

## That Other Impeachment and Me

Don Luidens  
Holland Professional Club  
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During the 1969-70 academic year I was enrolled in a Masters program at Princeton Seminary.



With my classmates, I took courses and served as a poorly paid weekend intern at a local Reformed Church. I earned about \$10-20 a week hand-holding disaffected teenagers.

The war in Vietnam was raging on, and with others I joined in various anti-war undertakings. The tragedy at Kent State, where four students and bystanders were shot to death by timorous National Guardsmen on May 4, 1970, was a wake-up call to me and to countless others. My involvement in the anti-war movement became more intentional.



With hundreds of thousands of activists, I went on marches to Washington DC and joined in local protests in Princeton. We were condemned and vilified by the Washington "Establishment" for being

un-American and borderline treasonous. Fearful but undeterred, we marched on.

Whenever my friends and I joined other protesters we kept our hands in our pockets or sewed the pockets shut in order to keep from having drugs planted on us. Stories of police entrapment and clandestine counter-protest measures abounded. Paranoia grew.

In the fall of 1970, I enlisted in the Movement for a New Congress, a political endeavor to elect anti-war congressional candidates. Princeton University was the national hub of student involvement in that campaign using mammoth computers and resident geeks. Students from around the country were informed by Princetonians about local candidates who were opposed to the war. I joined in, serving as a conduit for seminarians on the East Coast. Students on many campuses voted to give up their Thanksgiving breaks that fall so that they could take off days in early November to campaign for anti-war candidates. While Princeton Seminary did not close down, I spent a good deal of time that semester in downtown Trenton, NJ passing out campaign material in support of Rep. Frank Thompson.



In the spring of 1971 I was “invited” to visit with the IRS for an audit. Since my annual income was barely \$2,000, and I paid a miniscule tax, I wasn’t sure what was being audited. My wife, who made three times that amount, was not similarly

invited. When I appeared for my hearing, I was asked about the \$600 or so that I had earned at my field placement. Why hadn't I declared that as taxable income? I responded with a signed letter from the seminary which claimed that, as a graduation requirement for my degree, it was their attorneys' opinion that the internship income was not taxable. "Oh," replied the fearsome IRS agent. "OK." And that was the end of the hearing. Since this information had been provided when I submitted my 1970-1040 Form, I was perplexed at the episode, but wrote it off. "Whew!"

My second year of seminary I interned at the New York City office of the



National Council of Churches across the street from the UN. We were positioned there in order to host visiting delegations of church folk who

came from around the US to the Big Apple and wanted to connect with the UN. We



arranged their tours of the UN buildings and enlisted UN speakers.

I also helped to organize, under the auspices of my National Council of Churches supervisor, a major anti-war conference held in the spring of 1971 in Kansas City, Missouri. Among the conference sponsors – including many Christian, Jewish, and Interfaith groups – was the Communist Party of America.

Their delegate – a rather shriveled non-entity, from my point of view – sat with the rest of us sponsors as we strategized about the conference. At the conference, my one exciting task was to pick up the renowned Liberation Theologian, Dom Helder Camara, from the airport. Overwhelmed by his presence, I don't recall what we talked about during that brief journey.



Shortly after the conference took place, I invited my internship supervisor to our apartment in Princeton for supper. At some point after dinner he rose and asked if he could use our phone. “Of course,” I replied. “It will be a long-distance call, but I’ll charge it to my account,” he said. “No problem.”

He went into the next room, and after preliminaries I heard him switch from English to French. He spoke in French for a while and then jumped to German. Then to what sounded like Russian, then back to French, German, English, and so on through a fifteen minute call. I listened from the living room, spellbound.

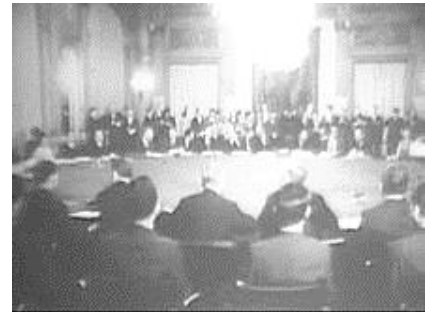


“Did you know your phone is tapped?” he asked as he reentered the living room. Mouths agape, my wife and I both shook our heads. “Do you hear a ‘click’ when you first begin your conversations?” “Yes, that’s been happening for a couple of months, and we considered getting it checked, but never got around to it.” “Well, that’s it. You’re being tapped.”

Now it was my turn to ask: “Why did you jump around in your languages?”

“To give the eavesdroppers a tough time,” he chuckled. “It will drive them nuts and take them a little longer to translate the conversation. They have to find three translators rather than just one.” He didn’t identify “them,” but I had some suspicions.

