

Portland's Dirty Little Secret
How Vice and Corruption Held the Rose City In Its Clutches

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In the 1940s and 1950s, neon reflected off the wet streets of Burnside as men in wide brimmed fedoras and women in seamed stockings tried to stay dry as cars slogged through puddles. Inside the clubs along the street an array of amusements could have been found. At the Capitol Theatre burlesque star Tempest Storm performed, at the Clover Room Sammy Davis Jr.ⁱ was on stage with his father and uncle, and big bands played live to the sounds of patrons taking their chances with slot machines, better known as one armed-bandits, and pinball machines, hoping Lady Luck was on their side. But behind the laughter and rolling of dice, a story of corruption was brewing.

After World War II, Portland, like many other cities, experienced economic growth in the post-war boom. However, some cities looked to less honest ways of making money, such as the mechanized amusements of slots and pinball machines, punchboards, card tables, bootlegging, drug trafficking and brothels, and Portland was such a city. Prior to the war, Portland had been involved in vice, and this has been attributed to its status as a shipping town, with numerous groups of people moving in and out, and its history of shanghaiing,ⁱⁱ but Portland had not seen a vice scandal like the one it was about to face. One which would end in a massive grand jury investigation, indicting the District Attorney, Chief of Police and even the city's mayor. The events would also catch the eye of the members of the McClellan Committee in Washington D.C. in their work to fight against corrupt labor unions. All of this was followed by a story splashed across the pages of *Life* and become subject of a film covering the dirty details "SIN by SIN, BRIBE by BRIBE, SHOCK by SHOCK".ⁱⁱⁱ

Jim Elkins Heats Things Up

In July of 1937, James Butler Elkins was released from the Arizona State Penitentiary, where he had been serving time after a robbery gone wrong and he injured a police officer. Upon release Jim Elkins moved to the cooler climate of Portland, which he chose because his brother, Fred, was living there, and he knew his brother would be a reliable partner to get started in the vice scene. Soon, Elkins met Harry Huerth, a safecracker or “box man” as they were called. When Huerth met Elkins, Elkins was the owner of a small brothel with only three or four girls, and would later recall that Elkins had a “marvelous personality and everybody liked him” despite his eyes, which Huerth said were “blue and just like ice. No feeling or anything there”.^{iv}

Elkins started Huerth on knocking over drugstores and stealing the narcotics out of them. Huerth claimed that these jobs were done to supplement Elkins’s morphine addiction. After about three years of doing the drug store scene, Elkins got Huerth a job working as a slot machine mechanic with Rayden Emlou, the leader in the slot machine racket in Portland. Huerth described Emlou as a “high roller” who would “get drunk and light his cigar with hundred dollar bills”. Elkins and Fred also worked with Emlou and they decided to muscle him out of town and take over the rackets themselves. Huerth was there that day and described the event,

[Elkins] walked in with a double-barrel sawed off shotgun. Fred went into the office and told Emlou that they were taking over. One of the slot machine mechanics got scared and started to leave. Jim took out the shotgun, reached out with it, stuck it between his legs and tripped him. He was very calm and collected with no excitement or nothing. He just told the guys that from now on

they were working for him. That's the way it was. Emlou was out. No money changed hands or anything.^v

This take over was the beginning of Elkins's career of becoming "Portland's vice czar" as he would be continually referred to in the press. He made Emlou's connections at the Portland Police Department his own, and made new ones, and "nobody got a promotion around there without Jim's OK first".^{vi} These relationships were important if one wanted to operate in the vice rackets, since a pay-off was the only way racketeers would stay out from behind bars. Pay-off systems were not uncommon especially in mid-twentieth century America, and relationships forged between politicians, cops and underworld vice racketeers. These relationships involved underworld figures who were working the vice rackets of gambling, bootlegging, drugs, and prostitution, and paying police officers and politicians to keep quiet and turn a blind eye to their sinful activities.

Despite the connections Elkins had within the police department, Portland was not about to roll over and be taken over by gangsters. On October 1, 1948, before things really began to heat up in the City of Roses, the Portland City Club issued a report titled "Law Enforcement in Portland and Multnomah County".

The report had six stated purposes:

1. To establish whether or not gambling, prostitution, bootlegging and other forms of vice have been prevalent in the city and county, and if so, to what extent.
2. To determine the characteristic methods of operation of gambling and other vice establishments; to ascertain their proprietorship and the extent to which they might be affiliated with and operated as organized rackets.
3. To ascertain the extent to which such establishments are subject to police supervision or control and to study the organization, policy and methods of the police department with respect to vice control.

4. To consider any evidence of police protection afforded vice establishments and the methods and purchase price of such protection.

5. To examine the effect of cycles of public apathy and excitement over prevalent vice conditions and the effect on public opinion upon the vigor of law enforcement policy.

6. To make such suggestions or recommendations as in the committee's opinion might seem calculated to improve the general state of law enforcement in this community.

