

By Nick Thimmesch

JOHN EHRLICHMAN LEFT Santa Fe for prison as quietly and unnoticed as he arrived. His daughter, Jan, 23, helped him pack his clothes in the little adobe house that looks down on twisting dirt roads. For eighteen months, his Spanish-American neighbors regarded this notorious bearded man as an amigo, but there were no farewells. Ehrlichman didn't even tell his closest friends he had decided to "go in." They heard about it from the radio, the TV news and the afternoon paper.

Nationally, the newsplay was that the first of the really "big" figures in the Nixon administration had gone to prison. Were Bob Haldeman and John Mitchell far behind? But in Santa Fe, a place long known for minding its own business, there was no great stirring.

"This is a passive town," Duane Northup, who runs a wine shop, told me later. He had known

Photograph by Stephen Northup

JOHN EHRLICHMAN

Ehrlichman casually when he came in to buy a bottle of California chablis to take to a friend's house for dinner. "There are a lot of people who come here for reasons of their own, to get away from something, and they are obliged. Some call it tolerance," Northup said.

Santa Fe, population 50,000, is really a small town. The streets around the plaza are narrow, the buildings bright white, the landscape brown. There are trading posts, a fine cathedral and the Palace of the Governors, the oldest public building in America. The Old Santa Fe Trail makes no geographic sense, but it is a reminder that this beautiful town is as old as America itself.

Ehrlichman became a familiar figure on the old streets of Santa Fe. He kept his distance from people, but showed little of the jut-jawed aloofness that made him the Nixon administration's ogre during the televised Watergate Committee hearings. During the tourist season, Ehrlichman was occasionally spotted and stared at, but town residents didn't gape. They had long experienced neighbors and visitors like Greer Garson, the Pulitzers, John Crosby, Truman Capote and Bill Mauldin. Ehrlichman didn't need his beard to be left alone.

Altogether, Ehrlichman lived twenty-one months in Santa Fe. He spent much of this time by himself, shutting off the telephone, visitors, newpeople and the local press. He read a good deal, worked four to five hours daily on his first novel and the beginnings of a second. Occasionally, he went out to dinner, or to play tennis, or to hike in the nearby Sangre de Cristo mountains. He tended his vegetable garden in the small back yard. At times, he leaned on the earthen wall and looked over the tangle of winding, pot-holed streets built over Indian paths centuries ago. His beard and ample belly gave him a Falstaffian look, and he liked to lounge on the sun-soaked patio like some reclusive desert rat who had seen it all.

He thought over his life: the years as a successful, locally renowned lawyer dealing in zoning

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It's Been A Long Way To Santa Fe And In Jail The Nights Are Longer Still

"The latent gentility and sensitivity are now dominant in John's personality."

—William Safire.

"We fiction writers must stick together"

—John Ehrlichman's inscription to Frank Gannon, research director for Richard Nixon's memoirs, in an autographed copy of Ehrlichman's novel sent to Gannon.

matters; his bourgeois marriage and the five children he spent so much time with; the plunge into service for Richard Nixon; the quick entry into government at the White House level; the power he wielded, and how its use in ways he regarded as legitimate ended in his felony convictions and prison sentences; in short, the movement from agreeable security in Seattle to fame, notoriety, retreat in Santa Fe and the prospect of months or years behind bars.

In early October, three weeks before he "went in," I spent two days with Ehrlichman. We talked in his living room, on the patio, in the Shed Cafe, along the streets, and on a long ride into the mountains. He would point out this historic street or that special building. He seemed to enjoy the brilliant sun, and the spectacular coloration of the oaks and maples, and higher up, the yellowing cottonwoods and gilded aspens. Nobody was twisting

slowly in the wind. He talked about prison, and his cases under appeal, but he gave no clue he would soon pack up for prison.

One afternoon, while I was talking to Ehrlichman, he wanted to fiddle around in his vegetable garden, neglected during his book tour. The sun was bright and warm, and there was no hint that the night air would bring frost. "Not much time left for these," he said as he pulled back the leaves from the squash and zucchini. "I want to get these to the Kerrs tonight."

He was wearing a sweater and a pair of levis which had a hole in the seat. His feet were in desert boots. He had talked the day before about beads and long hair, and now he and his son, Peter, had a beard-growing contest and Peter won. "I'm not so sure my value system is the same," he said. "Some things that I had spent an inordinate amount of time concerned about something as superficial as I held precious aren't so valuable. My kids' haircuts. That might be old stuff to you, but to discover it myself is significant to me."

