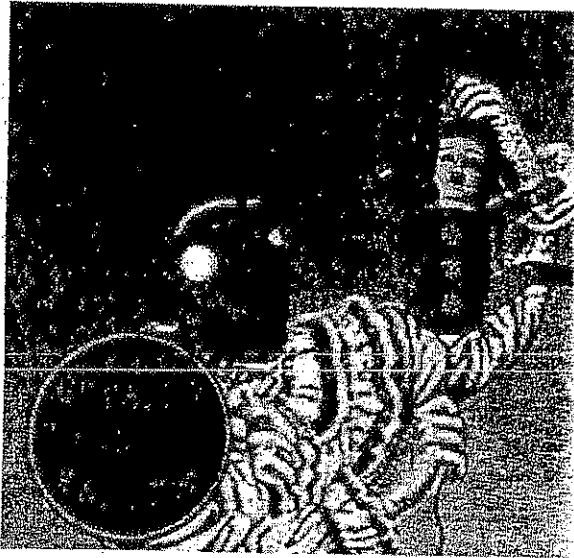


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The Greatest Vendetta on Earth

Why would the head of Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey hire a former top CIA honcho to torment a hapless freelance writer for eight years?

Editor's note: This is the first in a two-part series.

By Jeff Stein

Aug. 30, 2001 | WASHINGTON -- On a gloomy Veterans Day in 1998, Janice Pottker answered an unexpected knock on the door of her home in Potomac, Md., a woodsy, upscale suburb of Washington. Standing there was a man she'd never seen before, a private detective

who introduced himself as Tim Tieff. He told Pottker, a freelance writer married to a senior government official, that he had a discreet message from Charles F. Smith, a former top executive with Feld Entertainment, owner of the Ringling Brothers-Barnum & Bailey Circuses, Disney Shows on Ice, and other subsidiaries that make it the largest live entertainment company in the world.

Smith wanted to see her, he said.

It had to have been startling news for Pottker, who had written a controversial, 11,000-word piece on the circus and its colorful owners, Washington's Feld family, for a local business magazine in 1990. Her piece had recounted the Feld family's Horatio Alger-like story, but it had also exposed some unpleasant secrets about the famously tight-lipped Felds -- such as a bitter feud that had broken out between the two chief heirs, and the bisexuality of the family's patriarch, Irvin Feld. The circus had refused to talk to her ever since.

Ever since, Pottker had been trying, and failing, to get a book off the ground about the circus. But nothing had ever seemed to jell. Promising magazine assignments about the circus's questionable treatment of its performing children and the care of its animals had been derailed. Congressional and Labor Department interest in the subjects, which she'd spurred, evaporated. Now, out of the blue, a former top Feld official had sent a message saying he would like to meet with her. Would she agree?

In a New York minute. For years, Smith had been the right-hand man of Ken Feld, who had inherited the circus when his entrepreneurial father died in 1984. But Smith had been fired 18 months earlier. Now he was apparently ready to spill the beans.

The next day, Pottker sped off to meet Smith in nearby Chevy Chase. But if she had expectations that the

unnecessary.

The final paragraph of George's affidavit was a stunner, too. It suggested Feld had set up a special unit, much like the Watergate "plumbers," to destroy anyone who threatened the image of the circus as wholesome fun for the whole family, not to mention a conscientious custodian of animals and circus children. It was headed by one Richard Froemming, one of Feld's executive vice presidents, George swore. His main target was People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), and similar groups that had annoyed Feld with charges that the Ringling Bros.' elephants were badly cared for.

"As part of my work for Feld Entertainment," George wrote, "I was also asked to review reports from Richard Froemming and his organizations based on their surveillance of, and efforts to counter, the activities of various animal rights groups. I have discussed these reports in meetings in which Mr. Feld was present."

The former CIA spy master concluded by stating, "I swear under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct."

Janice Pottker had a serious interest in the way society worked -- she had a Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia -- when she started out as a writer. Her first two books, coauthored with her husband, Andrew Fishel, had been academic, "Sex Bias in the Schools," and "Sex Discrimination in Education." In Washington, where her husband wound up as a senior official at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), she began work as a sociologist in the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. She didn't leave her concerns behind in the office, either: Galled by a local dry cleaner's double standard of charging women \$2.25 to clean blouses that were similar to the shirts that men paid only 95 cents to have cleaned, she joined with another woman to file complaints with the local county human rights commission. Their protest was written up in the Washington Post.

