

# Maurice Stans, Alone.

He's 84. He Wants His Good Name Back. Shouldn't We Give It to Him?

By Ken Ringle

Washington Post Staff Writer

Here we have Maurice Stans, the notorious bagman of Watergate, who, as finance chairman of Richard Nixon's reelection campaign 20 years ago, trafficked in suitcases filled with \$100 bills, and, while raising more political money than any previous man in history, financed the burglaries and the coverups and all the sordid black baggeries of the greatest political scandal in American history.

And on the other hand we have, apparently in the same chair, the tousle-haired, bespectacled pride of Shakopee, Minn., the son of a Belgian-born house painter and concert bandmaster; who read Horatio Alger stories and believed them and believes them still; who in three years of exhaustive investigations and excruciating trials about Watergate was repeatedly found INNOCENT of ANY knowing violation of ANY law, and is still asking America to "give me back my good name."

As Dwight Eisenhower's chief fiscal watchdog, this is the man who gave America its last balanced budget.

Can it be that we owe him some sort of . . . apology?

In the vast rogues' gallery of Watergate, Maurice Stans was never a very satisfactory villain. Amid the bulldog intransigence of John Mitchell, the snarling defiance of John Ehrlichman, the storm-trooper glare of H.R. Haldeman, the hand-in-the-candle-flame machismo of G. Gordon Liddy, Mau-

rice Stans wore the exasperated sincerity of the substitute teacher who just can't quit the class. He never seemed to understand what could be wrong with doing his job so well, or why people thought all that cash he raised might tempt Nixon and his operatives to send some of it on dubious errands.

"There can be such a thing as an overdose of loyalty," said the Republican Party's most famous accountant the other day on a visit here from his home in Pasadena. "I may have been guilty of that. . . . Loyalty is one of my characteristics." But for 20 years, he says, journalists and prosecutors have been assuming—and writing—that the man who raised nearly \$60 million for Richard Nixon must have known everything that money was buying.

"I can understand how and why they thought that," Stans said. After all, he ended up pleading guilty to five of the charges against him and paying a \$5,000 fine. "But that had nothing to do with Watergate," he insists. "They were two charges of *non-willful* receipt of illegal campaign contributions—the word 'nonwillful' appears both in the charge and in the judge's ruling—and three minor counts of late reporting of

contributions. Out of nearly a million transactions that year!"

Now that the record shows he knew nothing of the conspiracies and coverups his money-raising underwrote, and that all such charges against him were false, he says, "there should be some process in the media for absolution."