The report continued by calling Portland a "wide open city", and that "gambling, prostitution, bootlegging and other forms of vice have been carried on openly and notoriously throughout the city for a period of several years past". The report addressed the matter of the pay-off system, and admitted that the locations of vice operations had been "under a system of police protection". The report closed with the statement that "Portland had become the clearing house for dope, bootlegged whisky, prostitutes and other contraband for the entire area from north of California and west of Colorado".^{vii} Portland already had a reputation, and it was only going to get bigger.

It may be surprising to find that bootlegging was still going on in the 1940s and 1950s. This is due to the choice that the Oregon government made to handle the sale of liquor after prohibition had been repealed. In 1933, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) was created. This made Oregon a "control state with the exclusive right to sell packaged distilled spirits, which are dispersed statewide from a distribution center in Portland" and sold in liquor stores operated by contracted agents of the OLCC.^{viii} This move kept the price of liquor high, and some took it upon themselves to bypass the state and continue with bootlegging. Bootlegging often went hand-in-hand with other lucrative vice operations, especially since

brothels and after-hours clubs made for prime bootlegging homes of operation since the target audience was already present.

Lee Cleans Up

The Portland City Club Report had done its job in getting the city to think about vice, and in 1948, Portland elected Dorothy McCullough Lee, the city's first female mayor. Lee already had a long established interest in justice and seeing it through. She graduated from the University of California at Berkley and soon after practiced law in San Francisco. Shortly after getting married, she and her husband, who was a Standard Oil Chemical engineer, moved to Portland in 1924. In Portland, Lee faced hardship in getting a position at a law firm and ultimately opened her own office. A few years later, in 1931, she formed a partnership with Gladys M. Everett to establish Oregon's first all-women firm. In 1932 she was elected to the Oregon Senate, and in 1943, was appointed to Portland's City Council, where she would later become the first woman to serve as the city commissioner.^{ix}

The abovementioned City Club report, which suggested pay-offs between underworld types and political figures, dominated the 1948 mayoral race and Lee, running with an unofficial campaign slogan of "I will enforce the law", came out on top, beating the incumbent, Earl Riley, with 70 percent of the votes. Upon entering office in January of the next year, Lee hired a new chief of police, Charles Pray. She also outlawed pinball machines, which were being used to pay out money instead of extra games when players reach a certain point. Continuing with her clean up, Lee ordered the police to go after gambling in nearly every form, including punchboards, slot machines, and betting pools wherever they may be.^x But slots and other gambling devices were not just in the seedy after-hours clubs and bars; they were also in many

of the city's elite private clubs, who used the machines to gain extra profits. The Portland Press Club manager, Charley Sommer claimed that the slot machines brought in \$4,000 a month in extra revenue. The move also upset Mrs. C.S. Jackson of the Veterans' Club, who thought that Lee "went too far by invading private clubs, and [referred] grumpily to [Lee] as 'Mrs. Air-Wick'"^{.xi}

Lee's ban on pinball machines was contested and challenged many times and the heated story reached *Billboard Magazine* twice, where Stanley Terry, an amusement game operator, was interviewed, arguing that pinball was legal and should not be outlawed "just because they don't happen to like them"^{.xii}

Lee lost the mayoral race in 1952 to drugstore owner Fred Peterson who quickly returned things to the way they were before "Dotty-Do-Good" took office, much of which was attributed to hiring a new Chief of Police, Jim Purcell Jr. A police informant reported Elkins paid Peterson \$100,000 to appoint Purcell. Purcell already had a mind to become chief of police, and was hailed by a member of the force as "utterly dishonest" and in it "to make as much money as possible, irregardless of the means"^{.xiii}

A "Storm" In Portland

Also included in Lee's clean up on vice, were burlesque houses. While in office, Lee was successful in closing many of houses of burlesque, but when she left office, the burlesque girls began strutting their stuff once again. Burlesque has been described as the "poorer, disreputable relation...of vaudeville theatre"^{.xiv} Unlike the strip clubs of today, burlesque had an element of humor and always of "the tease" and no nudity, and often the ladies were preceded by a stand-up comic, known as a straight-man, who sometimes also played parts in gag

elements of the show. Burlesque houses were known locations not only for many members of the underworld to hang out, but also members of the police, including Purcell who frequented The Star Theatre to see burlesque performer Candy Renee, often sitting in the third row, and visiting her dressing room afterwards. One night after a show, Purcell was spotted by fellow police officer Harlon Davis, who gained extra cash in transporting performers and went backstage to pick up a purse left behind by one dancer. There he saw Renee with her dress partly on, talking with the chief, yet the only part of any significance he overheard was Renee saying “Shut up, you son of a bitch, and zipper me up” and as soon as he entered, Davis left. The true nature of Purcell and Renee’s relationship is unclear, though it was known that she was dating Vance Larson, an associate of Elkins.^{xv}