Soon, she began to pursue writing full time, showing a knack for unauthorized biographies. In 1987 she published "Dear Ann, Dear Abby," on the two sisters who became renowned advice columnists. The book sold 200,000 copies. Family dynasties intrigued her. She began profiling them for a book she would call "Born to Power," which eventually included a chapter on the Felds, adapted from her magazine story.

In that article, Pottker wove what was, for the most part, an inspiring tale of Irvin Feld's origins as a little boy in the 1920s selling nickel bottles of snake oil at two for a dollar at traveling carnivals in rural Maryland, through the mid-1980s, when his global entertainment company employed 2,500 people, including Siegfried and Roy, with revenues approaching \$260 million a year. The feisty entrepreneur had cracked the Forbes 400.

Feld's knack for making serious money blossomed early, when he and his brother Israel came to Washington in 1938 and opened a novelty store in a predominately black part of the city. Two years later Irvin plunked down \$500 to open the Super Cut-Rate Drugstore downtown, and hung speakers outside to blare pop tunes and gospel songs at passersby. "I knew blacks liked music and records," he was quoted as saying.

But that was only the beginning. The drug store was soon followed by record stores, and then his own recording company, which specialized in black acts. The budding impresario then originated the idea of outdoor summer concerts, and later indoor concerts with air conditioning, to promote his recording acts, showing up to take charge in his trademark crimson jackets and garish ties, and screaming orders with his ever-present cigar and diamond pinkie ring fluttering in the air. Soon, Feld was booking acts from Chubby Checker to the Big Bopper to a teenage Paul Anka in all kinds of major venues. Then, in 1956, he finally got his lifelong wish: buying a share of the near-bankrupt Ringling Bros. circus. In 1967, for \$8 million, he

The paper trail of crime and punishment in Washington usually begins in the basement of Superior Court for the District of Columbia, where the clerk's office is. When I request civil case number 99-008068, the clerk rolls out a cart piled with 15 bulging volumes, about 7,500 pages in all. I unload each 20 pound volume one by one. They are all labeled the same: Pottker v. Feld, et al. It will take six days to read through them just once, taking notes and making copies. After that I go back again and again, transfixed by the plot that unfolds in the files.

As a whole, the filings, motions, rulings, depositions, affidavits and exhibits evoke "The Spanish Prisoner," David Mamet's 1997 portrait of deception and paranoia. In stomach-turning detail, the documents describe how Ken Feld, Charles Smith, Claire George and a mysterious cabal of still-unknown dirty tricksters with close connections to the CIA were deployed to act as Jan Pottker's personal gremlins, without her ever having a clue about why so many things in her life were going wrong.

All this because Pottker, a pixie-haired, 50-ish wife and mother of two daughters, had written a magazine article that included a passage on Irvin Feld's well-known sexual proclivities and his reportedly negligible job as a father. It might have worked, too, and Pottker would have gone through life just feeling particularly unlucky, as many writers do. But then, the plot started to unravel.

After Pottker read George's affidavit, she faxed it to her friend Dan Moldea, a well-known investigative reporter and author of several books, starting with "The Hoffa Wars," a 1978 bestseller. Moldea's beat is cops, the Mob and corruption, but even he was shocked.

"Jesus Christ," he said when he called Jan back. It was one of the most amazing documents he'd ever seen.

"I was completely stunned," Moldea says. "Every investigative journalist I know has moments of paranoia -- where we believe that higher powers are actively but covertly attempting to sabotage our work. But after reviewing the George affidavit, I had never seen such overwhelming evidence that just flat-out proved it."

One of Moldea's first questions for Pottker was where the document came from. She told him about Charles Smith, who was suing Feld for millions of dollars in stock options and other money he claimed the company owed him. Smith had gotten the affidavit from Clair George to support his allegation that Feld had used company funds for his private vendettas against her and animal rights groups.

"She was befuddled and puzzled by the document," Moldea recalled. "She didn't know what to make of it." Moldea wasn't sure either. But he told her it was strong evidence of "a concerted effort to destroy her efforts" to write about the Felds, and recommended she talk to his lawyer, Roger Simmons. Simmons was a tough puncher who'd carried Moldea's unprecedented suit against the New York Times for a defamatory book review all the way to the Supreme Court, only to lose by a hair. This year he also won huge cash judgments against CNN for its dismissal of two producers for their story on alleged U.S. poison gas attacks in Vietnam.