He had been talking to Paris, he explained. As you may recall, in the spring of 1971 National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger was engaged in clandestine talks with the North Vietnamese about how to bring the war to a rapid conclusion. Parallel to those talks, ecumenical church leaders from the US and Europe had set up “back-channel” conversations with other North Vietnamese representatives in Paris, hoping to reconnect with Christians in the North and thereby to pave the way for a smooth transition in the wake of the Peace Accords that Nixon and Kissinger promised were just around the corner.<sup>1</sup>



**Which brings me to Watergate and the subject of my talk tonight.**

In their classic work on Nixon’s Final Days, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein record the following




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<sup>1</sup> They didn’t come until January 1973.

emotional episode that took place on the night of August 8, 1974, the eve of Nixon's resignation:

The President broke down and sobbed. . . . Between sobs, Nixon was plaintive. What had he done to the country and its people? He needed some explanation. How had it come to this? How had a simple burglary, a breaking and entry, done all this? . . .

[Nixon] was hysterical. "Henry," he said, "you are not a very orthodox Jew, and I am not an orthodox Quaker, but we need to pray."

Nixon got down on his knees. Kissinger felt he had no alternative but to kneel down, too. The President prayed out loud, asking for help, rest, peace and love. How could a President and country be torn apart by such small things? (FD, p. 423)

Memory is a tricky business, especially collective memory. With that in

mind, I am convinced that one memory that needs to be renewed on a regular basis is our



mutual recollection of exactly what was going on in Washington, D.C. during the Nixon Administration. It is especially important in our current political climate. An imperative argument for reactivating this memory is wrapped up in Nixon's plaintiff cry about "such small things." I fear that, with the passing of time, we have reduced the evils of the Nixon Administration to a "third rate burglary," to a simple B&E by overzealous underlings. That was most definitely not the case.

The Watergate burglary was a small piece in a massive criminal conspiracy undertaken by the President of the United States and his minions against the citizens of this country, a conspiracy that was aimed at the very heart of

democracy. It involved illegal burglaries, illegal wiretaps, and repeated abuse of executive powers as well as a comprehensive and deliberate program to obstruct justice by lying to the press and subverting the judicial and legislative systems.

We begin our review of these travesties in the middle of the treachery. In the wee hours of Saturday morning, June 17, 1972, five men were arrested in the headquarters of the National Democratic Party in the Watergate Complex. Four were Cuban Americans (referred to in all subsequent analyses as “the Cubans,” a sobriquet I will use here) and one, James McCord, was an Anglo-America. At



their arraignment that afternoon they identified themselves as

“professional anti-Communists,” whatever that might be. One or two mentioned that they had worked for the CIA. McCord said that he was currently employed by CREEP, the Committee to Reelect the President, as its head of security. In their pockets were hundreds of dollars in cash, including \$100 bills that were in sequence.

The FBI was immediately called in on the case and was plunged into the middle of a quagmire. J. Edgar Hoover had been dead for less than a month, and

the recently appointed L. Patrick Gray was serving as an interim director awaiting Senate hearings and confirmation.

What unfolded over the next two years was a Greek tragedy of epic proportions. Bits and pieces of the puzzle would be laid bare, and then be swept back under a barrage of political bluster and presidential bombast. The general

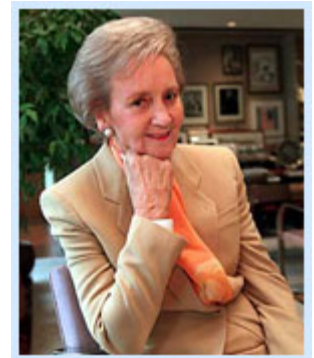


public, preoccupied with the 1972 presidential race and exhausted by the seemingly interminable Vietnam War, showed little interest in the grim details that unfolded. Two novice *Washington Post* reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein,

along with their intrepid editor, Ben Bradley, and high-society publisher, Katherine



Graham, seemed to be the only ones on the beat. As they tried to make sense of the reports and

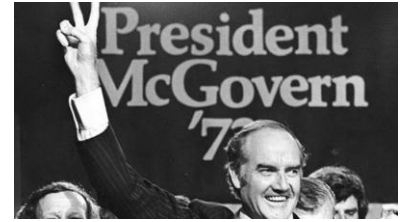


rumors that were dug up, they were subjected to a regular

pounding from the White House. Press Secretary Ron Ziegler, the Sean Spicer of the day, reviled them on a daily basis, dismissing the *Post* as a left-wing rag with no integrity.



All of this was going on in the midst of a presidential election. Senator George McGovern of South Dakota was an unlikely candidate for President of the United States; indeed he was probably the weakest of the available Democratic opponents to Nixon.



Nixon especially hated and feared the political power of the Kennedy family and the Ivy League “Establishment.” He had lost in 1960 to John F. Kennedy on the basis of suspect voting numbers from Mayor Richard Daley’s Chicago. It was widely felt that the assassination of Bobby Kennedy in June of 1968, right after his resounding victory in the California Democratic primary, had assured Nixon of the presidency that year. In 1972, Teddy Kennedy was a potential Democratic nominee. However, his involvement in the death of a young woman in a car accident on Chappaquiddick Island, Massachusetts, in July 1969 was an open political wound. It was a liability which Nixon knew how to salt. By using a paid Secret Service informant, and by hounding those who had been at the pre-accident gathering, Nixon’s men kept a surreptitious eye on Teddy Kennedy.

