

# UNTOLD STORY OF BLACK HERO OF WATERGATE!

By Simeon Booker  
*JET Washington Bureau Chief*

*Wills stands outside entrance to massive Watergate complex where he uncovered break-in of headquarters of Democratic National Committee.*



**F**rank Wills is a Black man who always has been jinxed by one thing or another. He quit high school in Savannah, Ga., during the eleventh grade only to learn that education is important. He enrolled in the Job Corps, studied heavy machine operation at a center in Battle Creek, Mich., only to be barred from union membership and not allowed to work. He finally got a job at Detroit's Ford Motor Corp., but his health—he is

5/17/73



an asthmatic victim—forced him to give up the assembly-line position.

Traveling to Washington, D. C., two years ago, Wills worked at several hotels before he finally landed a job as a security guard. And because he lacked seniority, Wills found himself working the lonely midnight-to-dawn shift.

Last June 17, Wills, a 155-pound, six-foot, Southern-type gentleman who prefers assembling model

planes and cooking soul food, patrolled the office building of the multi-million dollar Watergate complex on the shores of the Potomac River. It was a deadbeat job and Wills had the building to himself from 2 a.m. to 7 a.m. Imagine, a Black cat watching over the empty offices of some of the nation's powerful businesses, government agencies, and a major political party—the Democratic National Committee.



*Wills shows how he found tape on door leading to garage in the Watergate complex office building.*

But the security job really was no big deal. In the year that Wills had worked at the building, there had been only one attempted break-in—and the intruders didn't get any farther than a side door. It was considered such a safe place to work that security guards carried only a can of the chemical, Mace—and sometimes a nightstick.

On this particular night, Wills had his can of Mace—and not even an extraordinary detective sense.

"I really wasn't thinking about anything," recalled Wills, "just getting a better job and making some money. I'd been in the job about a year and wasn't going anywhere. A white fellow came in after I did and they made him a lieutenant. I was a corporal making just \$80 a week."

On his first round of the building, Wills says that he noticed tape

## Wills Found Door Taped

on a door leading from the garage in the firewell. "I figured some one had been moving during the day, and put the tape on so they could get back in," he explained. So Wills took the tape off, shut the door, and went across the street to a restaurant for a late snack.

In a half hour, Wills was back. There was more tape on the door. "I just got to thinking," said Wills, "there's somebody in this building besides me." So he rushed up to the lobby telephone, called for services of the Second Precinct police. "Nothing big," recalled Wills. "That's the instructions. With just a can of Mace, I couldn't confront a burglar who might have a gun."

Within minutes, police were at his door and Wills escorted them to the garage exit—still taped.

While Wills and the police were en route to the sixth floor, a buzzer rang. A tenant wanted to leave the locked building so Wills left the police and returned to the lobby.

He missed the action, a scene one policeman described as "chilling." Entering the Democratic headquarters, the lone policeman drew his pistol and commanded, "Hands up." The policeman said he expected a pair of hands to emerge from behind a desk. Instead, five sets of hands shot toward the ceiling and the surprised policeman backed off.

"I saw them when they were coming out," Wills said. "One asked me for a glass of water." (This individual was later described as George McCord, one

## And Alerted Local Police Officials

of the men who gave details of the break-in during court testimony.) "All were well-dressed and I couldn't make heads or tails out of the arrests," Wills said.

Afterward, Wills got his name in the papers—but there were no pictures. The security company promoted him to the rank of a sergeant and gave him a small raise. "They said I did a pretty good job," Wills said with a tinge of scorn, "but they seemed more interested in plugging the firm than in trying to help me. I didn't get many letters of praise or congratulations. Really, my role was downplayed—just like many other incidents in my life."

In a few weeks, Wills was brought before the federal grand jury investigating the Watergate break-in.

"Man, I never was so surprised in my life," the 25-year-old bachelor said. "Most of the members of the jury were Black. I couldn't count five white persons in the room. I told them what I told police. They didn't ask many questions and that ended my role in the prosecution."

So the Black man who blew the whistle on the Watergate case, with a reward that amounted to 40-cents-a-week after taxes, decided to quit the firm and go for himself. He landed another security job, this one paying him \$85 a week, and boasting improved working hours, from 4 p.m. to midnight.

For almost a year, Frank Wills was "the forgotten man" in the Watergate case. His role was downplayed just as much as the



*Security guard Wills leaves old offices of the Democratic National Committee where the break-in took place.*



*"The Watergate is one place you can be sure I will remember for as long as I live," Wills tells friends.*

### Grand Jury Is Composed Mostly Of Blacks

White House aides sought to downplay their roles.

Then suddenly, the obscure case that few Americans thought much about at first broke wide open, with high-level Administration officials seeking to cover up the facts and later being implicated.

Wills suddenly was lionized. He was interviewed by reporters. He was shown before television cameras. He was credited with touching off the century's biggest political scandal.

But the widespread publicity hasn't erased the jinx that somehow affects Frank Wills. He hasn't received any compliments from the so-called law enforcement organizations. When a reporter asked him whether anyone at the White House congratulated him, he asked, "Are you kidding?"

A better job hasn't come down the pike for him. In a few weeks, he has to move out of a \$160-a-month apartment because his roommate unexpectedly departed.

"The rent's too much for my salary," Wills said, "and I've got furniture bills and other expenses.

I don't have a car and ride buses to get around town."

"Everybody tells me I'm some kind of hero," Wills says, "but I certainly don't have any hard evidence. I did what I was hired to do but still I feel a lot of folk don't want to give me credit, that is, a chance to move upward in a job."



*Wills discusses incident while holding pet cat in his Washington apartment.*

## LABOR

### Whites Are Deserting Black Causes, Bond Says

The promise of whites uniting with Blacks to overcome the problems of racism, poverty and political indifference is a dying ember, according to Georgia State Rep. Julian Bond. The 30-year-old legislator told members of the Michigan State Bar Assn. in Detroit that attempted coalitions of Blacks with whites from labor organizations, white college campuses and liberal church groups have failed because the groups deserted Blacks to pursue their own self-interests.

Union coalitions failed, Rep. Bond said, because although white unions support minimum wages for all, "lily-white" craft unions balk at Black membership. Churches, which gave heavy support a decade ago, Bond noted, now focus on issues such as the Vietnam war and abortion reform. Student coalitions, the handsome and popular legislator asserted, are ineffectual because white students display more interest in "music, drugs and the romantic rhetoric of revolution than the very real problems that afflict Black people."

Although Blacks' greatest source of power at present, Bond said, lies in the cities and Southern rural areas, he urged wariness lest "political gains . . . be destroyed by an economy that still remains in the hands of the plantation boss."

### Scholarly Omaha Barber Is Candidate For State House

Speaking at a \$5-a-plate fund-raising dinner in his honor in Omaha, Neb., Ernest Chambers, civil rights activist and candidate



*E. Chambers*

for Nebraska's Unicameral legislature, called America a violent and lawless country that makes murderers and thieves into folk heroes, "from Robin Hood and Goldilocks to John Dillinger." The firebrand activist made nationwide impact with a flaming but scholarly oration (EBONY, April, 1968) before the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.

Referring to white America, Chambers said he could not say, as the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did, "that if you curse me, I will bless you; if you spitefully use me, I will bless you, and if you steal my coat, I will offer you my cloak." The Creighton University graduate told the audience of 400: "When we (Blacks) take over, we're going to treat you (whites) exactly as you treated us."

The Omaha barber charged, "The President goes to Kansas and talks about violence on campus when he's conducting the most violent war in the history of his godless, imperialistic nation."

Chambers won the primary election for the state legislature.