On Nov. 10, 1999, almost exactly a year to the day that Pottker answered that fateful knock on her door, Roger Simmons filed suit against Ken Feld; Feld Entertainment; the Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Circus and other subsidiaries; Charles Smith; Clair George; the owner of National Press Books, which Feld had funneled money through to publish Jan Pottker's Mars book; and one Robert Eringer, an obscure journalist with ties to the CIA who had allegedly helped George short-circuit Pottker's life. Other as-yet unidentified individuals suspected of wiretapping Pottker, breaking into her home and investigating her friends, were cited as "The John Doe Company." The charge was "invasion of privacy ... intentional infliction of emotional distress ... breach of fiduciary duty," and related allegations. Simmons asked for a \$1 million judgment and \$10 million more in punitive damages for his clients, Jan Pottker and her husband Andrew Fishel. The suit is ongoing.

damage was done.

How Smith induced Clair George to give him the affidavit that, like a loose thread, eventually unraveled all the plots against Pottker and the animal rights groups remains a mystery. In August 2000, when Roger Simmons, Pottker's lawyer, placed the affidavit in front of George during his deposition and asked him to reaffirm the truth of it, the following remarkable exchange took place.

"Well, I can't swear to that," said the aging spy master, now 70 and nearly blind from eye disease. "I accept the fact that I signed something I can't swear to (now)."

But you swore to it at the time, didn't you? Simmons asked.

"I sure did," George replied, "because the squeeze they put on me you'll never dream."

"Would you explain what you just said?" Simmons asked.

"No," George replied.

"Who is 'they'?" Simmons asked.

George, according to the transcript, gave "no oral response."

"Are you refusing to answer?" Simmons pressed.

"I'm refusing to answer," George said.

When George's 1998 affidavit surfaced it led to more suits against Feld. In June 2000, the Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) filed suit in California. Eleven months later, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals filed their own suit in Norfolk, Va., where the organization is headquartered.

According to the PAWS suit, Feld's assault on PETA began in 1989, when his security man Richard Froemming allegedly dispatched a man and a woman (improbably named Martin and Lewis) to PAWS's headquarters in Galt, Calif., where they posed as former activists at PETA and joined the organization as volunteers. Over the next three years, according to the allegations, the two undercover agents stole "thousands of pages" of PAWS' internal documents, including donor lists, that they used to solicit funds for an antagonistic organization, "Putting People First." To hide its hand in the scheme, Feld Entertainment farmed out the job to Richlin Consultants, a private security firm.

In particular, Feld's spies targeted the group's leaders, executive director Patricia Derby (a veteran Hollywood animal trainer), and secretary Edward Allen Stewart, going so far as to photograph the interior of their homes and offices, the suit claimed. Douglas Martin also "attempted to solicit Stewart to commit an illegal act involving the theft of Ringling Bros. animals," the suit charged, while Julie Lewis ingratiated herself so successfully with PAWS's director Pat Derby that in May 2000 she accompanied her to Washington, where Derby was scheduled to testify before a congressional committee on pending legislation. At Derby's side, Lewis attended sensitive meetings and sent intelligence reports back to the circus, the suit charged.

Again, it was a blunder by Chuck Smith that exposed the operation. When Smith left Feld in 1997 (after his videotapes of his girlfriend fell into her hands), he hired a Northern Virginia firm, Aegis Security Associates, according to sources close to the case, to gather up incriminating documents on Feld. Those included the documents his spies had stolen from PAWS, including internal documents, surveillance

"What I did [was] illegal, immoral, unethical, a long list," Kaplan testified on April 22, 1998. "Very long list. Do you want some of those?"

"Yes," Feld's lawyer said. What followed was a long list of charges against the circus that would seem to stretch credulity, and which is not backed up by any specific evidence from Kaplan. But Kaplan swore to it all under penalty of perjury.

"We had ... sexual assaults; pedophiles on the show; we had, you know, thefts; we had people we basically threw out of the buildings; we had people that didn't even have clothes on their backs." Later, Kaplan added, "We had people, pedophiles, taking kids in, the performers, taking them into trailers. We had some vendors who raped a few and the concessionaires in the building, and it was on and on and on."

In Kaplan's telling, the circus sounds more like Sodom and Gomorrah than Barnum & Bailey. But Kaplan had only begun. "We knew that drugs were actually coming (in) from the show side, working men, the performers," he added after a break. "Mr. Feld was told that." But they were not allowed to test the performers, he said. He also claimed that the working men were selling drugs to the food and concession vendors.

