

Landlady Almost Ruins Probe

BY WILLIAM JONES

A key portion of THE TRIBUNE's investigation of the hustlers among Chicago's private ambulance business was almost thwarted by a hysterical north side landlady who believed her furnished apartment had been invaded by a gang of narcotics addicts.

Before the bizarre chain of events was over, an ambulance crew was photographed deserting an apparent victim of a heart attack and the landlady would receive an extra \$20 rent to calm her frazzled nerves.

The chain of events began one week earlier when William Recktenwald, a Better Government association investigator, and this reporter rented the apartment under the name of Ray Patterson.

The apartment was to be used as the scene of a feigned heart attack case to record what happens when the misery merchants answer a call where the victim does not have the ambulance fee.

On the morning of May 25, two TRIBUNE photographers, three B. G. A. investigators,

and this reporter arrived in the apartment. The plan was to have George Bliss, B. G. A. chief investigator, feign a heart attack.

William Yates, a TRIBUNE photographer, and I were in a bedroom off the kitchen observing the events thru a venetian blind-covered window. Art Walker, another TRIBUNE photographer, was in a camper van outside the building to record the arrival and departure of the crew.

Landlady Rushes In

At precisely the same time the ambulance pulled onto the street where the building is located, the landlady arrived to pick flowers in front of the apartment. She also saw Recktenwald, whom she knew as Ray Patterson, climb into the camper with Walker.

When the ambulance crew entered her building, the woman rushed inside and demanded to know the identity of the victim and his companion, Roland Restle, a B. G. A. investigator. Remembering that she had seen Recktenwald enter the van, she tried to tell

the crew that Bliss' son was outside sitting in a camper van.

She was ignored by the ambulance crew, which was concentrating on collecting \$38 before they would place the victim on the stretcher. The crew deserted the victim a few minutes later.

Accused as Ringleader

A few minutes later, the landlady noticed movement behind the venetian blinds and attempted to pull the door open as Yates hid his camera under a bed. The experience was particularly unnerving to Yates, who was accused of being the ringleader of what the landlady believed was a narcotics party.

When she turned around and saw Bliss, the heart attack "victim", beginning to change clothes, the landlady decided it was time to call the police.

At this point, we identified ourselves and suggested an additional \$20 rent was in order for causing the woman such concern. She agreed to keep the event confidential, but was still shaking her head as we left.