Other rivals for the Democratic nomination, former Vice President Hubert Humphrey and current Senators Edmund Muskie and Henry “Scoop” Jackson, had flamed out over one or another incident and were no longer part of the picture. In a month the unelectable Senator George McGovern would be nominated.

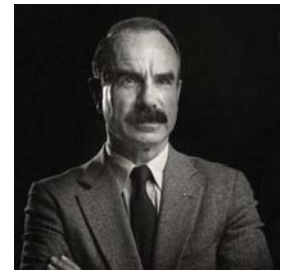
Like a submerged iceberg, movement on the Watergate front was underway below the surface of public awareness. Legal proceedings against the burglars had



led in several directions and had ensnared two more miscreants with strong and recent ties to the White House. E. Howard Hunt, a long-time CIA operative and mystery novelist, had been part of the Bay of Pigs fiasco against Castro. He was revealed to be the

recruiter and “handler” of the Cubans. It was clear that they would follow him into any legal or illegal dark alley he deemed fit. He had worked in the White House in an unspecified capacity until late in the spring of 1972. G.

Gordon Liddy seemed to be the operational leader of this band of misfits. He was a former FBI agent known for the trick of

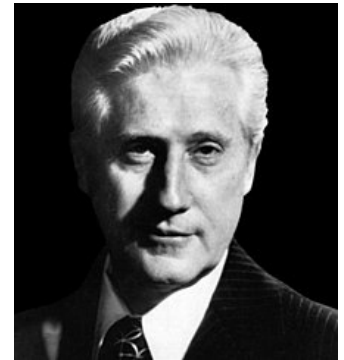


holding his hand over a candle until it was burned and proclaiming that, while it did indeed hurt, the test of a man was to not care about the pain. He worked under John Erlichman, one of two gate-keepers for Nixon in the Oval Office.

Within days law enforcement authorities had identified these participants and were pursuing a closely circumscribed investigation of their activities related to the June 17 burglary. Among the leads followed by the FBI and the hard-driving reporters was the discovery of a mysterious \$25,000 check which had been deposited in the Miami bank account of Bernard Barker, one of the Cubans. It was a cashier’s check from Herbert Kalmbach, Midwest fundraiser for CREEP and

long-time lawyer friend of Nixon. Kalmbach revealed that he had raised thousands of dollars in cash and personal checks. Another \$89,000 in checks – many with Mexican bank endorsements – was found in the Cubans’ accounts. These leads were acknowledged by the FBI, but their investigations seemed to lead nowhere. With instructions from the top, FBI agents had been warned not to look beyond the break-in for other possible illegal involvements of the Administration.

Woodstein, as Carl and Bob came to be known at the *Post*, plunged into a financial labyrinth of clandestine intrigue. Often relying on Mark Felt, the anonymous third in command at the FBI who became known as “Deep Throat,” Woodstein were relentless. On Felt’s advice, “Follow the money” became their watchword, and with other reporters from the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, they uncovered information about hundreds of thousands of dollars, reaching a million dollars in cash, that were stashed in various safes at CREEP headquarters and in the White House. These donations had been contributed to the President’s campaign in early 1972, allegedly in advance of the first campaign finance laws which took effect in April. They came from otherwise legitimate sources – often Southern Democratic political and business figures that were leery of revealing their abandonment of the Democratic Party or their support of Nixon. The money



was being used to pay the seven defendants – the four Cubans, McCord, Hunt, and Liddy – to take the fall for Watergate.

Nixon was duly reelected in November 1972, and he breathed a sigh of relief that nothing significant had come of the “third rate burglary.” However, events

soon overtook him. In January 1973, just two weeks

before his Second Inauguration, the four Cubans and

Hunt all pled guilty to the B&E at Watergate. After his

plea was lodged in Judge John Sirica’s court, Hunt told reporters: “no higher-ups

were involved in the conspiracy, ‘to my personal knowledge.’” (AtPM, p. 231)

Liddy and McCord, who pled “not guilty,” were convicted within days. Once

again, it appeared as though the whole business had been contained and settled.

But Judge Sirica wasn’t satisfied. Woodstein, again:

Sirica was seething. After accepting the . . . pleas [from the Cubans], he called the four men from Miami before him. They walked up and stood before the bench. Defendant Barker bounced up and down on his toes, wringing his hands behind his back.

Judge Sirica asked about “these \$100 bills that were floating around like coupons.”

Barker replied that he didn’t know where they had come from. The others nodded. “I got money in the mail in a blank envelope,” he said.

“Well, I’m sorry,” replied Sirica, “I don’t believe you.” (AtPM, p. 233)

True to his reputation as a hangin’ judge, Sirica sentenced the defendants to the maximum penalties and denied them all bail. They were marched off to jail, facing years behind bars for their “simple” burglary. And there they stewed.



Meanwhile, the drip-drip of Watergate related revelations had begun to take its toll on the political front. Barely weeks after Nixon's inauguration, the Senate voted 70 to 0 to establish a select committee to investigate Watergate. Senator Sam Erwin of North Carolina, a constitutional scholar and old-line Southern Democrat, was chosen to be chair of the committee. His Republican counterpart was Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee, who soon became renowned for asking, "What did the president know, and when did he know it?"