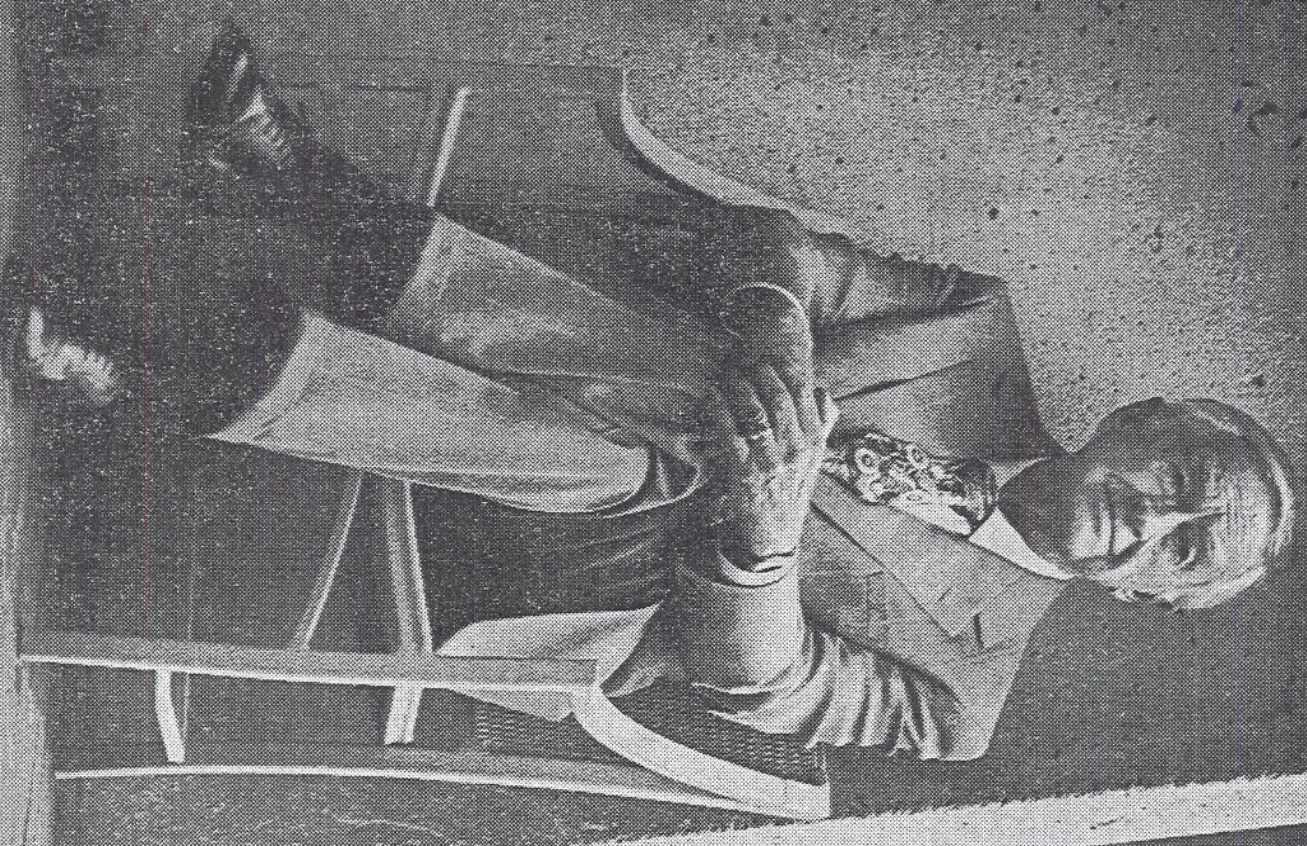
Stans has pursued that absolution with the same tenacity and zeal with which he once made six- and seven-figure contributions leap from the pockets of corporate America. He has testified and granted in-

terviews. He has telephoned and demanded corrections. "When necessary" he has filed libel suits, all of which, he says, have been settled out of court.

In 1978 he published "The Terrors of Justice," a 478-page apologia setting forth his storybook journey from a \$30-a-week stenographer for a sausage casing company to the millionaire money man of presidents.

Written in clear, accountant-like style, complete with periodic summing up and frequent double entries, it adds up all the

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Maurice Stans: Oddly enough, still one of the President's Men.

BY BILL SNEAD—THE WASHINGTON POST

hundreds of charges against dozens of so-called "Watergate figures" like himself, subtracts the 14 men convicted and finds among the remaining innocent an unconscionable surplus of shattered lives and personal suffering, his own among them.

Last month, as the 20th anniversary of Watergate approached, he dashed off a letter to the nation's 30 leading newspapers, wire services and newsmagazines pleading with them to "exercise discretion" in any upcoming retrospective articles when they identify someone as a "Watergate 'conspirator' . . . Watergate 'character' or similar term of lasting stigma."

While he has won retraction of such labels in the past, he wrote, "that has been costly. Meanwhile, my financial affairs have been shattered. My defense expenses have been enormous. Awards and honors, justly due, have been denied me. Positions of trust have been withheld."

For an 84-year-old son of Shakopee, still seeking validation in the wider world, it's been a heavy price. But Stans has never, for one moment, lain even an ounce of that price at the feet of Richard Nixon.

"It never occurred to me to pin my problems on him or anybody else," Stans says thoughtfully, making a tepee of his long, freckled fingers after adjusting his presidential seal tie clasp. "I never felt I wanted to go back and demand accountability, financial or otherwise, from anybody that got me in trouble. It always seems best to me to forget the misdeeds and mis-evaluations of my friends and go on doing my business as best I can. . . ."

Stans, however, has done far more than taking care of business. He also appears to have sustained one of history's world-class cases of unrequited love, toward a president who at best ignored him and at worst hung him out to dry.

In his book, he notes without complaint that, despite his Cabinet position (he was Nixon's first secretary of commerce) and his record-breaking achievements in fund-raising, he was routinely excluded from the president's inner circle. His budgetary advice was ignored. His counsel was discarded. On the night of his overwhelming election victory, Nixon spurned even a token appearance before Stans and the contributors who had paid for it all.