Kaplan continued with stories of "despicable living conditions," and drug problems that led to tragedy. "We had two people die on the train, from overdoses."

Many employees were "undocumented aliens," Kaplan went on. "We had criminals, people with extensive warrants out for their arrest working as working men under assumed names." As director of security for the concessions arm of the circus, Kaplan said he was closely involved in that. "[W]e started doing criminal checks in the later years."

And when sick employees filed for workman's compensation, he bugged their rooms, put electronic tracking devices on their cars, surveilled, harassed and otherwise helped the company outlast hard-pressed claimants until they'd take any crumb that the company offered, he testified.

And that was just the treatment of people. "We had some real problems with the elephants," Kaplan testified. "I was told [by the circus veterinarian] ... that about half of the elephants in each of the shows had tuberculosis and that the tuberculosis was an easily transmitted disease to individuals, to human beings. The circus, the elephants, were transported all throughout Florida, which is illegal to do that in the State of Florida."

Later, he said, "I was asked by Chuck [Smith], through Kenneth [Feld], to find a physician who would test the people on the circus to see if they had tuberculosis but who would destroy the records and not turn them into the Centers for Disease Control."

Startling statements, every one of them. But Kaplan said his company's "immoral, illegal, unethical, and dangerous" acts extended all across the country -- and abroad.

Name one, a lawyer asked. "Such as going through Warsaw, Poland and being asked to take \$230,000 of U.S. currency out of the country that we weren't allowed to take money out of," Kaplan answered, "and illegally removing funds out of the country, which I think anybody would consider very dangerous."

Who instructed you to do this, he was asked. "Mr. Feld, Chuck Smith," Kaplan said.

But Kaplan wasn't a lone ranger, he said. Richard Froemming was the real go-to guy at the circus for

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And this doesn't even touch on the
stimulating conversations I've either taken
part in or witnessed.

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Send in the clowns

How Ringling Bros. minions tormented a freelance writer for eight years.

Editor's note: This is the second in a two-part series. The first part can be read [here](#).

By Jeff Stein

Aug. 31, 2001 | WASHINGTON -- In August, I left a message for Jan Pottker at her home in Potomac, Md. She called back the next day to politely say she'd think it over, but doubted she would want to talk.

"Burned once, you know, it's not my fault," she said. "Burned twice, it is my fault."

It's not difficult to understand why Pottker declined to be interviewed. For eight years, she had been subjected to a bizarre ordeal. A gregarious, prematurely graying man in his late 30s posing as a helpful book packager and promoter had led her on a wild goose chase. While reporting on her every movement, and even thoughts, he steered her toward other projects, feeding her disinformation and generally doing everything in his power to prevent her from publishing anything about Ringling Bros.

The life of a freelance writer can inspire paranoia even at the best of times. Story assignments inexplicably fall through, editors change their minds. But the surreal campaign of dirty tricks endlessly played on Jan Pottker by Ringling Bros. chief Ken Feld and his minions would be enough to persuade even the most stoic freelancer that their career path was being plotted by Franz Kafka.

The excruciating details of Pottker's travails are annotated in almost 10,000 pages of pretrial complaints, motions, affidavits and depositions filed in the bowels of Superior Court for the District of Columbia. The evidence gathered so far evokes other unfortunate milestones in the annals of corporate espionage, going back to General Motors' infamous campaign against the young activist Ralph Nader 40 years ago through the mysterious death of Karen Silkwood on a dark Oklahoma highway in 1974.

Pottker's personal tormentor was an obscure, innocuous-looking, 36-year-old freelance writer and sometime publisher with uncommonly close ties to high-ranking former officials of the CIA. His name was Robert Eringer.

"I met Robert Eringer in the late 1980s," Clair George said in a deposition on file in Superior Court. "He called me when I still worked for the government, introduced himself as a book agent/publisher and asked me if I would be willing to do a biography." (George presumably meant "autobiography.")

A woman who knew him then recalled, "He was very charming. Almost charismatic, I'd say." Her understanding

court.

It isn't clear exactly when Eringer began working for Clair George. But clearly he was on Feld's payroll, with orders to obstruct Pottker's planned book about the circus, by 1990. At that time, Eringer was running a small publishing operation called Enigma Books, on Georgia Avenue in suburban Silver Spring, Md. He befriended David Cutler, a Washington literary agent who was representing Pottker, and offered to help him market her proposal for a book on the Feld family. Cutler supplied Eringer with a copy of the proposal, which Eringer gave to George.