In March Sirica received a letter from McCord, written from prison, that claimed the burglary had unspecified higher-ups behind it and that there had been pay-offs to the defendants in order to get them to plead guilty and to keep them quiet. He intimated that people in the White House knew about the burglary from its outset.

The White House went on the offensive, denying that any current White House folks had been involved in planning or approving the burglary. The adjective "current" became a point of focus for reporters.

McCord's titular boss, former Attorney General John Mitchell, had been the head of CREEP when the burglary occurred.

Mitchel soon came under suspicion that he had given McCord



and his band of bunglers the go-ahead on the wiretapping. Although Mitchell had resigned from CREEP<sup>2</sup> only three weeks after the Watergate break-in, he denied any involvement in it. Nevertheless, he was suffering from considerable public heat by early 1973. In one phone conversation with Bernstein he infamously shouted that, “Katie Graham’s gonna get her tit caught in a big fat wringer” for publishing the revelations Woodstein were unveiling. (AtPM p. 105) Legal focus turned on him and Jeb Stuart Magruder – like Paul Manafort, former chairs of the president’s election committee.

But the iceberg’s calving had only begun with them. In late April 1973, Nixon announced on national television the resignations of Bob Haldeman and



John Erlichman, his closest aides. Haldeman, like Reince Priebus, had been the president’s chief of staff.



Erlichman, like Steve Bannon, had been a principal advisor on political matters.

Accepting their resignations with regret, Nixon described them as “two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know.” (Emery, 353) Historian Fred Emery notes in his tome on Watergate that the public’s reaction to the resignations of such “fine public servants” raised the inevitable question “what

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=a070172mitchellresigns>

more was there?” (*Ibid.*) There was much more. Mitchell’s successor as Attorney General, Richard Kleindienst, also tendered his resignation and was replaced by the ill-fated Elliot Richardson. Less magnanimously, Nixon announced the simultaneous firing of John Dean, his erstwhile White House Counsel. Overnight, Dean became the focus of a flurry of press leaks and political recriminations. He



was portrayed as the hidden master-mind behind the scenes of what was increasingly clear had been a massive cover-up related to the Watergate break-in.

The balance of this sad tale is quickly told. In May 1973 Nixon put out a lengthy account of the burglary stating that, while he had initially thought the episode had been a matter of national security and therefore warranted caution by FBI and CIA investigators, he was quickly disabused of that conviction and had acted aggressively to fully investigate the incident. This was not enough; Nixon’s explanation did not shut down the critics or the crisis. The investigations continued apace.

The Senate Watergate Committee held public hearings through the summer of 1973. The most riveting witness was the aforementioned John Dean who demonstrated a remarkably keen memory of specific conversations and specific dates. Despite repeated efforts by Republican Senators to challenge his testimony and impugn his motives, Dean’s resolve was unshaken. He concluded that, with

genuine regret, he had come to believe that the president was involved in the Watergate cover-up from its earliest days.

With the inevitable blistering response from the White House, it became a public debate over whom to believe – a thirty-something upstart who had been plucked from obscurity to become the President’s chief legal advisor, or the twice-elected president who was wheeling and dealing with Chairman Mao and General Secretary Brezhnev, who was bringing the warring tribes in the Middle East to the negotiating table, and who was winding down the endless tragedy in Southeast Asia? Dapper David versus Hairy Goliath.

The sling-shot which ultimately felled Goliath was loaded on July 13, 1973.

Alexander Butterfield, the head of the Federal Aviation Administration and a former top gun colonel, revealed to the Senate Committee that, as Haldeman’s Haldeman for four years in the White House, he had overseen the



installation and maintenance of an elaborate tape-recording system. Voice-activated microphones were lodged in the Oval Office, the Cabinet Room, and on the president’s White House telephones.

Pandemonium reigned. Here would be the evidence to confirm or challenge Dean’s accounts of his conversations with Nixon.



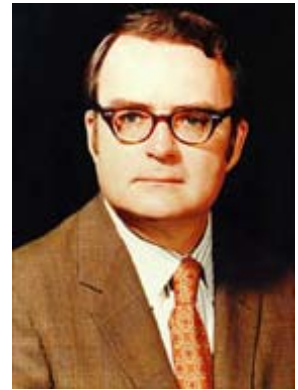
What ensued was a long and drawn out denouement. Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, who had been appointed by Attorney General Richardson to investigate the cover-up, demanded that Nixon turn over tapes from specified dates



corresponding to Dean's testimony. Nixon refused on the grounds of presidential privilege.

When Cox persisted, Nixon unceremoniously fired him,

along with Richardson and his Deputy



Attorney General, William French Smith. Technically, the latter

two resigned, so Nixon had to rely on Solicitor General Robert Bork to fire Cox.

Generally known as "the Saturday Night Massacre," this incident as much as any Watergate-related episode turned the tide of public opinion against Nixon.