Once Stans's three-year legal nightmare of accusations, innuendo and investigation began (his wife was critically ill much of the time; she died in 1984), Nixon offered neither money or support. When the famous White House tapes were made public, Stans discovered Nixon had secretly planned to make him a fall guy for the scandal, nominating him for an ambassadorship so his stormy confirmation hearings would take the heat off the president.

Didn't that kind of smack of ingratitude?

See STANS, F5, Col. 1

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## STANS, From F1

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"You're right about that," Stans says.

Which in turn demands a certain accounting:

Why has Maurice Stans just spent four years raising \$27 million for the Nixon Library?

### A Sense of Obligation

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Here is the central paradox of Maurice Stans.

"I don't know how you rationalize my thinking," he says of his continued service to the man who brought him down. "Many people have been angry for me. Many people have thought I should have acted differently. But maybe it's my Minnesota small-town attitude. . . ."

What happened was Nixon asked him over to dinner and, after he'd turned down the fund-raising job three times, "tried the one thing that always works: flattery. He said 'Maury, you're the only man in the country who can do this. Without you there will be no Nixon Library.' And I said, 'Well, Mr. President, if you put it that way, I accept. But it won't be easy.' And it wasn't. . . ."

"But I felt an obligation to Nixon as I did to Eisenhower. Eisenhower picked up a guy with no government experience whatever and put him in charge of the federal budget. Nixon put me in charge of raising money for his campaign when I'd never raised more than \$1.5 million before. . . ."

"Those things became challenges to me, opportunities. And whatever successes I've had in my life have flowed from opportunities like that."

### 'You Don't Want to Know'

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Stans is explaining how he could have been blind to what his 1972 fund-raising was paying for.

"There were two parts to the money operation: getting the money, which was my job, and handling the money, which was Hugh Sloan's. He deposited and dispersed the money, paid the bills and so on, and along the line he got involved in a couple of flows of cash I didn't know anything about, until the whole thing came out in court. . . ."

"I remember one instance when Sloan came to me and said, 'Liddy wants \$50,000 to spend in New Hampshire.' And I said, 'What's Liddy got to do with New Hampshire?' And he said, 'I don't know but Magruder

says he should have it.' And I said, 'Wait a minute: Let me talk to John Mitchell.' So I called Mitchell and I said, 'Is Liddy entitled to get any money for campaign purposes?' And he said, 'Yes, but it should go through Sloan.' And I said, 'That's the way it came but I just want your approval.' And he said, 'Okay, tell Sloan to give Liddy any amount of money he asks for. And that's what happened.'

According to testimony in the Watergate hearings, Sloan later asked Stans precisely what Liddy, who was technically nothing more than counsel to the finance committee of the Committee to Re-Elect the President, needed money for. The answer, of course, was for the campaign of "dirty tricks" of which the Watergate burglary was only one small part. But

Stans, Sloan said, replied, "I don't want to know and you don't want to know."

It was, Stans says today, none of his affair.

He concedes that CPAs such as he usually evidence unusual interest in both where money comes from and where it goes. But, as he explains: "There's a fever that goes on in a campaign like that. It gets higher and higher. You do your job at a faster and faster pace and you have less and less time to look at any individual transaction. . . . Yet I did take the time. I was able to demonstrate to the special prosecutor that I had refused or returned somewhere between \$4 and \$5 million, either because I didn't trust the contributor or because the contribution came with some sort of string attached. . . ."

"Now if there's a question of my integrity, it seems to me that's part of the equation. It seems to me that ought to outweigh any little piddling thing of a two-month delay in reporting an item because I couldn't get the names of the contributors from the individual who raised the money. But nothing has ever been said about that, as far as I can remember, either by the lawyers [who prosecuted him] or by the media."

### **Flattery and Fund-Raising**

One question, spoken and unspoken, about Maurice Stans and Watergate, is how, if the 1972 campaign contributions weren't buying special favors from the Nixon administration, a nice unassuming fellow like Maurice Stans managed to raise so much.

The answer, he says with a crafty smile of pride, lies in his discovery of the real key to fund-raising: "Nobody ever gets offended by being asked for too much."

People, he says, "are flattered by being asked to give more than they can afford": It suggests you think they're richer than they are.

