

# Wife Asks Pardon for Silent Liddy

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G. Gordon Liddy is not exactly your everyday political prisoner. He is not even a typical suburban white-collar crook.

Gordon Liddy is weird, as everyone who followed the Watergate saga already knows. The burglar who wouldn't talk. A character unto himself.

In a town where cutting deals is the main industry, Liddy would not bargain with federal prosecutors. In a political case where contrition won shorter sentences for so many other culprits, Liddy refuses to apologize for Watergate.

This is most bizarre, everyone agrees. But the nagging question about Gordon Liddy is: should a

man spend 20 years in prison because he has a peculiar sense of integrity? Is it fair?

Liddy is now completing his 43d month in prison and yesterday, on his 56th birthday, his wife and five children, a few neighbors from Prince George's County, and 7,000 sympathetic citizens put the question to the President of the United States.

Liddy, sentenced to eight to 20 years for burglary and wiretapping, is not eligible for parole until 1981, long after the market for Watergate memoirs will have faded. He is petitioning for a pardon and yesterday four fat volumes of petition signatures in his support were de-

livered to the Justice Department's pardon attorney, Lawrence M. Traylor.

Traylor responded like a man with a hot potato in his lap. He couldn't guess when his recommendation on the case will be ready or when the Attorney General would review the matter or when it would get to the White House. It could be weeks or months or longer.

But Traylor did allow Mrs. Liddy and James M. Gavin, an Oxon Hill neighbor who organized the pardon petitions, to stage a little media theater in his office. The five Liddy children, all dark-eyed teen-agers with wholesome smiles, stood around their mother and looked wholesome for the TV cameras.

See LIDDY, C4, Col. 1



Associated Press

Mrs. Gordon Liddy, with two of her five children, tells reporters of her petition.

## LIDDY, From C1

"This is the first decent thing that the Justice Department's done in the last four years," Mrs. Liddy said, apologizing to a secretary for the temporary inconvenience. Her manner was without rancor or melodrama.

"All you can do is hope and not try to rationalize what's going to happen," Mrs. Liddy said.

"This is plainly a case of unequal justice," Gavin told the TV cameras. "That's your constitutional right, to remain silent. That's no reason to get hit with the maximum sentence."

These arguments have been reviewed by various courts and rejected, so presidential pardon is Liddy's only recourse. Gavin calculates that the average sentence actually served by an other Watergate defendants who went to prison was about six months.

And, of course, many avoided any punishment, including Liddy's former commander-in-chief. Howard Hunt, Liddy's partner in leading the burglary squad, got his sentence reduced after cooperating with the grand jury and will be eligible for parole in January. Liddy wouldn't play.

"His 20-year sentence is so much longer than anybody else's," Mrs. Liddy complained, in an even voice.

Normally, a burglary where nobody was hurt or threatened, where the burglars were unarmed and entered an unoccupied office, might draw a sentence of six months or so, according to a recent study of criminal sentences by the Twentieth Century Fund.

The Watergate break-in, of course, wasn't your normal burglary. Liddy, in particular, matched his will against Judge John Sirica's will when the judge suspected a cover-up and was trying to force the defendants to talk. The judge didn't win that contest, but neither did Liddy.

He now works at the power plant at the federal prison in Danbury, Conn., monitoring air pollution, according to his wife. His social consciousness has been raised, she added, by his role as unofficial jailhouse lawyer for other inmates. Liddy helps them draft appeals and file complaints against alleged unfair treatment such as solitary confinement or the denial of visitors. He has written several magazine articles and hopes to do more.

Mrs. Liddy, like her husband, will go so far in pleading for public sympathy. But, like her husband, she will go no further.

Why doesn't her husband express a little bit of contrition, she was asked, at least enough to get him sprung from prison?

Mrs. Liddy answered without hesitation: "He still believes he was doing what he was asked to do by the executive branch. Basically, under the same circumstances, he would do the same thing the same way."