Slowly the tapes were released, first in typed and inconsistently edited transcript versions with "expletives deleted," then in highly redacted audio

versions. They told a sordid tale. Among the most hotly debated was a tape from Tuesday, June 20, 1972 – barely three days after the burglary – in which an eighteen and a half minute gap was



uncovered. Nixon's true-blue secretary, Rose Mary Woods, claimed that she had inadvertently erased about five minutes by awkwardly stretching from her

telephone to her typewriter to her Dictaphone. A picture was released to show her contortions; it drew considerable public skepticism

Indeed, when finally studied by experts, the June 20 tape had at least five and as many as nine separate erasures in those eighteen minutes. The first of these was about five minutes in duration – perhaps that done by Rose Mary Wood. However, the manufacturers of the Uher 5000 tape recorder contended that there was no way the erasures could have been made as Wood claimed. The natural conclusion was that one of the two conversants – Nixon or Haldeman – was responsible for the other erasures. A subsequent tape, on June 23, suggested that the eighteen minute gap had been about Watergate and what to do in response. The cover-up had begun only days after the burglary, and it had been orchestrated from the outset by the president and his chief of staff. (ND, pp. 19 and 658.)

Another telling tape was that of March 21, 1973. In it John Dean warned the President that there was “a cancer on the presidency” which was eroding the health and well-being of the Administration. As Dean had testified in the Senate Hearings, Nixon spoke blandly that day about raising \$1 million on behalf of the imprisoned Cubans and the other convicts. Hunt’s wife had been killed the previous December in an airplane crash at Midway Airport, and on her body had been found almost \$10,000 in cash – hush money for the



defendants (Emery, p. 230). Hunt was now demanding an additional \$120,000 “by yesterday,” and Nixon asked Dean how much would be needed altogether. Dean guessed a million dollars. “We could get that,” replied the President of the United States of America. “What I mean is, you could, you could get a million dollars. And you could get it in cash. I, I know where it could be gotten.”<sup>3</sup> Although Nixon tried in later years to brush off this conversation as “a test” of Dean’s integrity, what becomes perfectly evident in the recording is that Nixon was deeply complicit in an exercise that Dean characterized as Mafia-like. *[Let’s listen to a bit of the March 21<sup>st</sup> tape.]*

In October 1973 Vice President Spiro Agnew pleaded *nolo contendere* and resigned from the vice presidency in the face of an indictment for taking bribes as governor of Maryland. His departure removed the man who Nixon saw as the primary safe-guard against his own impeachment. Although Nixon favored former Democratic Governor John Connolly for VP, he was persuaded that the House Minority Leader, Representative Gerald Ford of Grand Rapids, would be a more pliable presence and would serve as an intermediary if Nixon had to deal with the House of Representatives as it marched toward impeachment. Those proceedings were well underway; in late October twenty-two bills were introduced in Congress to impeach Richard Milhous Nixon.

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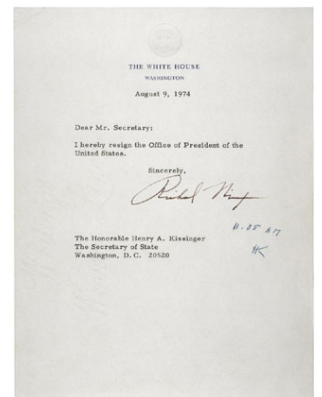
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZx7g74CvKc>

Through the first seven months of 1974 the drumbeat of justice was throbbing in the background as Nixon's legal appeal to keep control of the tapes made its way through the judicial system. Finally, the Supreme Court announced on July 24 that it had voted unanimously – including Nixon's own appointees – to uphold the special prosecutor's demand for the tapes.

While Nixon tip-toed through the next two weeks, seeking a final way out, his former aides and the gut-wrenching tapes, had doomed his presidency. On Thursday night, August 8, 1974 – the night of his vigil with Kissinger – Nixon announced to the nation that he would resign the presidency at noon the next day. Despite some last-minute misgivings – as remembered with panic by his son-in-law David Eisenhower – Nixon sent his resignation letter to the Secretary of State on August 9.

But the path to that resignation had been littered with foul-smelling garbage.

One of the abiding questions has been this: Why would a sitting president, with a clear advantage in all the polls and with a weak candidate running against him, undertake the idiotic exercise of bugging the office of his rival's party? Moreover, once that incursion had been discovered, why spend so much time and effort to cover it up?



To answer those questions one must understand that this was not an isolated event. Illegal activities had been the backbone of the Nixon presidency from the outset. Cover-up mode had been in place for a long time. Most particularly, some of the participants in the Watergate intrusion had been previously engaged in other illegal activities on behalf of the President and his stallwarts. At all costs, those other activities needed to be kept secret. Let's review.

**Item 1)** The June 17, 1972 invasion of the Democratic headquarters was not



to put NEW wiretap equipment in place. It was to REPLACE already planted, malfunctioning wiretaps. Those had been installed three weeks earlier. As Emery reports, the May 28<sup>th</sup> initial assault was “the first of

several illegal entries into the Democratic National Committee (DNC)

headquarters in the Watergate complex.” (p. 3) Lawrence “Larry” O’Brien was

the chairman of the Democratic Party and was the immediate target of these

wiretaps. The wiretappers had been monitoring his conversations from the

Holiday Inn across the street, but the initial devices had not been very effective,

and upgraded gizmos were needed. This was to be the first of several incursions –

the next target was to have been McGovern’s headquarters elsewhere in D.C.