"Suppose I came to you and said, 'I'm raising \$2 million for an animal shelter here in Washington. Your neighbors are all contributing and we'd like you to contribute too.' What goes through your head? You think,

'How much should I give him: \$25? \$50? Or does he expect more than that?'"

So fund-raising rule number one, Stans says, is always name a figure before your prospect can think of one. And make it larger than you think they'd give.

"So instead of waiting for you to suggest a figure I say, 'Several of your neighbors are giving \$200 and we think it would be nice if you were in that same class.' I'll probably get the \$200 from you. But if I don't I'll always get more than if I let you set the amount yourself."

But it's also critical, Stans says, to know your prospect and see him in person. In 1968, he said, he flew to Chicago hoping to coax a \$25,000 contribution for Nixon from legendary mega-millionaire W. Clement Stone. But he didn't know much about Stone's politics, and was surprised to find him already strongly for Nixon. Noting the enthusiasm, Stans held back from mentioning a figure, and by the time they'd finished lunch, had about decided he could ask for \$100,000. Then Stone mentioned he strongly favored matching gifts, and would match anything the campaign could raise in the next 60 days.

"Up to what amount, Mr. Stone?" Stans asked.

"Up to a million dollars."

Stans then asked for and got a \$200,000 advance on account, and the 1968 Nixon presidential campaign was underway in style.

Four years later, Stans said, he'd learned other techniques as well.

"I would meet with some potentially big contributors and tell them, 'You all know what kind of president Richard Nixon would be, but you probably don't know much about George McGovern. So I've brought along copies of a tax bill he's submitted to Congress. Take it home, show it to your accountant and ask him how much this bill would cost you.' That was very effective."

### **Total Recall**

Whatever the traumas he suffered over Watergate, Stans is a great advertisement for old age. Though he's

slightly stooped and wears a hearing aid, his mental agility would impress in a man half his age. Not only can he recall from memory chapter and verse of every charge, trial and witness in the labyrinth of Watergate, he is just as forthcoming with details of the budget he balanced in 1960 or his trade talks with the Soviets during detente.

In January he finally decided to whittle his 15 corporate consultancies and directorships down to three. He closed his office and now has a secretary only three days a week. But he's been away from home more than half the year so far, most recently working on revitalizing a minority enterprise

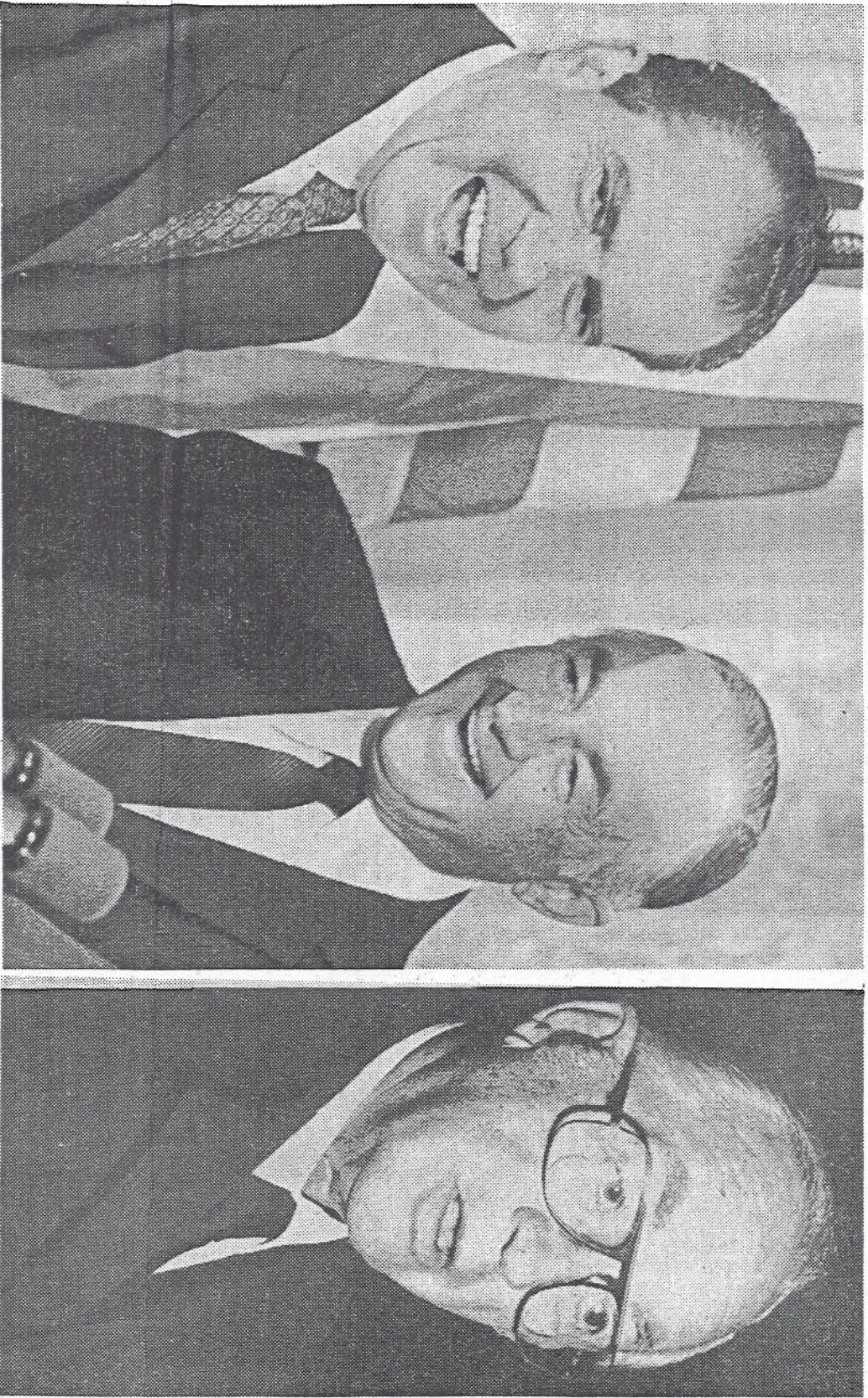
program that was one of his pet projects as secretary of commerce.