"Did you know he worked for the circus?" Pottker's lawyer, Roger Simmons, asked Eringer under oath.

"Yes," Eringer said. About the same time, he also admitted, he was secretly helping George develop "an authorized" book on the circus, paid for by Feld Entertainment subsidiaries to the tune of \$3,000 a week. At the same time, according to court files, Feld was sending checks to Post Office Box addresses at three separate Mailboxes, Etc. stores in northwest Washington and Bethesda. The checks were often made out to entities such as The Pitcairn Group, Admiralty Consultants, and Equator Associates -- names evidently inspired by "The Mutiny on the Bounty."

Pottker was totally in the dark about these activities, of course. Eventually she tired of Cutler's ineffectual efforts to market her proposal and found a new agent. That's when George and Eringer kicked off a new operation to derail her book, "Project Preempt."

On the night of April 26, 1993 -- nearly three years after Pottker's initial magazine story on the Feld family had caused such a commotion -- Robert Eringer attended a presentation on family dynasties that Pottker was giving at a local library. When she finished, Eringer introduced himself, said he liked her ideas, and wanted to help her get some books published.

Like any writer, Pottker was flattered. She'd gotten "several" nibbles from book publishers after her Regardie's piece, she told him. She also confided that she'd just sent a piece about child abuse at the circus to Mirabella (a now-defunct women's glossy). She'd love to work with Eringer if he could help, she told him. They agreed to meet again soon.

So began one of the strangest campaigns ever waged against a writer, freelance or otherwise. It would become a convoluted, drawn-out saga that seems at once tragic and ridiculous. Ridiculous, because it's unclear at times exactly what Feld was getting for his money. Although they tried, there is no direct evidence that Eringer or George succeeded in causing any book publishers or magazines to reject Pottker's proposals -- although they may very well have. By their own testimony, however, they admit that they ran an eight-year-long operation to divert her into different projects.

Eringer promptly reported on his easy seduction of Pottker to Clair George, especially the important detail on her piece for Mirabella, "which was finished but not edited," according to their undated "Memo No. 1" to Feld. "It is our intention to monitor Pottker closely."

But spying on her wasn't enough. They needed to distract her as well. "To this end, we need a hook," they wrote to Feld. They planned to commission a book on the Rockefellers, which, they wrote, "will side-track Pottker for many months to come -- probably a couple of years." Since book advances are customarily paid out in thirds, they explained, "if we agree to an advance of \$35,000 we will need only \$11,666 up front."

There was an additional benefit, Eringer reported. "It will give me the opportunity, as Pottker's [sic] 'editor,' to monitor her work closely and, incidental to the (book project), collect intelligence on her sources and methods pertaining to her interest in Ringling Bros."

As it turned out, the Rockefeller book would never happen, but a book on the Mars candy family would -- with many problems from the moment it was published. And for years to come, Pottker would face one perplexing hurdle after another, unaware that her career was being monitored, prodded and shaped by a group of spies.

confidentially to Feld.

Now they had to make sure that someone showed interest in the Mars book.

In 1994 Pottker began research on a book about the Mars family. Eringer, her dutiful "book packager," helped arrange for it to be published by Joel Joseph, the proprietor of National Press Books, a little-known entity in Bethesda. He told the circus that he would need \$25,000 for Pottker's advance, according to his deposition.

Pottker had no idea, of course, that her book was secretly being funded by the circus. But the operation was right out of a CIA playbook. As George admitted in his deposition, the checks "came from ... a Ringling Bros. bank in Texas or Oklahoma or ... North Carolina or someplace," addressed to various mailboxes he and Eringer had rented. In espionage parlance, these are called an "accommodation address," as Eringer put it in his own deposition; they're used to obscure connections between spymasters and their agents. After depositing the money in accounts at the Chevy Chase Bank and Madison National Bank, they issued their own checks to National Press Books, which in turn made out its own checks to Pottker, according to the testimony of Eringer and George and evidence on file in the court.

Joel Joseph wasn't entirely witting about the operation, the agents assured Ken Feld in a memo. "The Washington publisher will never know the source of monies put up for Pottker's advance." He did, of course, know that he wasn't paying the advance -- Robert Eringer was.

Joseph denies knowing what George and Eringer were up to. "There may have been a conspiracy by the other defendants," Joseph wrote to the judge, "but ... National Press Books and Joel D. Joseph was not part of the conspiracy."