Nixon’s long-standing hatred of O’Brien as a friend of JFK prompted the initial

wiretap. He was an “enemy.” It was hoped that O’Brien’s position could be

compromised and, like a more recent Democratic Party chair, he could be embarrassed into resigning, thereby leaving political mud on the party's ticket.

Wiretapping was a prime illegal practice of the Nixon Administration, used against a wide swath of partisan victims. (AtPM, p. 13) When he first entered the

White House, Nixon sought Hoover's help in

wiretapping reporters and others he felt were a threat to

himself. He was particularly peeved that reporters had

found out, in the waning days of Johnson's presidency,

that Nixon had secretly been in touch with the South Vietnamese Government,

encouraging them not to join any Johnson-led, last-minute peace talks. Nixon

wanted to be credited with bringing our ally to the table, but the press found out

about his machinations. Nixon wanted to expose the reporters who had outed his

near-treasonous parleys with a foreign government. Hoover demurred. If there was

a matter of national security (or if Hoover had a particular personal axe to grind),

he was very glad to wiretap anyone – as he had done for both JFK and LBJ. Even

Martin Luther King, Jr. had been in Hoover's crosshairs. It wasn't that Hoover

was opposed to wiretapping *per se*, it was just a matter of making sure that he

could protect himself from legal entanglements if the press found out. So Hoover

resisted Nixon, at least initially.



In the end, Nixon was able to prevail on Hoover to wiretap a broad range of Americans – chief among them were Nixon’s “Enemy’s List.” Reporters,



politicians, academics, and anti-war activists were prime targets; as were his own (and Henry Kissinger’s) aides in the White House. Like many other presidents, Nixon hated leakers – especially if

they worked for him. (AtPM, pp. 209-212) This indiscriminate wiretapping of friend and foe created a reign of paranoia in the inner circles of the White House – as well as elsewhere. Woodstein feared that their own lines and apartments were bugged, and conducted many of their conversations outside the *Post*’s offices.

**Item 2)** The Nixon Administration not only compromised the FBI, it sought to do so throughout the Federal bureaucracy. In early 1969, just months after Nixon’s inauguration, a young White House staffer by the name of Tom Charles Huston proposed that the IRS should be ordered to investigate so-called “radical” anti-war activists. Huston, the former “chairman of the archconservative Young Americans for Freedom,” wanted the IRS to review anti-war non-profit organizations with the intention of denying them tax exempt status. The IRS initially rebuffed Huston, much to his ire. According to historian Emery, Huston reported to Haldeman that “the truth is we don’t have any reliable political friends at IRS whom we can trust, and as I suggested a year ago, we won’t be in control of

the government in a position of leverage until such time as we have complete and total control of the top three slots at IRS.” (p. 23)

Nixon was enthusiastic about Huston’s aggressive approach and appointed him to head an interagency task force charged with developing a program of national surveillance. Emery again:

[A]t the first meeting of the working group, Huston told the impassive intelligence professionals that the president wanted them to recognize that “everything is valid, everything is possible.” Their report did not disappoint the president when it was delivered a few weeks later. The point to remember is that the Huston plan was first approved by the heads of all three agencies – CIA, DIA, and NSA. . . . The odd man out was Hoover. The FBI director had footnoted his personal objections, mainly, it seems out of worry over possible press disclosure. . . .

Huston sent a separate memorandum to the president calmly discounting Hoover’s objections. He recommended that the president go ahead and select all the options for the maximum relaxation of restraint. . . . His memo, speaking of surreptitious entries, noted particularly:

Use of this technique is clearly illegal; it amounts to burglary. It is also highly risky and could result in great embarrassment if exposed. However, it is also the most fruitful tool and can produce the type of intelligence which cannot be obtained in any other fashion. (pp. 24-25)

#### Huston Plan Acknowledges Criminality

- “Use of this technique is clearly illegal; it amounts to burglary. It is also highly risky and could result in great embarrassment if exposed. However, it is also the most fruitful tool and can produce the type of intelligence which cannot be obtained in any other fashion.” (Huston Plan in Emery, pp. 24-25)

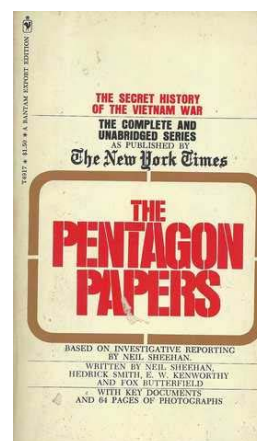
Within a week of receiving the “Huston Plan,” Nixon approved most of it – including the illegal incursions. High on the Plan’s list of bull’s eyes was the Brookings Institute, which was prominent on Nixon’s Enemies List. Then, as now, the Brookings Institute was a left-leaning think-tank in Washington that was publishing reports challenging the Administration’s proclaimed benefits of the



Vietnam War. Huston wanted to burgle the Institute in order to retrieve what he claimed were classified documents. While this phase of the Huston Plan was shelved – indeed, the larger plan was ultimately tanked when Hoover complained to Attorney General Mitchell – focus on the Brookings Institute came back a year later. In 1970 Charles Colson, Nixon’s attack dog, suggested that the Brookings Institute should be firebombed in order to destroy it and all of its records. That proposal, too, was shelved, although a reconnaissance of the Institute was undertaken by what became known as the Plumbers. This nefarious group of White House “investigators” was answerable to Erlichman. Its organizer and leader was Howard Hunt, and its stormtroopers included the Cubans and McCord.