The most famous and well-known burlesque performer of the 1950s was Tempest Storm, who moved to Portland in 1953 shortly after her marriage to John Becker, a burlesque straight man. The move to Portland was to escape Becker’s ex-wife, another burlesque star, Arabella Andrea. Storm opened at The Capitol Theatre. Storm bought the theatre for \$15,000 and “spent a few thousand more fixing it up”.^{xvi} But the move to Portland did not remove Andrea from their lives. She too moved to Portland and began performing at the Star Theatre, which billed her as “John’s Other Wife”. Not content, and convinced Becker married Storm before his divorce with her was final, Andrea went as far as to go to Storm’s home;

One night, the doorbell rang, and Johnny opened the door. There stood his ex-wife with a glass in her hand. She had threatened many times to pour acid on my face, so I was hysterical when she threw the contents of the glass on me. It turned out that the glass held nothing but water.^{xvii}

Storm's husband had Andrea arrested and they asked for her to be placed into a mental hospital. When that failed, Andrea sued Storm and Becker for \$50,000 for false arrest. The group eventually settled out of court, paying Andrea and her attorney \$1,500 each. But this settlement was not made before *Life* magazine got a hold of the story and ran with the headline of "Burlesque Wives War in Portland".^{xviii} Storm had had it with Portland, and she and her husband moved to San Francisco, ending Tempest Storm's Portland engagement.

The Teamsters Move In

While Tempest battled her husband's ex-wife, the Teamsters were getting their hands involved in Seattle's vice rackets, and would soon have their eye on Portland's as well.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters was founded in 1903 in order to create and organize trade unions for better working conditions. But by the 1930s, their original goal of purely representing workers in specialized crafts was beginning to fade as they moved to recruiting unskilled laborers. This move laid the groundwork for the rise of the more militant membership. In the 1940s, the Teamsters officials began to support illegal and at times violent way to gain control of profitable industries and to access and control political representation.^{xix} The Teamsters began to interfere with the delivery of goods made by non-member groups, and used the tactic of false picketing, a method where they asked union members to protest outside locations that did not carry union goods. Soon, the Teamsters' monopoly began to grow along on the west coast.

In 1952, Dave Beck was elected the new president of the Teamsters. Beck was already involved in the Seattle vice racket, and saw Portland's growing vice racket a good place to expand. Beck's "number two man" was Frank Brewster, who also happened to already be

involved with Seattle vice. Brewster became the Teamsters' vice-president in 1954. At this time, Brewster formed a relationship with Washington vice racketeer Thomas Maloney, a friendship that was built on "real estate and organized crime".^{xx}

Maloney, while never a Teamster himself, aided the union group in maneuvering the underworld vice rackets, especially on the racetrack circuit. Maloney was described as "six feet tall and immensely fat...He wore a shapeless hat and usually had a cigar jutting from the corner of his mouth". No stranger to getting into trouble, Maloney had a "long arrest record, but only one recorded conviction – for possession of liquor in Los Angeles in 1931...The record also shows he was charged with a rape in 1921 in San Francisco".^{xxi}

By the time the Teamsters got interested in Portland's vice racket, they already had a large portion of Portland's labor unions under their control, and when Elkins wanted to put his gambling machines in the Portland Labor Temple, a place under Teamster control, he had to see the men in Seattle first.^{xxii} In Seattle, Elkins spoke with Brewster and Teamster official John Sweeney, who gave Elkins the permission he needed, but with a catch, he had to agree to "give Tom [Maloney] a piece of the joint"^{xxiii} meaning allow him to take financial interest in the underworld operations in Portland, thus extending the Seattle mob vice racket and Teamster control into Portland.

The move of the Seattle mob down to Portland is a story with some discrepancies. The story described above is the summary of historian Robert C. Donnelly, in his *Oregon Historical Quarterly* piece "Organizing Portland", which eludes that Elkins entered into the partnership of his own accord; he went to them, and then they asked for Elkins's help in setting up in Portland. When the *Oregonian* broke with the story in 1956, a very different picture was painted;

The effort to take control of Portland's underworld began in 1955 when the Seattle group [The Teamsters] moved into the city and demanded that Elkins help them 'set up town'...Elkins became a reluctant partner. Elkins was instructed by the Seattle leaders to organize all rackets – bookmaking, prostitution, gambling and bootlegging.^{xxiv}

This wording makes Elkins out to sound like a victim of bullying instead of a partner.

Once in Portland, Teamster friend, Maloney soon became William Langley's campaign manager in Langley's run for District Attorney. Repeatedly, newspapers, as well as secondary documents, refer to Maloney as becoming the "manager-without-portfolio" for Langley's campaign.^{xxv} Langley won the election and become more deeply involved with the Teamsters. Meanwhile, Maloney's "unofficial job" in Portland was to be a "liaison between key teamster [sic] officials in Seattle and the Portland plotters".^{xxvi}

In 1953, Mayor Peterson began to gather information and started scouting for a location for the new entertainment-recreation (E-R) building, now known as the Memorial Coliseum. Part of this process included the creation of the Entertainment-Recreation Commission, a five-man group all appointed by Peterson, and one member was Teamster member, and ex-convict, Clyde C. Crosby. Crosby, who felt he might have some pull with the ultimate decision suggested to other Teamsters and Elkins to begin buying land in the Broadway-Steel Bridge area, thus if the site was eventually selected, the vice racketeers would make off with a large profit.^{xxvii}

