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## The Working Man That Watergate Forgot

**W**ith all of the talk about the legacy of Watergate, one lesson of that infamous incident is if you're going to be a criminal, it's better to be a white-collar one.

Look, for a moment, at just a few of the major players who committed Watergate crimes in contrast to an unsung hero of sorts who later committed a blue-collar crime.

Charles W. Colson, guilty of obstruction of justice and other offenses, served seven months in prison; John Ehrlichman, guilty of conspiring to obstruct justice, perjury and other offenses, served 18 months.

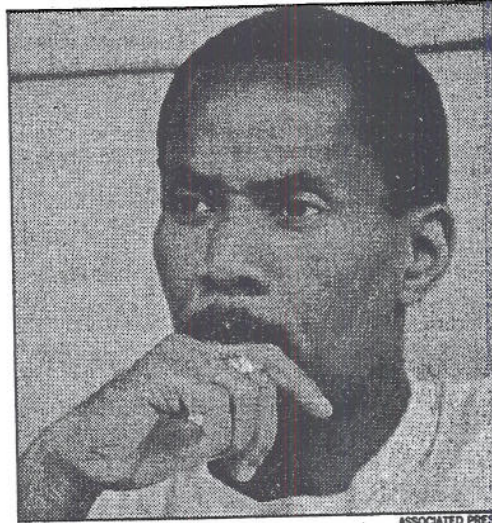
Nixon aide Egil Krogh Jr., guilty of conspiracy, served four months; and deputy campaign director Jeb Stuart Magruder, guilty of obstructing justice, served seven months. Guilty of conspiracy and perjury, H.R. Haldeman served 18 months.

By contrast, Frank Wills, the security guard who discovered the break-in at the Democratic National Committee office and telephoned police, was found guilty several years later of shoplifting a \$12 pair of sneakers and received a one-year sentence.

Wills was sentenced to a longer term for stealing sneakers than many of the other Watergate figures served for violating the Constitution. He was the man that Watergate forgot.

"Watergate hasn't really changed my life. I was just doing my job," Wills told the New York Times last week. "If anything, the crooks benefited. They got famous."

Wills spent most of the last 20 years working off and on as a security guard, most often unemployed.



Frank Wills, the guard who told police of the break-in, ended up on the wrong side of the law years later.

He now lives in South Carolina and cares for his ailing mother.

But Wills is more than another example of inequality in the application of the law. While poor black and brown men who fill America's jails can rarely get a job after they have paid their debt to society, few of the Watergate gang suffered financially after leaving prison.

See GILLIAM, D2, Col. 3

## White-Collar Crime Still Gets Less Time

GILLIAM, From D1

Krogh is a partner with a Seattle law firm; Colson has written several books and is a lay minister, Haldeman owns a hotel and develops real estate.

"White-collar criminals are, relatively speaking, getting away with murder," says Eric Lewis, Georgetown University Law Center professor and Washington lawyer. "At the same time, blue collar criminals [or] the violent or drug-related offenders, are punished with savage rage."

But complaints about the dual system of punishment are about as popular as the plague because so many Americans are living in fear of violent and drug-related crime.

Drug dealers routinely get 30 and 40 years behind bars without parole; and moves are afoot to dole out stiffer sentences for first-time drug possession.

Of course, drug dealers who are destroying our youth should be punished, but then so should the white-collar criminals who are destroying the fabric of society.

This country already has more people in jail than

In the years since Watergate, particularly after the light sentencing of Ivan Boesky, there has been something of a turning point in prosecution of white-collar criminals. Boesky stole more than \$200 million and probably accelerated investors' disenchantment with Wall Street, but he received only a three-year sentence.

Later prosecutions were tougher—"junk bond" king Michael Milken pleaded guilty to six felonies, agreed to pay a record \$600 million in penalties and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

For a while it seemed, as one legal expert said, it was "the golden age of white-collar criminal prosecutions." But white-collar criminals can speak on their own behalf, hire expensive lawyers and pull in the consultants they need to manipulate the system to their will. That cost is certainly beyond the reach of those with modest means or who are living in ghettos.

"Our current two-tiered system has empathy with the fallen only when those who administer the system can identify with the plight of the offender," says Lewis of the Georgetown Law Center.

And, of course, the system can more easily identify with a Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Colson than with their crimes against the Constitution, than with