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**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.

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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.

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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.

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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?

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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.

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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

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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 ?

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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.