He's also writing his autobiography ("Between the Lines of History") and a book on fund-raising.

Where does he get the energy?

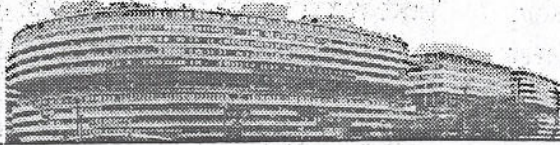
"When I was 12 my father bought a life insurance policy on me for \$1,000. I read all the fine print and discovered that on the payment of premiums for the 96th year, no more premiums shall be due and the full amount of the policy falls due to the beneficiary. I decided I had to live to be 96 to collect that \$1,000. And I still plan to."

And from Maurice Stans, the small, satisfied smile of an accountant who's summed it all up.



Left, happy times for Nixon and Stans in 1969. Right, in 1982, the Associated Press reported spotting Stans "prowling Washington hoping to restore his reputation."

ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOS



TWENTY YEARS AFTER

## *Positively the Last Word(s) On Watergate ...*

By Charles Trueheart  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Thumb-suckers are nice, retrospectives are dandy, but the meaning of Watergate can be rendered in a few short phrases: "a scandal involving abuse of power by public officials, violations of the public trust, bribery, contempt of Congress, and attempted obstruction of justice."

So says the American Heritage Dictionary of the American Language's Third Edition, due out in August, where Watergate shares a page with its sister debacle Waterloo. "It's taken on an extended meaning, just as Beirut has," says Anne Soukhanov, executive editor of the dictionary.

Watergate has become an important legacy not just to presidents, journalists and citizens, but to lexicographers, the keepers of our dictionaries, and many others whose minds are attics of the memorably uttered.

The suffix *-gate* is far more versatile than Watergate proper, and lives on today as an all-purpose denoter of scandal. It has adorned many a word—Korea, Iran, Billy, debate—and given it the redolence of malfeasance at the highest levels. "Gatesgate," the minor hubbub over Robert Gates's nomination to head the CIA, was the *reductio ad absurdum* of this idea.

Yet Soukhanov and company decided not to include the suffix in the new edition. Maybe next time: They've just admitted *grassy knoll*.

**Stonewall** and **deep-six** and **dirty tricks**, among other charming expressions, may not have been invented by Watergate protagonists, but the terms were crystalized and immortalized by their invocation during the affair.

