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Family
Weekly

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Sneers turned to smiles for a vindicated Joe Poskonka who was given a hero's welcome by neighborhood kids.

My secret life for the FBI

By JOSEPH A. POSKONKA

(Last week, Mr. Poskonka described how he had gone to the FBI with a story of Communist domination of the United Packinghouse Workers, of which he was an official. He had agreed to stay in the Union and report Communist activities to the FBI. In doing so, he had become publicly identified as a Communist, and both he and his family—who weren't in on the secret—had been subjected to all sorts of insults and indignities. The worst of these came when—during a Congressional hearing in the midst of the Korean War—he was named as one of the "top Communists in the Chicago area." This story appeared in all Chicago newspapers and was read by his friends, neighbors, and co-workers.)

RIGHT AFTER the newspaper story identifying me as a "top Communist" appeared, I had my worst time as a spy for the FBI. The hardest incident for me to accept happened one night in a bar when I was standing with my back to the room. A soldier in uniform hit me in the back of the neck without warning. He'd just come back from Korea and wasn't feeling very sympathetic toward Communists. When I spun around, he really clobbered me.

As I got slowly to my feet, he stood over me and said: "You Communist so-and-so!" I crawled out of the place and cried like a baby.

At work, the men in my department tacked the story on the bulletin boards and called me "Comrade."

None of them would work with me. These men were not members of the Packinghouse Workers Union and still had some freedom.

Things got worse at home, too. One night, as I lay awake wondering how much longer I could stick it out, I heard a crash and tinkling glass on our back porch. When I got out there, whoever had thrown the bricks through our windows had disappeared. But it happened again several times.

Then some of our neighbors decided they wanted us out of the home we'd lived in for 26 years. It really hurt when a petition was circulated to try and force us to move. We never saw the petition, but some of the people pushing it made sure our children heard about it. Enough people refused to sign so that it was never put up to us. It's a miserable feeling, though, to know you're not wanted.

The day after my name was cleared, my youngest daughter, Esther, came home waving a newspaper and said she was going to take it to the people who had started the petition.

"I'm going to shove this paper under their door," she shouted, "to make sure they see it!"

But that was still in the future. Right now, I had a new problem. I lost my job and couldn't find another. I was laid off at Armour and Company in June, 1957, along with a lot of other people. My lack of seniority, not my politics, dictated this layoff. I continued going to all

my Communist meetings during this period—until I was called back to work early in 1958. But when I reported, my supervisor said: "Joe, if you punch in, I'll fire you." And that was that.

It was then my past really began catching up with me. There was work in other companies—but not for me. I'd apply and they'd tell me to report for work. Then, when I showed up, there was always some reason why there wasn't a job after all.

My wife was working to keep our home together, but this was my responsibility, not hers. For the first time I had some misgivings. I was still attending Party meetings and was still known as a Communist, both inside and outside the Party. That was why I couldn't get a job.

Several times I asked the FBI to take the wraps off me. I was no longer afraid of retribution from the Party; I was more afraid of seeing my family go hungry. The Government wanted me to testify as a surprise witness when my testimony would be of greatest value. I was all for that, too, because the more my appearance was played up in the newspapers, the more people would realize what I'd been doing.

But somehow the right occasion didn't seem to come along. Three times I thought I was going to throw off the Communist shackles—at trials of people I knew to be Communists. But each time they decided they didn't need my testimony, and the time dragged on.

THEN, on May 7, 1959, came that wonderful subpoena from the House Un-American Activities Com-

mission as a "top Communist," this man was scorned by neighbors and employers, but the day came when he could serve his country by naming Reds attacking our union movement.

RED POSER OFFERED JOB

Undercover Agent for F. B. I. May Become Union Aide

CHICAGO, May 9 (AP)—A man who posed as a Communist sixteen years to unearth activities in the United Packinghouse Workers Union may have his first job offer in less than two weeks.

the FBI

tee, meeting in Chicago to investigate Communist activities in the Midwest. I'm probably the only guy in history who was ever overjoyed to get a subpoena.

For 16 years, I'd been unable to talk with my family—really talk with them. Now the time had finally come. I called together my wife and the children who were at home or close enough to come over.

"Tomorrow," I told them, "I'm going to have a chance to clear my name and yours before the whole country."

Then I told them the story of my 16 years as a spy for the FBI. I don't remember too well what happened after that because we were so happy. I remember, though, that we all thanked Almighty God for bringing us through this experience.

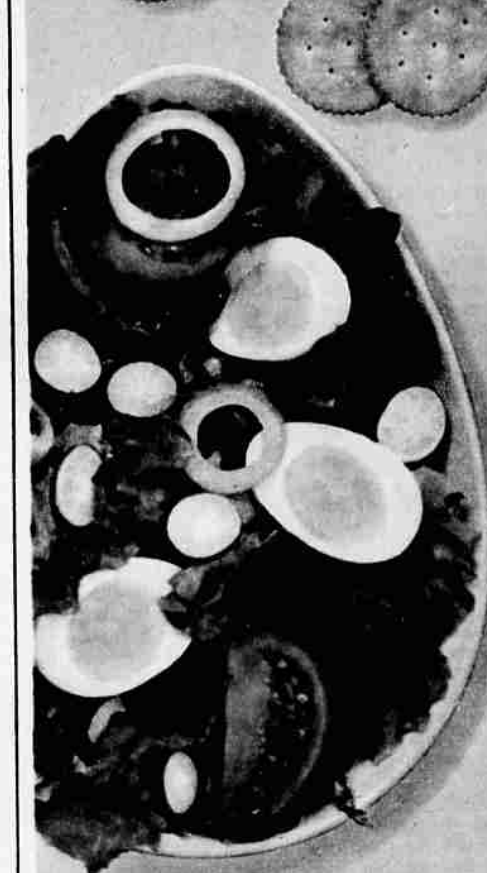
The hearing next day was almost an anticlimax to me. I got to the hearing room very early, found the doors locked, and went out for a cup of coffee. While I sat on a restaurant stool, George—who had first brought me into the Communist Party—came in, saw me, and sat down beside me. I knew he had been subpoenaed to appear before the committee; but he wasn't expecting to see me. He looked at me suspiciously and asked me what I was doing downtown. I told him I had some business to attend to, paid my check, and left.

I wandered around for a few minutes, then returned to the courthouse where the hearings were being held and went to the washroom. As I was going out the door, George came in. Our eyes locked, and I saw him suddenly realize why I was there. He

(Continued on page 18)

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