

Bobby vs Jimmy

If John was the Kennedy playboy, his brother Bobby was the pit bull. When RFK set his sights on Jimmy Hoffa, the Attorney General was willing to do whatever it took to take down the Teamster boss.

The chief law enforcement officer of the nation was willing to break the law, repeatedly, to achieve his goals. Although it doesn't seem like a big deal today, RFK bugged Hoffa's hotel suite at the Patton Hotel in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to obtain evidence to use against him in court. Now that law-enforcement technique is routine. Then it was illegal. That was merely an annoyance to RFK, not a deterrent.

During the Hoffa trial in Chattanooga, Justice Department lawyers, on RFK's orders, listened to tapes of illegal wiretaps recording conversations between Hoffa and his attorneys. The illegal tapes obviously couldn't be introduced as evidence in court, but they were used to determine what questions to ask in court the next day.

So important were illegal wiretaps to RFK that he had a special assistant who was an expert in the field. Walter Sheridan was Bobby's go-to guy for wiretaps (and other crimes). Sheridan had a security services business that specialized in wiretapping, and RFK made liberal use of those services. Sheridan wasn't too concerned with getting caught, because his company was immune from prosecution, thanks to Bobby.

RFK also told the IRS to do their own wiretapping. And it wasn't just criminals or suspected criminals that were being violated. When conversations were recorded that had nothing to do with any investigation, the federal snoops didn't discard them. They started keeping files on

those people as well. Bobby was half a century ahead of his time.

The political implications of RFK's criminal activity were far more important (to him) than any legal concerns. So Bobby and Sheridan lied their asses off, publicly denying any use of illegal wiretaps or any knowledge of such a thing. Even under oath, Sheridan lied. One lawyer caught Sheridan off guard, pointing out that his mention of the name Armentrout could have come only by listening to illegal recordings. But neither RFK nor Sheridan ever paid any legal price for their crimes.

It wasn't just federal snoops who lied about the liberal use of illegal wiretaps. Respected historian Arthur Schlesinger betrayed his profession for RFK. **In the entire investigation in connection with the Hoffa case, there has not been one instance of wiretapping or bugging of Hoffa.** It was a lie, and Schlesinger knew it.

Wiretapping was not the only form of crime committed by the RFK get-Hoffa squad. Included in the RFK / Sheridan bag of dirty tricks were blackmail and threats of violence. Sheridan paid a convicted felon, Edward Grady Partin, to assist in their get-Hoffa efforts. Partin reported to Herbert J Miller Jr, just like Sheridan did, and Partin was paid as an undercover agent, which was illegal. Sheridan, posing (as he often did) as a journalist or commentator, planted a story in a 1964 *Life* magazine article portraying Partin (the primary witness against Hoffa) as a guy who had had a few minor scrapes with the law, but was now on the straight and narrow, cooperating with the feds. In fact, Partin was in jail at that time, and his rap sheet included rape, forgery, first-degree manslaughter, kidnapping, and assault and battery.

Sheridan swore under oath that he was not aware of any money paid to Partin. However, Partin admitted that he had been

paid, and added that Sheridan still owed him money. Caught in a lie, Sheridan blamed his assistant, former FBI officer A Frank Grimsley Jr, who pointed the finger right back at Sheridan. Feds finally produced a memo dated July 3, 1963, authorizing a check payable to Frank Grimsley, who was instructed to give the money to a confidential source.

When his dirty work was finished, RFK rewarded Partin with a Lotus Ford racing car. However, Partin eventually decided he'd had enough of the Hoffa mess, and he was ready to tell everything he knew.

Frederick Michael Shobe was another criminal who got caught up in RFK's get-Hoffa obsession. Shobe had spent time in jail for armed robbery, burglary, and forgery. He was out on parole when he encountered Sheridan, who hired him to embarrass and harass Hoffa and his Teamsters Union. It was either do as Sheridan said or go back to jail on parole violation. When it came time to rat out Sheridan at the Hoffa trial, Sheridan tried to buy Shobe's silence with a promise of a presidential pardon and a federal job. However, Shobe found out the job was in Japan, and that was a deal breaker. Shobe testified for the Hoffa defense.

Under oath, Shobe testified that Sheridan had told him that **Hoffa should be in jail and if we have to resort to unfair tactics, well, that's where a person like myself came in at . . . to get him by any means, fair or foul.** Asked if Sheridan said that directly to him, Shobe said yes.

Shobe also told the story of Thomas E Parks, who worked in a funeral home. He was a Hoffa co-defendant, and Sheridan was intent on getting Parks to turn on Hoffa. Sheridan's scheme was to stage a phony arrest of Parks, who would be kidnapped and taken out into the woods, where men posing as Hoffa muscle would dig a hole to

bury Parks in. Sheridan's minions would swoop in at the last minute to save Parks from the wrath of Hoffa, and Parks would be so frightened and grateful to Sheridan that he would play ball with the prosecution. (Shobe's account of those events came while the jury was out of the court room. The prosecution didn't bother to deny or refute it.)

RFK was careful to work only with loyalists, who would lie for him if necessary. But J Edgar Hoover was hardly a Kennedy loyalist, and he knew a lot of Kennedy secrets. (That's how he had managed to stay on as FBI Director for so long.) On September 26, 1966, Hoover wrote to LBJ Special Assistant Marvin Watson. Hoover said he had written evidence that RFK had authorized illegal wiretaps. Furthermore, RFK had pushed hard to get wiretap recognized by Hoover as an acceptable investigative technique. Although publicly RFK claimed he didn't know much about wiretaps, privately he lobbied for their extensive use. When that didn't work, Bobby used wiretaps extensively anyway. RFK's public image was that of a champion of civil liberties, but behind the scenes RFK had no respect for constitutional rights if they happened to interfere with his agenda.

Another RFK victim was Martin Luther King Jr. Based on a flimsy excuse, RFK authorized the FBI to wiretap King's telephones. However, the FBI had already been tapping King's lines for years. So Hoover had nothing but contempt for the Constitution as well.