"I decided when I came here that I was going to be open for as many experiences as possible. I met Allen Ginsburg [the poet]. Holy hell, if I would have had Allen Ginsburg in for lunch when I was in the White House ...

"Ginsburg and I were looking at things from the opposite end of the tunnel, especially in 1968 during the demonstrations at the convention. I was working to keep him out, and so when we talked, he asked why did this happen and why did that happen. He's a very gentle guy. He was there out of conviction. We compared notes. There was no hostility. Ginsburg wrote me a warm note, and sent me an autographed copy of his book, *Howl*.

"It was very much the same with Marlon Brando. He was looking at the Indian situation from a militant point of view. We had correspondence after I left government, and he had me out to see him in Los Angeles. He was interested in Wounded Knee, and atomic fallout, and hunger. We talked thirteen or fourteen hours across the landscape. I found him well read and stimulating."

Norman Mailer interviewed Ehrlichman for

Continued on page 19 7

The Washington Post/Potomac/January 2, 1977

Ehrlichman, from page 7
Chic magazine, the new companion to Hustler, the blue-collars' skin magazine. The interview was mostly Mailer talking, but Ehrlichman said he thoroughly enjoyed it. "We hit it off," he said. "Mailer is perceptive. This is a guy who thinks about what he is reading, the whys and wherefores. I really liked his mind. There was no clash at all.

"Mailer is open-minded, but you know, all of us are sewn into our own suits of underwear by past experiences. I am perhaps less doctrinaire than any one of these three guys. I have fewer precommitments to live down at this stage."

Some say the twenty-one months in New Mexico created a "new John Ehrlichman." It's more likely that John Ehrlichman has only discovered qualities in himself, and has learned he doesn't have to live the way he has during the first half of his adult life. One way to probe is to ask how he liked the hyphenating of Halde-man-Ehrlichman.

"I never found it amusing," he said, "because anytime you are stereotyped—as a Pole, a liberal, a Jew—you say, wait a minute, I am an individual, I'm a mixture, I'm complex.

"Originally, I wasn't concerned about it—the Germans, the Berlin Wall—because I was fairly anonymous. I felt I should do my job and get a result . . . help the President and things would take care of themselves.

"Later, during Watergate, there was a liability. There was a confusion in the minds of people who should know better—like Jaworski—and it resulted in me having less credibility in situations where prosecutors had to decide whether [John] Dean or I was telling the truth. Compare my situation to Henry's [Kissinger's]. He assiduously cultivated the press, worried about his image, improved it, and came through on credibility questions in good shape.

"Since all this has come to a climax, I have had to come to grips with the disparity of what I understand about myself and how the public perceives me. There's nothing I can or should do about it."

He claims Haldeman and he weren't really that close, that their families saw each other socially only four times in Washington. "Our differences are much more important than our similarities," Ehrlichman said. "We had dramatic differences of opinion on personnel selection. I had to defend people like Bobbie Kilberg [the liberal feminist] because Haldeman felt she shouldn't be in the White House.

"We differed a lot on my idea that the President ought to get out more. I wanted to see people like John Osborne and Hugh Sidey because I thought it was good to explain what we wanted to do in domestic policy. My instructions were not to see those people. I have a great affinity for John Osborne. I liked and admired the guy."

Ehrlichman was enthusiastic about another discovery in Santa Fe—privacy. He absolutely relishes it. "I've learned something every writer must know, and that is you need four or five uninterrupted hours to focus on one subject. You can do magic things with it.

"All my life has been fractionated. I had a hundred open files when I practiced law. Every day was fifty phone calls, night meetings, hearings, all that kind of stuff. Got in the government, and it got worse. Committee meetings pulled and hauled . . . your tail on somebody else's kite all the time.

"Here I am now, I can sit down at 8:30 in the morning and I know I can get clear to 1:30. The phone's unplugged. I can focus on one thing, and I move a mountain. I have a whole new way of looking at things. I go out sketching and really look at stuff. Some afternoons I finish work at one o'clock, and I'll go up to Abiquiu and do the church. I'll go there and sit. I don't have another living thing that I have to do. If I don't get back by dinnertime, I don't get back by dinnertime."

Ehrlichman sat down on a porch chair and looked out over Santa Fe. Sky clear, air good, sun warm. Unpretentious four-room adobe house. Quiet and privacy. Good for writing and thinking, I think. Sooner or later he must be asked about feeling guilt.