Soon, gambling and other subversive schemes were not enough for the Teamsters, and they began to look into opening up houses of prostitution. They brought in madam Ann Thompson out of Seattle and talked with two Portland madams, Helen Hardy known as Big

Helen and Helen Smalley known as Little Helen. One *Oregonian* article claimed that Elkins was “personally opposed to engaging in the prostitution racket” and that he “flatly refused to have anything to do with opening bawdy houses”.^{xxviii} Not wanting to have anything to do with new arenas of prostitution, Elkins went to Seattle to talk to Brewster. Brewster became upset and threatened Elkins by saying, “If you bother my two boys, you will find yourself wading across Lake Washington in a pair of concrete boots”.^{xxix} Both Brewster’s threat and being forced to open houses of prostitution led Elkins to begin tape recording conversations he had with the Teamsters. Elkins created a device that was hidden in his watch and coat. During one conversation with Maloney, the face of the watch came off, exposing the wires, and he expressed curiosity, Elkins coolly replied that it was one of the new battery operated watches, and no further questions were asked and Elkins continued with the conversation.^{xxx}

Meanwhile, Maloney was looking for a new place to live in Portland. Elkins set Maloney up with a place at the King Tower Apartments in the West Hills. This gave Elkins an ample opportunity to place a bug in Maloney’s apartment. Additionally, the Teamsters were getting nervous about Elkins’s reluctance to become involved in their new prostitution ring and soon Elkins “learned of a threat to frame him for a nonexistent crime and remove him from the scene”.^{xxxii} The Teamsters would then redistribute the rackets without him. The way in which Elkins found out about the plan to frame him was from the hidden tape recorders in Maloney’s apartment, that he had help setting up from former police officer Raymond Clark, who also happened to be married to Jerry Rogers, a madam.^{xxxii}

In September of 1955, Langley met with Joseph Patrick McLaughlin, a Teamsters member and Seattle bookmaker, at Maloney’s apartment, not knowing of Elkins’s bug. In this conversation they exchanged ideas to get Chief of Police Jim Purcell fired, because they felt his

connections with Elkins, who was against the opening of brothels, put them at risk. District Attorney Langley, who knew of Elkins and Purcell's relationship is recorded to have said, "There's no question about what that character'll [Elkins] do – he'll run and tell Purcell. There won't be any question about what Purcell'll do".^{xxxiii} One excuse the Teamsters and Langley came up with was to have Teamster member, Crosby talk to Mayor Peterson about a lack of law enforcement on gypsies. That idea was not used as an excuse, instead Crosby told Peterson that Purcell and his team of officers used countenanced wiretaps, and Purcell condoned police brutality. Crosby also said if Peterson still did not get rid of Purcell, Peterson would lose union support in the next election. When Peterson asked for proof, Crosby merely said, "you know all about it or you sure can find out in a hurry".^{xxxiv} The mayor confirmed that Crosby visited his office to the *Oregonian*. Peterson also said that prior to Crosby's visit, Maloney had approached him at his mayoral office in city all with a demand that two "illegal enterprises be allowed to operate in the Williams avenue district",^{xxxv} and Peterson refused. Later, the *Oregonian* reported that Maloney made a reference to Langley's involved and said, "you'd not have any trouble from the district attorney – he's not shoving his nose in vice" in his conversation with Mayor Peterson.^{xxxvi}

The Story Breaks

By the early part of 1956, Elkins was tired of being told how to run Portland's underworld, and wanted out, but he just needed a way. His way out came in the form of *Oregonian* reporter Wallace Turner. Turner, who knew of Elkins's involvement in Portland's vice rackets, wanted to know more information on the rumors about politicians and their involvement in the rackets.^{xxxvii} Elkins said he could confirm the rumors, and offered his

audiotapes he recorded at Maloney's apartment as supportive evidence. Turner partnered up with fellow *Oregonian* reporter William Lambert, and they took the tapes from Elkins. After much deliberation with Governor Elmo Smith, the headline "City, County Control Sought by Gangsters" was splashed across the top of the front page of the *Oregonian* on April 19, 1956. It was the first in a series that Turner and Lambert would produce where they identified persons involved, their occupation, and roles in the plot to take over Portland, such as District Attorney Langley, Teamster Brewster, and E-R Committee member and Teamster Crosby. Elkins was humbly described as an "ex-convict and longtime operator of pinball machines and other fringe business in Portland". The next day, Turner and Lambert had the *Oregonian* publish a large chunk of the transcripts of Elkins's audiotapes, revealing Langley's involvement in accepting money to turn a blind eye to places of prostitution, gambling and bootlegging, and the plot to get rid of Purcell. The next piece in the *Oregonian* was a large story about Maloney, which covered his criminal history, as well as his weight, mentioning his weight of 209 pounds when he was arrested in Los Angeles in 1932, and his weight of 270 pounds upon his arrival in Portland also adding that Maloney "suffered from the gout" and that he had "a passion for the rich candies which brought on attacks of the ailment". The paper even went as far as to comment on the matter of Maloney's lack of education, noting that in his letters to Langley and Elkins, he had a "complete disregard for proper spelling and punctuation".^{xxxviii}

