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1971 Premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, May 18, 2015 on PBS

**Before Watergate, WikiLeaks, and Edward Snowden,
there was the Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI**



John and Bonnie Raines with their children.
Credit:

(San Francisco, CA) — On March 8, 1971, a band of suburban parents, university professors, and community leaders broke into a small FBI field office in Media, Pennsylvania, just outside Philadelphia. Calling themselves the Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI, the eight activists took hundreds of secret files and shared them anonymously with select members of Congress and the news media. By doing so, they uncovered evidence of the FBI's vast and illegal regime of spying on and intimidating American citizens. Despite one of the largest investigations ever conducted, the FBI never solved the mystery of the break-in, and the identities of those responsible remained a secret — until now. For

the first time, the members of the Citizens' Commission have spoken out. **1971** is their story. Directed and produced by Johanna Hamilton, the film premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, May 18, 2015, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

On the night of the "Fight of the Century" boxing match between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, the Citizens' Commission picked the lock on the door of the Media field office, loaded every file they could find into suitcases, and walked out the front door. The heist yielded a trove of evidence proving that the FBI was deliberately working to intimidate civil rights activists and nonviolent Vietnam War protesters, among others. The most significant revelation was of a massive illegal domestic surveillance program overseen by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover known as COINTELPRO.

Weaving together exclusive interviews with national news coverage of the burglary and dramatized scenes of the events, *1971* unfolds with the tension of a suspense thriller, with haunting echoes of today's questions of privacy in a new era of government surveillance.

Visit the *1971* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/1971/>) which features information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, preview clips, and more.



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Participants (in alphabetical order)

Bill Davidon was the mastermind and de facto leader of the Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI. He died in 2013.

Keith Forsyth took on the role of master lock picker for the Citizens' Commission during the planning of the burglary.

David Kairys, a professor of constitutional law at Temple Law School, is a leading constitutional scholar and civil rights lawyer. He has represented the Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI in secret for over 40 years.

Betty Medsger was a reporter at *The Washington Post* and one of five people who received the first copies of FBI files distributed anonymously by the Citizens' Commission. She is the author of *The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI*, published in 2014.

Bonnie Raines cased the inside of the FBI office, providing invaluable intelligence as the Citizens' Commission planned the break-in.

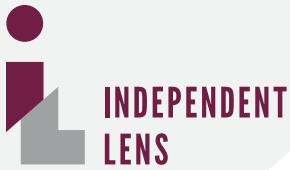
John Raines was a member of the Citizens' Commission and drove one of the getaway cars. He also planned the distribution of documents to Congress and the press following the break-in.

Bob Williamson was a member of the Citizens' Commission who offered comic relief during the 1971 burglary.

About the Filmmaker

Johanna Hamilton (Director, Producer) co-produced *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, the gripping account of a group of brave, visionary women who demanded peace for Liberia, a nation torn to shreds by a decades-long civil war. The film won the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival, was shortlisted for an Academy Award, and premiered on PBS as part of the *Women, War & Peace* miniseries. Hamilton has produced non-fiction programs for PBS, History Channel, A&E, Discovery, The Washington Post/Newsweek Productions, and New York Times Television, among others. Her career began in South Africa, where she worked for that nation's premiere investigative magazine program, *Carte Blanche*. Hamilton graduated from the University of London and has an MA in Broadcast Journalism from New York University. *1971* is her feature-length documentary directorial debut.





CREDITS

Directed & Produced by	Johanna Hamilton
Edited by	Gabriel Rhodes
Produced by	Marilyn Ness
	Katy Chevigny
Executive Producers	Julie Goldman
	Abigail E. Disney
	Gini Reticker
Co-Executive Producers	Laura Poitras
	Lilly Hartley
	G. Perezutti Hearst
Cinematographer (Interviews)	Kirsten Johnson
Cinematographer (Recreations)	Andreas Burgess
Original Music	Philip Sheppard
Written by	Johanna Hamilton
	Gabriel Rhodes

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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