"I can see a lot of mistakes that I made," he said. "I certainly will never deny that I made mistakes. I have a very strong religious conviction that I've had for years, and nothing has changed about that.

"Everybody has to come to grips with his own actions. Whether he feels he has to say or do something about it is another matter."

It was a Christian Scientist who was Ehrlichman's only friend at the beginning in Santa Fe. It was through Christian Science friends that he made some of his best friends in his exile. He also met with his Christian Science practitioner in San Francisco with whom he has had a close relationship for many years and "will all my life." Ehrlichman called him for help "from the time this whole [Watergate] problem dusted up.

"A Christian Science treatment is prayer. It's not a lot of dialogue. I do my own studying in Christian Science, and he prays for me in San Francisco, or wherever he is.

"The reason one asks for help is that many times when the physical pain or the argument is so distracting, you can't do good work. Say when you smash your finger with a hammer. Somebody else can do it objectively, and can say, 'Look, this is what's true about that situation.' The material appearance is not true, and by his mental work, he can help you enormously.

"If you just had an auto accident and your nerves were jangled, and you came into a house where everybody was joyous and calm, it would be hard for you to sustain your jangles. Their serenity would ameliorate the situation."

He noted that I looked quizzical, and laughed. "You're getting into deep water," he said. "If you want to learn more, I've got some reading material here."

He owes an estimated \$400,000 in legal bills. His children are brave but scared by his experience. He and his wife have an uncertain future together. The judges haven't been very sympathetic. He's no Patty Hearst. And he knew, that afternoon, that escaping prison was a long shot for him. So weren't his problems about as bad as problems can be?

"You don't quantify problems," he said, smiling. "There is a little old lady somewhere who is sure the pain in her toe is the biggest problem in the world. A crisis with kids or family can be the biggest problem.

"My problem seemed bigger to other people because of the publicity. It's a matter of perception. I've come to be more sympathetic to other people's problems than before. You know, your problem always seems bigger than the other guy's, no matter."

So now he is in the Federal Prison Camp, seven miles from Safford, Arizona (population 6500). The information that it was a wall-less, minimum-security facility made the first news reports suggest a "country club" prison.

"It's no country club," says Superintendent John T. Hadden, 34. "Taking away a man's freedom is punishment."

A recent inmate, whom I talked with, said the same thing. "No prison is a country club, and Safford isn't great, though it's not as bad as a state prison. It's not badly run. But the process is dehumanizing for anyone who grew up in a civilized country."

Two-thirds of the prisoners are Mexican nationals, usually called "wetback" laborers. The other prisoners are Chicanos, blacks and whites (ten per cent), doing short terms. Some are men who served many years in tough big prisons and are finishing out their last months at Safford.

"It's overcrowded," the former inmate told me. "Sixty men in each open barracks. Lots of them sleep in their clothes so they won't get stolen. Only footlockers, and no privacy. There's plenty of vulgarity and some fighting. Every barracks has got at least one drug pusher and one homosexual, but that stuff isn't as bad as in some prisons."

The punishment, he says, is in the boredom. Most prisoners work in the broom and glove factory. The better jobs are in the powerhouse, and that's where Ehrlichman works, according to Superintendent Hadden. Ehrlichman monitors dials and switches and makes sure the

septic system is working properly.

Like most prisons today, Safford's operating capacity is pushed to the limits. A year ago, it handled 250, and now the number is 353. The guards don't carry guns, and a prisoner could walk away. But his shoes have had holes drilled in the heels so he can be tracked in the desert. That, and the additional sentence of five years for escape, keep the runaway count down.

A library ("mostly paperbacks," says the former inmate), has corners where Ehrlichman could write in his spare time. "From what I hear about Ehrlichman," the inmate told me (He picked it up from more recently released prisoners), "he'll do very well because he finds his own business."

There are four TV sets, softball, handball, weightlifting and tennis. Movies are shown once every couple of weeks. Radios allowed, but only with earplug receivers. Mail is opened and censored, coming and going.

There is a scattering of white-collar criminals. One recent resident was Jesse D. Kornegay, former State Treasurer (Democrat) of New Mexico. The former governor of Oklahoma, David Hall (Democrat), entered a few days after Ehrlichman, so Ehrlichman has a fellow government official to talk with.

