue that occurred during the night."

There was just a silence.

He said, "Did you hear what I said?"

I said, "Yes."

Then he repeated himself. He said, "I have a mandate from the President to terminate the investigation."

He said, "Did you hear me?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Are you going to terminate the investigation?"

I said, "No."

Then he got emotionally upset and profane and wanted to know why not.

DB

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 10

DB: I said, "Under the constitution, the FBI is obligated to initiate an investigation to determine whether there has been a violation of the illegal interception of communications statute."

Ehrlichman said, "I am an attorney and I never heard of that statute."

I said, "Well, Mr. Ehrlichman, get the Federal Code out and it is in there under Title 18." Or whatever the section number was, I forget now.

He got emotionally upset again and he said, "Do you know that you are saying 'no' to the President of the United States?"

I said, "Yes."

Then he said, "Bledsoe, your career is doomed."

BH: That sounds desperate, doesn't it? I've heard that a couple of times.

DB: We all have, haven't we? He was more profane. He said it again. He said, "You are gone. You're doomed." Then he slammed the receiver down.

So I called Kunkel and Felt and told them that John Ehrlichman just called and wanted me to stop the investigation and I said that I wasn't going to do it.

I told Kunkel, he and I, well all three of us were on the Inspection Staff together. I told Bob that I may have to look for another job on Monday morning.

He said, "Well, I don't know. But if you have to, state me as a reference."

Then I called Mark Felt and told him that Ehrlichman had just called me and told me to terminate the investigation. Mark interviewed me in detail about exactly what was said and I told him what I just related. He laughed because he knew these people. In his high position, he knew what was occurring in the White House.

He just laughed. He said, "That sounds like John. Dan, just keep up the good work and keep me up to date. I'll be home the rest of the day."

I said, "Okay."

DB: So that is pretty much what occurred. The supervisor coming in to relieve me at 4:00 in the afternoon eventually was *the* supervisor that ended up with the Watergate case, as a special assignment. That agent's name was Al Barter. He is deceased now.

BH: A L B - A - R - T - E - R ?

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 11

DB: Not sure.

BH: He is deceased now?

DB: I'm pretty sure. The reason I didn't get the ticket, the assignment was because I was on Major Crimes, and at that time we were handling aircraft crimes, extortions and kidnappings.

We had a rash of hi-jacked aircraft being flown to Cuba.

I put myself through my education. Most of my education I financed through working for an airline in an administrative position. That gave me a tremendous insight into airline operations. Consequently I ended up on the aircraft crimes desk because we were writing the manual of instructions on "Crimes Aboard Aircraft."

It is a very broad statute. It covers everything but suicide. It is not illegal to commit suicide on an airplane.

BH: Unless you take everybody with you. It is kind of interesting the connections that the Bureau had. The tremendous connections, of course, with the Marine Corps, the Bureau is full of marines and for whatever reason big connections with the airline industry. I remember down in Miami you could go over to American, I think it was American, they had a training center there. The guys would go over for lunch and the beginning stewardesses were learning how to give cabin service. They would go over and sit in a fake airplane and have lunch.

It was part of the fun. It is just kind of interesting. There were a lot of people who had airline background.

Tell me a little bit, you followed things. That was an interesting thing that you got that case opened up and you were the guy who opened it. Did you follow it closely just from an interest point of view?

DB: No, not really. I was curious. When I went home that evening after work, it was Sunday evening. Of course I never ever told my wife any details about my work. When I went home, she said, "Well how did your day go?"

DB: I said, "Well I was busy. I might have to find a new job on Monday morning." She said, "Good." She thought the Bureau treated us despicably. They never really appreciated us. At least Hoover didn't.

BH: Tell me what it was like at Headquarters there at the time of Hoover's death and the transition that went on. It went on for quite a while. For several years, in fact, I would say. You had met Hoover I would assume.

Daniel F. Bledsoe

August 19, 2009

Page 12

DB: I knew him but only in a professional way. The last eighteen months of his life my office space was on the same floor, about 150 yards from his office. The space was occupied by maybe four supervisors and our support personnel. To the east of our space was Tolson's office and then there was the elevator bank and then there was Hoover's office.

It wasn't uncommon to bump into these two. They were like clockwork. They would go to lunch at the same time of day. They would come back at the same time of day. You could inadvertently get into the elevator at the wrong time and there you were with Hoover and Tolson.

I'll talk to you but you have to turn the recording machine off if I tell you these stories.

INDEX
Daniel F. Bledsoe
Interviewed on August 19, 2009

A

Airplane hijackings, 12

B

Barter, Al, 10, 11

Bledsoe, Daniel F.,

Assignments,
Chicago IL, 2, 3
Houston TX, 2, 3
Quantico VA, FBI Academy, 2
Washington, D.C., Headquarters, 2, 4, 5, 6,
7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; Fugitive Desk, 2, 4;
Inspection Staff, 2, 5; Major Crimes Desk,
2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; Special Inquiry
Desk, 4, 5
Early life & education, 1
Entered FBI, 1, 2
Censured once, 4, 5
Military service, USMC, Korea, 1
Retirement, 4, 5

C

Copyright release, 1

D

E

Ehrlichman, John, 9, 10

F

Felt, Mark, 2, 7, 8, 10

G

Gray, L. Patrick, Acting Director of the FBI,
7

H

Hollstein, Brian R., interviewer, 1
Hoover, J. Edgar, Director of the FBI, 4, 5,
7, 11, 12
Hunt, Al, 7, 8

I

Informants, 1, 4

J

K

Kennedy, John F., President of U.S., 4
Kennedy, Robert, Attorney General, 3
Kunkel, Bob, 7, 8, 10

L

Liddy, G. Gordon, 7, 8

M

N

O

Olympics, 1984, 2, 3

P

Q

R

S

'67' file, 7, 8

T

Tolson, Clyde, 12
Top Ten fugitives, 4

U

V

W

Watergate investigation, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
White, Byron, 3, 4

X

Y

Z