Shortly after the publication of the transcripts and supplementing stories in the *Oregonian*, Governor Smith summoned Langley to Salem. Langley said the reports regarding his involvement with the Teamsters were a "pack of lies".^{xxxix} Originally, Langley was invited to appear before the grand jury and Attorney General Robert Y. Thornton, as a voluntary witness. Langley declined that appearance offer. Later that week, Langley was issued a

subpoena to appear before the grand jury, as was Purcell. In a letter, Langley stated that the *Oregonian*, “aided by top racketeers has used all of its newspaper technique to smear me, including the use of phony tape recordings made by blackmailers and racketeers in an attempt to intimidate me. But it has not and dares not charge me with the commission of any crime”.^{xl}

Langley Tells His Story

While the grand jury investigations got under way, Langley was given the opportunity to tell his side of the story, by the *Oregon Journal*.

Langley started his three-part story by discussing his childhood and that early on he had a desire to rid Portland of vice and corruption, after he witnessed his father, who from 1930 to 1934, had held the position of District Attorney, fight with the vice rackets then. He then claimed that he was “opposed and have always been opposed to organized houses of prostitution and to bootleg joints. I will not tolerate them because they are the hangouts for criminals of all kinds and breeding places of violence and serious crime”. Early in office, Langley claimed he had a desire and tried to create his own investigative vice squad. He said Purcell, County Sheriff Terry D. Schrunk and Fod Maison of the Oregon State Police all turned him down, because they had too few of men. Langley accepted those reasons from Schrunk and Maison but Purcell was a different matter. Langley argued Purcell’s refusal was a lie, because “[Purcell] knew I would be able to look over his shoulder on vice activities” and Purcell would not enjoy that.^{xli}

In regards to the Teamsters and Maloney, Langley wrote in his *Oregon Journal* segments that he met Maloney in September of 1954. Maloney came to him offering support in the election for District Attorney, boasting Teamster Union connections. Maloney was

“enigmatic” and “had friends in all walks of life” including taxi drivers, priests, fighters, and politicians. Langley said he did not know Maloney had connections with Elkins and their relationship and interactions about “setting up town”. As for the Teamsters, Langley said he never took any money from them, but admits that the Teamsters paid for the sound truck for the campaign, but that it was an idea of Maloney. Langley then disputed the often-made claim that Maloney was his campaign manager and said that anything Maloney did for the campaign was on a voluntary basis and that his real campaign manager was druggist, Harry Winkler. Langley also claimed that Maloney was a plant of Elkins, stating that “Elkins had never been able to corrupt me and apparently he tried to get me through Maloney”. Once he learned of Maloney’s vice involvement, Langley tried to flip the tables. Langley said that he paid Maloney to get dirt on the vice side of things. He paid Maloney \$1250, which was drawn from the liquor law enforcement fund and the Multnomah County vice investigation funds. Langley claimed that this information was then passed to Purcell, who he claimed never followed up on the information.^{xlii}

Langley then discussed the suffering his family had gone through during this process. He claimed that there had been plans to send poisoned candy to his children, and explained distress that his wife went through, while continually referenced the matter that she was pregnant with their fifth child. Repeatedly, Langley called the tape recordings, which the *Oregonian* had used, “phony” and “doctored”. According to Langley, Elkins had an ax to grind, and came to his house brandishing a snub-nose revolver, attempted to blackmail him with the tape transcripts (prior to them being turned over to the *Oregonian*) and brought the physical tapes for Langley’s wife to hear. But despite all of these invasions, Langley did not report or attempt to prosecute Elkins, and he claimed that the reason he did not perform either duty was

for two main reasons: his wife did not want to be a witness against Elkins “and spend the next 20 years in a life of terror – watching over her children and worrying each time one of them was late coming home from school” and because Langley believed that Elkins held an “immunity” in the community and belief that he controlled the police department and had an ability to block attempts to get rid of him.^{xliii}

In the final portion of his series with the *Oregon Journal*, Langley discussed his reason for not willingly appearing before the grand jury. Langley claimed that Thornton had regarded him as a “political enemy” because there were some recordings where Langley said “some unpleasant things about Thornton’s ability as a lawyer”, thus Thornton was unable to give Langley a fair trial. Unhappy with the way the *Oregonian* handled the stories surrounding himself and the vice racket, Langley expressed his plans to sue the *Oregonian* for two million dollars for slander, libel and malicious prosecution and to “make them pay for the sleepless nights and mental anguish they have given my wife while she was carrying our fifth child”.^{xliiv}

Langley did not stay quiet after his piece with the *Oregon Journal*. He also wrote a letter to Governor Smith detailing, what in his opinion was Thornton’s failure to “conduct the Multnomah county grand jury investigation on vice and corruption on a proper basis”. The letter then listed 15 specific things Langley felt Thornton was doing wrong. Many of these claims were that Thornton had failed to act and bring indictments against persons involved in Portland’s vice rackets, and claimed that “Elkins has boasted that he is running the investigation”.^{xlv}

