OBITUARIES

Frank Sturgis, Convicted In Watergate Burglary

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Miami — Convicted Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis, who served 13 months in prison for the crime that brought down the Nixon administration, died yesterday of cancer. He was 68.

Mr. Sturgis died at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Miami a week after he was admitted, said his lawyer, Ellis Rubin. Doctors diagnosed lung cancer that had spread to his kidneys.

Mr. Sturgis

Mr. Sturgis was a member of the burglary team caught after a break-in at Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate hotel.

"In Watergate, he claimed to his dying day that he was acting under orders of the White House," Rubin said. "He had no idea that he would be put in prison as a result."

Mr. Sturgis received a 1- to 4-year sentence for the burglary. He was denied a pardon by President Jimmy Carter.

Interviewed last year for the 20th anniversary of the botched break-in that ultimately brought the resignation of President Richard Nixon, Mr. Sturgis said he thought the United States was better off for the experience.

"It really screwed up the country," Mr. Sturgis said. "But it made our government a little bit stronger . . . I feel the laws that came about after Watergate didn't give the president — whether it was Nixon or anybody else — the free rein to do what a dictator would do."

The Philadelphia-born former police officer was a rabid anti-communist. He was the second Watergate figure to die in less than a month. Former Nixon chief of staff and Watergate conspirator H. R. Haldeman died Nov. 12 in California.

Mr. Sturgis is survived by his wife, Jan, and a daughter.