

The Watergate Caper Comment on if not analysis of GAO report release 8/26/72 HW

We heard the first report at 2 p.m. on the CBS ~~news~~^{net} radio news of that hour. It was the lead item. It might have been out for earlier use. Because on a major story where release is controlled I question a Saturday release, I went into town tonight after calling the newspaper distributor. Their editions of the Baltimore Evening Sun (5*) and Wash. Star-News, they said, came in at 2:30 p.m. and were not the early editions. I think they said it was the Sun's Saturday last. Allowing 2 1/2 hours for the 1 hour trip, these could easily have been noon editions. Neither had the story. Both page-one'd Stans' defense, the Star as the three-column lead story.

You know better than I how Saturday daytime release, especially if not early a.m., is certain to reduce if not kill reactive comment, especially during summer months. There is nobody in his office. And it was a major story for the charges, whether or not complete, stipulate certain violations and claimed violations of the law.

It was the lead item on NBC's TV net news, one of the two of the entire week with the smallest audience. If CBS used it they used the same lead spot. We looked at NBC first then switched to CBS, aired same times here Saturdays.

Ordinarily, I think, this would have been a for Monday a.m.s story, unless there was a decision to downplay. If any complaint would have been made, and that is doubtful, the fact of an interview with Stans at his request and the delivery then, not several months earlier, of "hundreds of pages" of documents was more than enough justification, for these had to be read and if relevant included. That they did not delay the report would seem to be adequate description of what Stans gave.

I don't think the Sat release was in reaction to the clamor for release nor does it address the possibilities of early trial. There will be none before the election because it is within the power of attorneys for the to-be accused (read GOP) to delay trial with motions of various kind.

With Monday a.m. release, there is everyone to be interviewed for the p.m.s and the prime-time TV newscasts. Now this will be a third-day story. If I think it will get major attention, there will be competition for the space, including still another GOP defense, which is proper, but any Demo comment will be from space devoted to the recap of the story. The difference is that the GOP will have had the weekend to go over the report and prepare an answer relative untroubled by interviewers, certainly under conditions assuring to the degree it can be assured that there will be fewer newsmen around. They can even hide easier on weekends while still having staff to make and release statements.

Or, I think it not unreasonable to suspect that the GAO was not really acting as an arm of the Congress, which it is supposed to be.

Although it was 9:30 by the time I could get the papers, that is still too early for the Sundays. It will be interesting to see the Post's handling and whether it finally uses some of its own knowledge, that the reporting was so grossly deficient it included no recap, no summary. I am not up on these laws as once I was, but unless the law with which I was familiar was changed, all expenses were still required to be filed before April 7's new law.

Caddy was deposed yesterday. He sought to escape photogs by having his lawyer, Henry Rothblatt, go out first while using the basement. A Star photog anticipated correctly and got him. The picture is p.1 tonight. I wonder if this does not indicate some knowledge of the building, which I know (Williams owns it and uses top two floors for his offices). There are two side-by-side elevators. The stairway is next to the shaft, as I remember it. Unless it was known that there is another, separate, basement entrance/exit, why go down there only to have to come up and out the same front? If a lawyer knows a building from business in it, this rarely includes the layout of the basement. Of course, Caddy could have been taking a chance there was another way out.