The following Sunday after Langley’s published letter to the governor, Langley did take action regarding his plans to sue the *Oregonian*. He brought charges against Thornton, Elkins and the Oregonian Publishing Company in what was a one million dollar suit, instead of the

previously boasted two million dollar suit. One of Langley's counts was that Thornton, Elkins and the *Oregonian* "conspired to deprive Langley of 'equal protection of the law'". A charge directed at Thornton was that he had "improperly conducted the Multnomah county grand jury probe of city corruption". Thornton felt these were "desperate, last-minute maneuvers" to ruin the grand jury investigation.^{xlvi} These charges were eventually dropped after the outcome of the trials in 1957.

The Trials

The late part of July and the early part of August of 1956 were a frenzy of indictments. Over a one-week period 28 people were indicted for the grand jury vice probe, including eight cops, all for perjury. Langley was indicted for malfeasance and conspiring to permit and promote gambling. Purcell did not escape without indictment, and faced one indictment of "incompetence, delinquency and malfeasance in office in that he failed to suppress illegal activities in gambling, bootlegging, prostitution and bribery of police officers". He also issued a statement to the *Oregonian*, asking "the people to withhold judgment until all of the facts 'in connection with this sordid case become public'" Crosby, who was described as "handsome international representative of the Teamsters union" faced two indictments, "one for conspiring to commit a felony in connection with location of the E-R site, the other for being an ex-convict in possession of a revolver". Elkins faced the most indictments, 18 in total.^{xlvii} When being booked, Elkins was required to put down his occupation, "the bespectacled, bow-tied Elkins...replied... 'well, I guess put down "automobile mechanic"'"^{xlviii}

Sheriff Terry D. Schruck, who by historians has been described as a heavy drinker and a skirt chaser^{xlix} became a suspect of the vice probe when a report surfaced about Schruck picking

up a manila envelope containing \$500, which was left by a telephone pole located near the 8212 Club, a known racketeering joint operated by Elkins.¹ Elkins said the pay-off was for Schrunk to go away “without causing any more trouble — except for arresting a few drunks”.^{li} This suspected involvement in the pay-off system led Schrunk to subject himself to a polygraph test to prove his claims that these accusations were “ridiculous”. This polygraph test, which even Schrunk himself said he did not “regard...as infallible”, was performed to keep Schrunk’s image clean, since he was in the midst of running for mayor.^{lii} The outcome of the polygraph would be revealed later after the 1956 mayoral election. The scandal though did not harm Schrunk’s popularity with Portland’s citizens, clearly displayed by the outcome of the election, where he beat out Peterson, taking office in January of 1957.

During the course of the trials, Langley reached the end of his rope in terms of the press. On August 10, Langley assaulted *Oregonian* photographer, Allen de Lay. De Lay had been taking pictures outside of the courtroom when Langley said, “If you take one more shot I’ll smash that thing”. As De Lay posed to get another shot, “Langley leaped at him, grabbed the camera...then hurled the camera against the wall and smashed it”.^{liii} At the same time, Maloney, who faced five indictments, one for “feloniously conspiring to corrupt Langley and four others for bootlegging”^{liv} and Teamster Crosby pled “not guilty” to their indictments.^{lv}

In an attempt to rescue his reputation, Purcell wrote a letter to still mayor Peterson, laying down that he, as chief of police, had performed his duties to the best of his ability, listing off successes in tapping out vice and acknowledgements of locations yet to be dealt with. The letter was then published in the November 2, 1956 edition of the *Oregonian*.

Washington D.C. Gets Involved

The local grand jury trials were postponed when the United States Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, also known as the McClellan Committee, who were investigating corrupt labor unions, got wind of the corrupt Teamsters union via Turner and Lambert in late 1956. Robert F. Kennedy, the chief counsel of the committee issued subpoenas to Teamster officials, Maloney, Langley, Shrunk and Elkins. Kennedy and Chief Assistant Counsel Jerome Alderman flew to Portland in order to gather information on the Teamsters. Kennedy met with Elkins who he described as “a slim rugged-looking man with a rather kindly face and a very attractive and devoted wife” and the pair returned to Washington early. Kennedy said he and Elkins “locked ourselves in a little room away from my office and went over what he expected to tell the Committee. I spent more time with him than any other witness”. In Washington D.C., Elkins and Teamster officials came head to head with senators such as future presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, communist hunter Joseph McCarthy, and of course Kennedy and the committee’s chairman, Arkansas Democrat, John McClellan, all on national television no less. Elkins became “one of the most interesting and controversial witnesses” that appeared before the committee. Kennedy also described Elkins as “bright...had a native intelligence” but also “highly suspicious – and a fund of information. He never once misled me. He never once tried”. Elkins quickly cooperated with the Committee, but Crosby denied everything Elkins said to the Committee. Kennedy also believed Elkins’s audio-recordings to be real, and they were used to support everything Elkins said. Langley meanwhile pleaded the Fifth Amendment to all questions posed to him^{lvi} and Maloney did the same for most of his questions as well.^{lvii} At the hearings, Republican Senator Carl Mundt of South Dakota said that the elected politicians were

embarrassing to their city, especially to have Langley continually pleading the Fifth, and “If I lived there, I would suggest they pull the flags down at half-mast in public shame”.^{lviii}