Feld's agents, meanwhile, had grudgingly come to admire Pottker's reporting, especially her "eye for detail," one memo reported. She had discovered, for example, that Mars had been lobbying the government to extend Daylight Savings Time one week, past Halloween, because it could mean an extra million dollars in candy sales. The two spooks also enjoyed her anecdote about how Mars once secretly funded a "research institute" in Princeton, N.J., that ginned up a study saying "chocolate is good for teeth." She was also working on an idea for a book about celebrity homes in Washington, they reported. Fine, Eringer told her: Let's do it together.

"When talk turned to the circus," they reported to Feld, "Pottker had very little to say. Why? She has no time to even think about Ringling Bros. Our projects have effectively diverted her from new investigations into Ringling Bros and from marketing her unpublished story on circus children."

Eventually, the Mars book was published. It got good reviews and a fair amount of attention, especially in Washington. But it was hard to find -- and it became much harder to find when National Press Books refused to honor a mere \$300 invoice from a photographer who had supplied pictures for the book. Pottker begged them to pay it, and finally paid it herself, but it was too late: The photographer had gotten a court order to pull the books off the shelves. The publisher didn't fight it. The book was effectively killed.

A similar chain of events happened with Pottker's book "Celebrity Washington: Who They are, Where They Live and Why They're Famous." Eringer and Pottker launched the project as a "joint venture," according to court files. But as time went on, Pottker found Eringer's work unsatisfactory. She decided to drop him and publish the book on her own. "Eringer's apparent incompetence was in fact deliberate," her suit charges.

George and Eringer seemed ready to declare victory by the mid-1990s, having entangled Pottker in other ventures. But their next memo reported ominously that Pottker had "joined an organization called Investigative Reporters and Editors." The national organization of crusading journalists was founded in 1975 and gained recognition after the 1976 car-bombing murder of reporter Don Bolles by Arizona mobsters, but Feld's spies didn't know anything about it. "We will try to find out what that organization may be," they wrote. "Will keep you advised."

Then, there was more bad news, the spies reported: Pottker had a new idea for an article or book comparing

It wasn't for lack of trying, however. Bob Keating, the ABC producer who was a friend of a friend of Jan Pottker, started to pursue the story last year, according to knowledgeable sources. He worked on it for months, then presented it to his bosses. After they refused to go with it, Keating, who would not return repeated calls for comment, left the network. ABC, of course, is owned by Feld's partner Disney.

A spokesman for ABC News, insisting on anonymity, said, "There is no connection between his leaving and any story." He added that Keating "worked a full year on the story ... about the circus, I guess, but it's my understanding that it wasn't much of a story."

"Some stories stick, and some stories don't," he said, adding, "ABC has a strong record of doing stories critical of Disney."

Eringer did not respond to several messages left at his telephone in California. According to Clair George, they were still in business a year ago. One can only wonder what new projects they've cooked up.

Pottker's book remains unwritten. Her hopes for exposing the real life of the circus now lie with the courts.

It has been nearly two years since she filed her suit, in which she and her husband allege that they suffered grievous psychological damage from eight years of spying and harassment at the hands of Ken Feld and his operatives. (Contesting that, Feld's lawyers are examining the Pottkers' private medical records, which the Pottkers turned over to them.) The case is still in the discovery stage.

The circus isn't talking outside of court. Catherine Ort-Mabry, spokeswoman for Feld Enterprises, stated, "It's an ongoing legal matter and we're not going to comment." But Judge Leonard Braman has rejected several motions by Feld et al. to dismiss the case. And by the looks of Pottker's "proposed list of fact witnesses," the last chapter of her saga hasn't even opened, much less been written. Among the 346 names on the her list are several more former CIA agents, as well as the top editors at magazines and publishing houses where Pottker's proposals were derailed.

The 15 volumes in the basement of Superior Court are also littered with photocopies of checks that George and Eringer issued and received, not only in connection with Pottker, but in what looks like a wide spectrum of activities. All the while, they were dining out on other people's money at the Chevy Chase Club and other exclusive haunts.

Several hundreds of thousands of dollars passed through their accounts in the 1990s alone, the records show, many bearing the names of several intriguing but as-yet unidentified individuals and entities.


The full story of the greatest vendetta on earth, it would appear, remains to be told.

About the writer

Jeff Stein, who covers military affairs for Salon News, is the author of "A Murder in Wartime: The Untold Spy Story That Changed the Course of the Vietnam War" (St. Martin's Press).

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