Before long, both the FBI and the CIA were brought under White House aegis. Their respective directors (L. Patrick Gray and Richard Helms) ultimately resigned in disgrace, the former for destroying documents taken from Hunt’s safe and the latter while under press and political pressure for complicity in Nixon’s cover-up of the Watergate investigation.<sup>4</sup>

The Plumbers were created in 1971 in the wake of the publication, by the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, of *The Pentagon Papers*. As their catchy moniker suggests, the Plumbers were developed to stop leaks. *The Pentagon Papers* was a highly



<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Helms#RN: Watergate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Helms#RN: Watergate)

classified, highly critical, military history of American involvement in Vietnam from the end of World War II through the mid-1960s. It was written by Pentagon insiders and showed that there had been massive military failings and systematic efforts to mislead Americans. It revealed beyond doubt that the Johnson



Administration had repeatedly lied about the extent of the war's

shortcomings and its illegal expansion into neighboring countries.

While the focus of *The Pentagon Papers* was on the pre-Nixon

period, Nixon feared that current lies – including denials of

massive bombings along the Ho Chi Minh trails through Laos and

Cambodia – would be the next revelations.

The leaker of this classified history was a Pentagon consultant by the name of Daniel Ellsberg. In September 1971, in order to find evidence to discredit him,



the Plumbers were dispatched to California where they broke into Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, trashing the place in an effort to cover their tracks.

Nixon soon learned of this break-in, and it is likely that on June 20, 1972 – as

would have been recorded in the eighteen minute gap – Nixon instructed

Haldeman to initiate the cover-up of the Administration's involvement in the

Watergate burglary so that Hunt wouldn't reveal the Ellsberg break-in.

**Item # 3)** The White House, under the auspices of Haldeman and his chief aide, Dwight Chapin, also engaged in a raft of actions that they called “rat-fucking.” This was the term used by lawyers Donald Segretti, Alex Shipley, and their University of Southern California buddies for illegal and marginally-legal activities that disrupted Democratic candidates’ campaigns. Ziegler and Chapin were at USC with Segretti and Shipley in the early 1960s where they were known to stuff ballot boxes and undermine opposition student candidates’ rallies. Segretti enlisted up to fifty other “rat-fuckers” to undertake similar “operations” around the country on Nixon’s behalf. Money seemed to be no limitation.



Woodstein found that Segretti, alone, criss-crossed the country several times, appearing at McGovern and other Democrats’ campaign rallies to disturb and discredit them. A frequent technique was to call the owner of a rented venue and cancel the upcoming Democratic event or change its start time so that the candidate appeared to arrive late. They also introduced spies in opposition camps in order to investigate and misguide campaign strategies. Paid disrupters at Democratic rallies – including some posing as ultra-radical, anti-war agitators – were common. “‘Get out fake polls showing [McGovern] doing well in trial heats,’ Nixon once suggested to Colson,” according to Emery. Nixon was intent

on running against McGovern rather than Kennedy or Muskie and would stoop to any means to make that happen. (p. 107)

Perhaps the most memorable and insidious “rat-fucking” technique was to compose false epistles on prominent Democrats’ letterheads that undermined fellow Democrats. Among others, letters to news outlets on Muskie letterhead claimed that Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson and former Vice President Hubert Humphrey had consorted with prostitutes. Nixon knew of and approved of these undertakings. (BA, p. 231 quotes Nixon on these letters.)

The most effective such maneuver was an anonymous letter, written by the Deputy Director of Communications Kenneth Clawson, the Sarah Huckabee Sanders of the day. His notorious epistle became known as the “Canuck Letter.”

It claimed that Muskie used the disparaging term “Canuck” to refer to French-Canadians. This “fake news” was published by the conservative *Manchester Union Leader* without fact-checking, and drew a round of bitter condemnation from the



Muskie camp. It followed on the heels of an earlier editorial by the *Union Leader* claiming that Muskie’s wife smoked, drank, and used off-color language on the campaign trail. Muskie was furious, and in an emotional defense of his wife and denunciation of the publisher of the *Union Leader*, Muskie broke down and cried.

His performance effectively ended his campaign for president. The “rat-fuckers” had won. While “rat-fucking” seemed harmless, it cost the Democrats tens of thousands of dollars – and was the subject of a major civil suit against Richard Nixon at the time of his resignation.