Back in Portland

Once things cooled down in Washington D.C., Elkins, Langley, Teamsters members and company returned to Portland to resume with the Oregon grand jury. When the local grand jury testimonies resumed, Schrunk was now Mayor Schrunk, proving that the suspicion of his involvement in a pay-off system did not affect his political popularity with Portlanders. Schrunk had many character witnesses at his disposal as he as put on trial, including the reverend of the church he attended and his high school football coach.^{lix} Clifford Orban Bennett was the manager of the 8212 Club, and was called in as a key witness to prove that Schrunk picked up the pay-off envelope in question. However, the “tall, thick bootlegger-gambler never did take the witness stand”.^{lx} Thornton then turned to the polygraph test that Schrunk had taken prior, and pointed out that results of the polygraph showed that Schrunk had lied on the questions relating to the 8212 Club incident. However, the grand jury decided that these test results were insufficient, and Schrunk was found not guilty and went on to serve as Portland’s mayor until 1973 and today has a park area named after him, located in front of Portland’s city hall. Kennedy also came to Portland, flown in under subpoena to offer testimony on both his time with Elkins, and his knowledge of Teamster official Frank Brewster. Kennedy was described as “deeply tanned” and that his clothes were “rumpled and his hair sprawled on his head. He looked like a man who had been riding a freight train”.^{lxi} However his importance as a witness has seemed to be less than great, since one examination of the vice story topic fails to

mention his visit, and another writes off his appearance as an “opportunity to support the entire proceedings”.^{lxii}

By the end of the grand jury testimonies and Portland’s involvement in the McClellan Committee hearings, there were a total of 115 indictments. Elkins and Raymond Clark were convicted of under federal wiretapping laws, but after two appeals, their convictions were overturned. Clark’s wife, Jerry was also indicted with “one indictment for keeping and setting up a house of ill fame”,^{lxiii} her charges were dropped. The only conviction that stuck was that of Langley, who was convicted for refusing to prosecute gamblers, a misdemeanor. He was fined \$428.00 and removed from office. For everyone else involved, their charges were either dropped, or they were found not guilty.

Portland’s tale of vice and corruption did not end when the jury, witnesses and criminals were sent home. The *Oregonian* reporters, Turner and Lambert, were awarded the Pulitzer Prize for their work, under the “Local Reporting, No Edition Time” journalism award. The March 11, 1957 issue of *Life*, which ironically had John F. Kennedy on its cover, printed a six-page story covering the affair. The article called Portland an “unlikely focal point” for the Senate’s investigation, labeling Portland a “staid” city. The article was the jumping point for the film that was released later that year, *Portland Expose*. The poster for the film even boasted that *Life* had exposed the story and that it was filmed “where it happened”. In the film a group, representative of the Teamsters, comes to Portland and takes over the pinball and slot machines and introduces prostitution. When the owner of the fictional Woodland Tavern is forced to operate pinball machines and slots, he teams up with the cops and two reporters to spy on the mob. He uses a tape recorder, similar to the one Elkins used, disguised as a hearing aid, to get the evidence needed. There is also a character to represent the madam Ann Thompson. The

owner of the Woodland Tavern in some respects is a stand in for Elkins, in the matter that acts he performs are done in order to supply evidence and then prosecute, however he is not a vice lord, but instead an honest business owner, husband and father. What the film also lacks is the involvement of a District Attorney and other police and political figures. Additionally, the film has a much more exciting ending than that of the real life situation, with a shoot out in the mob's warehouse.^{lxiv}

Today, Portland's tale of seedy underworld characters and corrupt politicians and police officers is a little known one. Few historians have written about it, and the *Portland Expose* was only recently produced on DVD under the collection of "Forgotten Noir". It's the Rose City's dirty little secret, and Portland would much rather be known for its well-oiled mass transit system, green technologies and rose gardens, instead of being the original sin city.

NOTES

ⁱ Sammy Davis, Jr. and Jane and Burt Boyar, *The Sammy Davis, Jr. Story Why Me?* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 36.

ⁱⁱ Fred Leeson, *Rose City Justice: A Legal History of Portland, Oregon* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1998), 143.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Portland Expose* film poster, 1957, from the personal collection of Janey Ellis.

^{iv} Harry King, *Harry King: A Professional Thief's Journey* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 17.

^v King, 53-54.

^{vi} King, 54.

^{vii} Portland City Club, "Law Enforcement in Portland and Multnomah County," October 1, 1948, <http://www.pdxcityclub.org/content/supplementary-report-city-club-committee-law-enforcement> (accessed October 4, 2009).

^{viii} Oregon Liquor Commission, "About the OLCC", http://www.oregon.gov/OLCC/about_us.shtml#The_Organization (accessed October 12, 2009).