President Nixon, borrowing an honorable Civil War name for dishonorable purposes, used "stonewall" to describe the position he wanted his minions to take to staunch revelations of official wrongdoing. The Trickster himself is cited in the American Heritage definition:

See GLOSSARY, F5, Col. 1



Nixon:  
"Stonewall"



Ziegler:  
"Inoperative"



Ehrlichman:  
"Twisting slowly  
in the wind"

# The Final Words on Watergate

## GLOSSARY, From F1

**"Informal.** To refuse to cooperate with; resist or rebuff: *'I want you to stonewall it, let them plead the Fifth Amendment.'* (Richard M. Nixon)." (This tactic, also known as **hanging tough**, was later amended, no more successfully, to the famous **limited modified hangout route**.)

**Deep-six**, a term that has its roots in both naval and funerary parlance, was the Nixon White House's equivalent of "five fathoms deep"—the underwater location, possibly off a Potomac River bridge, where documents or loot or bugging equipment could be forever secretly dispatched.

**Dirty tricks** were the political ones, from Donald Segretti's wicked pranks at the excusable end to the White House plumbers' wiretapping at the unconstitutional one. Perhaps because Watergate gave dirty tricks such a bad name, the term is no longer in use. It's been replaced by—what else?—euphemisms, such as "negative campaigning," stoked by "opposition research."

How about The Washington Post's anonymous ultra-source, **Deep Throat**? (The expression was itself borrowed from a well-known porno flick of the time.) "That's something we'll be watching for a while," says Soukhanov, who writes the Word Watch column for The Atlantic. "If it gains more currency out of the Watergate context, like Catch-22, then it could become an addition to a future edition of the dictionary."

But other shards of language are somehow more memorable, even if they are too wordy or Watergate-specific to earn a place in a dictionary.

Who can forget John Ehrlichman's sneering description of how the

White House should handle the doomed nomination of L. Patrick Gray to head the FBI—to leave it **twisting slowly, slowly in the wind**? Or Rose Mary Woods's gymnastic **18-minute gap**—one of many, many strange gaps in the Oval Office tapes, deletions Alexander Haig later straight-facedly suggested were caused by a **sinister force**. Or **CREEP**, as Nixon's enemies liked to call the Committee to Re-Elect the President.

Not in Soukhanov's dictionary, but still frequently heard, is **expletive deleted**, the blushing frequent euphemism of choice on transcripts of Oval Office conversations. This cover-up language, ironically, has been adopted by some newspapers to protect the sensibilities of their readers from the raw and earthy things most people say in their daily discourse.

The Senate testimony of Richard Nixon's buttoned-down minions sagged with bureaucratise, the wordiness favored by people who have nothing to say but want to sound important saying it: **At that point in time** instead of "then," for instance, and **not to the best of my recollection** instead of "I don't remember"—or instead of telling the truth.

Watergate spawned its share of quotable quotes: "**What did he know and when did he know it?**" was Sen. Howard Baker's sonorous interrogatory. It earned him a reputation for tough-mindedness—in imperial Washington, it doesn't take much.

Then there was the nasty thing involving a **wringer** that John Mitchell said would happen to Washington Post Co. Chairman Katharine Graham. And Chuck Colson's reported willingness to **run over my own grandmother** in the service of RN. And the **cancer on the presidency** John Dean somberly warned Nixon about early in the cover-



Baker: "What did he know, and when did he know it?"

up. And the **firestorm**—now a journalistic cliché—that greeted the Saturday Night Massacre.

Press Secretary Ron Ziegler, tangled to the end in his president's unraveling lies, managed to etch a few terms in history's glossary. No one ever let him forget his early dismissal of the Watergate break-in as a **third-rate burglary**. And he provided weeks of mirth with his later announcement, as official explanations of the scandal were proven to be deliberately fraudulent, that previous White House statements on the subject were **inoperative**.

The great man himself contributed some memorably Nixonian phrases to our cultural vocabulary. "**I am not a crook**" is the pathetic best of them. "**Let others wallow in Watergate**," he said at another point in time, "we are going to do our job."

But for sheer sanctimony and Machiavellian gall, nothing comes close to Nixon's quickly adding, after swaggering on at length about his ability to lay his hands on a million dollars of hush money, that **it would be wrong**: a side-long whisper to his conscience, not to mention the whirring tape recorders reeling him down into history.