There’s more. I could talk about the break-in by Hunt at the home of Arthur Bremer, the would-be assassin of George Wallace. Before the FBI had a chance to



investigate Bremer, Erlichman dispatched the ubiquitous Howard Hunt to break into Bremer’s home, hoping to find – or plant – evidence that Bremer was a left-wing fanatic. Hunt got there before the FBI, but found nothing.

I could talk about the bald intimidation of ITT executive Dita Beard. ITT contributed \$400,000 to the Nixon campaign with the expressed intention of



ending an anti-trust lawsuit and of securing the 1972 Republican National Convention in San Diego. Dita Beard wrote a memo which made that quid-pro-quo clear. Hunt intimidated her while in she was recuperating in a hospital so that she denied writing the memo.<sup>5</sup>

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[http://www.historycommons.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=nixon\\_and\\_watergate\\_tmln&nixon\\_and\\_watergate\\_tmln\\_other=nixon\\_and\\_watergate\\_tmln\\_itt\\_and\\_dita\\_beard](http://www.historycommons.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=nixon_and_watergate_tmln&nixon_and_watergate_tmln_other=nixon_and_watergate_tmln_itt_and_dita_beard)

I could talk of Nixon's threat to expose the pecadellos of Republican Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott. About Nixon's tax "irregularities," including his back-dating of the donation of his vice-presidential papers so he could claim a \$500,000 deduction. About Nixon's obstruction of justice in the investigation of the My Lai Massacre. About Nixon's threats to withhold licenses for CBS and the *Washington Post*. About Nixon's use of public funds to enhance his estates in San Clemente and Key Biscayne. About "all the president's men" who went to prison.

"All the President's Men" Are Convicted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vice President Spiro Agnew – tax evasion charges</li> <li>• Bernard Barker (Cuban) – 12 months</li> <li>• Dwight Chapin – 8 months</li> <li>• Charles Colson – 7 months</li> <li>• John Dean – 4 months</li> <li>• John Erlichman – 18 months</li> <li>• Virgilio Gonzalez (Cuban) – 15 months</li> <li>• Patrick Gray (FBI Director) – resigned; burned documents; never indicted</li> </ul>

There's More
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H. Robert Haldeman (Chief of Staff) – 18 months</li> <li>• E. Howard Hunt (CIA, Plumber) – 33 months</li> <li>• Herbert Kalmbach (Nixon's Lawyer) – 6 months</li> <li>• Richard Kleindienst (AG) – suspended 1 month</li> <li>• Egil "Bud" Krogh (Erlichman's Aide) – 4 ½ months</li> <li>• Frederick LaRue (Mitchell's Aide) – 5 ½ months</li> <li>• G. Gordon Liddy (Plumber) – 52 months</li> <li>• James McCord (CIA, CREEP Security) – 4 months</li> <li>• Jeb Stuart Magruder (CREEP) – 7 months</li> </ul>

There's even more
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robert Mardian (Asst. AG) – conviction overturned</li> <li>• Eugenio Martinez (Cuban) – 15 months</li> <li>• John Mitchell (AG, Head of CREEP) – 19 months</li> <li>• Herbert (Bart) Porter (CREEP) – 1 month</li> <li>• Donald Segretti ("Rat-Fucker" in Chief) – 4 ½ mos.</li> <li>• Maurice Stans (Sec of Treas., CREEP) -- \$150,000</li> <li>• Gordon Strachan (Haldeman Aide) – dismissed</li> <li>• Frank Sturgis (Cuban) – 13 months</li> <li>• Tony Ulasewicz (Private Eye) – 1 year probation</li> </ul>

About Roger Ailes' and Nixon's cynical "Southern Strategy" that locked the Republican Party into a racist alliance that continues to plague the Grand Old Party. But time constrains.

Was I a victim of the president's obsession with "radical" anti-war activists? Were my home bugged and my income tax surveilled because of my activism? I don't know. Perhaps. But I was small potatoes. That wiretapping was wide-spread, there is no doubt. That intimidation took many forms, there is no doubt. That Nixon feared and didn't understand the war protesters, there is also no doubt. But our political differences most definitely did NOT warrant the systematic undermining of the central institutions of our

Differences did NOT warrant . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undermining of central institutions of our country               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Free Press</li> <li>○ Agencies of Law Enforcement</li> <li>○ Judiciary and Rule of Law</li> <li>○ Truth</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Through repeated denials of FACTS with the deliberate and cynical use of FAKE NEWS</li> </ul>

country – from the press to the agencies of law enforcement to the judiciary to the intelligencia to a frontal attack on truth through repeated denials of guilt in the face of overwhelming evidence. None of that was justified. And all of it was the result of an Administration with no guiding moral compass except its own self-preservation, led by a master manipulator of gullible devourers of “fake news.”

The break-in at the Watergate on June 17, 1972 was indeed a “third-rate burglary.” But, like the tip of an iceberg which glistens and glows in the sunlight,



seeming in its beauty to deny the power and destructive potential that lies beneath the water’s surface, the Watergate burglary capped a monstrous partisan iceberg that inexorably battered the

highest values and ideals of our democracy. If we forget it, if our memories fail, we may fall victim to another all-out assault on our beloved country some time in the not-too-distant future.



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