^{ix} Leeson, 143-144.

^x Leason, 145.

^{xi} "Portland's Cleanup: New woman mayor drives out dice and slot machines," *Life*, March 21, 1949, 41.

^{xii} Buford Sommers, "Ore. Op Gets More Time to File for Pin-Game Rehearing," *Billboard*, May 15, 1954, 76.

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- ^{xiii} Phil Stanford, "The Rise and Fall of Big Jim Elkins," *Great and Minor Moments in Oregon History: An Illustrated Anthology of Illuminating Glimpses into Oregon's Past – from Pre-History to the Present* ed. Dick Pintarich, (Portland: New Oregon Publishers, 2003), 330-331.
- ^{xiv} Harald Hellmann, "Girls, Gags & Giggles – The world as a madhouse," *1000 Pin-Up Girls*, (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2008), 7.
- ^{xv} Phil Stanford, *Portland Confidential: Sex, Crime, And Corruption in the Rose City* (Portland: WestWinds Press, 2005), 59-61.
- ^{xvi} Tempest Storm with Bill Boyd, *The Lady Is A Vamp*, (Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, 1987), 136.
- ^{xvii} Storm, 137.
- ^{xviii} "John's Other Stripper: Burlesque wives war in Portland," *Life*, November 30, 1953, 67-68.
- ^{xix} Robert C. Donnelly, "Organizing Portland: Organized Crime, Municipal Corruption, and the Teamsters Union," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 104 (2003): 336.
- ^{xx} Donnelly, 340.
- ^{xxi} Wallace Turner and William Lambert, "Boast Revealed Via Recording On Racket Plot," *The Oregonian*, May 3, 1956.
- ^{xxii} Donnelly, 341-342.
- ^{xxiii} Turner and Lambert, "Boast".
- ^{xxiv} Turner and Lambert, "Top Teamster Seeks Police Chief Ouster," *The Oregonian*, April 19, 1956.
- ^{xxv} Turner and Lambert, "Boast".
- ^{xxvi} Turner and Lambert, "Boast".
- ^{xxvii} Donnelly, 347.
- ^{xxviii} Turner and Lambert, "Top Teamster".
- ^{xxix} Robert F. Kennedy, *The Enemy Within: The McClellan Committee's Crusade Against Jimmy Hoffa and Corrupt Labor Unions*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1960), 260.
- ^{xxx} Kennedy, 261.
- ^{xxxi} Turner and Lambert, "Top Teamster".
- ^{xxxii} Stanford, "Rise and Fall," 338.
- ^{xxxiii} Turner and Lambert, "Transcript of Talks Reveals Aid Expected From Teamster Heads," *The Oregonian*, April 30, 1956.
- ^{xxxiv} Turner and Lambert, "Transcript".
- ^{xxxv} Turner and Lambert, "Transcript".
- ^{xxxvi} Turner and Lambert, "Boast".
- ^{xxxvii} Donnelly, 351-353.
- ^{xxxviii} Turner and Lambert, "Boast".
- ^{xxxix} "Vice Probe By State Under Way," *The Oregonian*, April 20, 1956.
- ^{xl} Ann Sullivan, "Mayor, Purcell Heed Jury Bid; Langley Misses," *The Oregonian*, July 13, 1956.
- ^{xli} William Langley, "Langley Tells His Version Of Vice Story," *The Oregon Journal*, July 23, 1956.
- ^{xlii} Langley, "Version".
- ^{xliii} Langley, "D.A. Details How Threats Upset Family," *The Oregon Journal*, July 24, 1956.
- ^{xliv} Langley, "Langley Sees Elkins 'Trap' In Vice Quiz," *The Oregon Journal*, July 25, 1956.
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- xlvii “List of Accusations Cites Malfeasance,” *The Oregonian*, August 4, 1956.
- xlviii “Elkins, Eight Others Indicted by Vice Jury,” *The Oregon Journal*, July 31, 1956.
- xliv Stanford, “Rise and Fall,” 335.
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- li “Investigations: The Teamsters Take Over,” *Time*, March 18, 1957.
- lii “Lie Test OK For Schrunk In Jury Quiz,” *The Oregon Journal*, July 19, 1956.
- liii “D.A. Smashes Camera; 29 Accused Arraigned,” *The Oregonian*, August 11, 1956.
- liv “List of Accusations”.
- lv “D.A. Smashes Camera”.
- lvi Kennedy, 256-262.
- lvii “Senators Hear Tales of Scandal,” *Life*, March 11, 1957, 35.
- lviii Stanford, *Portland Confidential*, 173.
- lix “Schrunk Swears No Bribe Taken; Senate Probe Counsel Testifies,” *The Oregonian*, June 27, 1957.
- lx Sullivan, “Mistrial Move”.
- lxi “Shrunk Swears”.
- lxii Stanford, *Portland Confidential*, 176.
- lxiii “List of Accusations”.
- lxiv *Portland Expose*, produced by Lindsley Parsons, 72 minutes, 1957, DVD.