Ehrlichman and I were up in the Sangre de Cristo when he talked of confinement. "It's a possibility I've confronted and looked at a long time," he said. "I don't dwell on it. My principal reaction is that it's a big waste of time as far as I am concerned."

Egil (Bud) Krogh, reared in the Ehrlichman home and a beginner in law in Ehrlichman's firm, had an opinion. "He'll do well in prison," Krogh told me after John went in. "He will work with the other prisoners and be a help to them. He has a fascinating imagination and extraordinary wit."

Krogh did his own time in prison after being convicted of carrying out a White House mission headed by Ehrlichman. But Krogh has this idea that prison is good for many afflicted with trouble. Soon after he got out, Krogh visited Richard Nixon at San Clemente and gingerly suggested that prison

Continued on page 24

Ehrlichman, from page 19 wouldn't be the worst experience the former President went through. He got no warm thanks or pats on the back for that observation.

Ehrlichman would make no such suggestions to Nixon; he hasn't talked with him in three years. He claims, contrary to Woodward and Bernstein, that he never asked Julie Eisenhower to get her father to pardon him. Ehrlichman says he phoned on behalf of Haldeman. And he says now that had he known in 1968 what he learned later about Nixon, "I suspect I would have stayed home from that campaign. I also know my answer carries a lot of baggage."

Living in Santa Fe, "where I was totally unplugged," Ehrlichman has learned to be more intuitive and imaginative, and now feels that he has enough "unrequited projects, curiosities and activities" before him that he would need "three times the years left to me to get them done."

"The first time I was in New Mexico is when the Army sent me here by accident during the war," Ehrlichman said. "There was a foul-up in my orders, so they got me a week off here while they found out where I belonged. It was quiet, and like out of a cowboy movie to me. I was taken with the openness, the limitlessness."

After his second Watergate convictions—the cover-up trial—Ehrlichman began thinking about "alternative service," a new departure in the crime and punishment process. The idea, as promulgated by activist lawyer Ira Lowe, is to sentence offenders who are no threat to society to useful community work—thus an option to incarceration or leniency.

Ehrlichman made contact with Pueblo tribes headquartered in Santa Fe, offering to provide them non-legal expertise. He figures that his experience in water rights and land use would be helpful. The Pueblos were receptive, so Ehrlichman flew to New Mexico in January 1975 to meet with Harman Agoya, executive director of the eight northern New Mexico Pueblo tribes.

Agoya wrote Judges John Sirica and Gerhard Gesell that his board of governors wanted Ehrlichman to help the Pueblo tribes in the

event he was sentenced to alternative service. But during the hearings on the sentencing, there was an uproar over the notion that Ehrlichman, he of jutting jaw and aloof manner, the tough stonewalling Nixon lieutenant, would give of himself to the Indians. Hooting and guffawing.

Back in Santa Fe, where the state legislature was in session, the Ehrlichman proposition became a political problem for the Pueblos, "Herman phoned," Ehrlichman explained, "and said 'My governors can't take the heat,' so I said, 'Let's call it off.'" The judges didn't go for the idea either, so the question was moot.

The publicity, however, prompted other groups in the Southwest to pepper Ehrlichman with proposals of how he could help them. An offer to do the novel came through about the same time, so Ehrlichman decided to move to Santa Fe to follow both pursuits. He wound up helping a Chicano organization and, on a limited basis, advising two Navajo tribes, but he was careful to keep these efforts unpublicized.

"John showed us how to get information on federal programs," reported Herbert Claw, a Navajo working in youth development. "He knew what catalogs we needed and who to phone. John and I decided to keep it out of papers. He helped the Navajos down at Chinle [Arizona] too, at the Pimon school."

Frequently the needs Ehrlichman encountered were legal ones, forbidden to him to take on because of his disbarment, but ultimately he handled about six projects, he said.

"There was a school problem on a Navajo reservation, and they couldn't get the Bureau of Indian Affairs to do anything. The school was a disgrace, and I got them referred to someone who could help," he cited as one example.

"Soon other Navajo schools got in touch with me. I didn't do anything worth writing home about, but I knew what the system was back in Washington and they didn't. I was a sort of ombudsman. It wasn't a great thing."

Ehrlichman was the house guest of the one family he knew in Santa Fe until he rented the four-room adobe house. The beard had

scarcely begun when local newsmen came round, but Ehrlichman's presence attracted only brief media interest.

The citizens of Santa Fe value their town's isolation and serenity. No scheduled airline stops in Santa Fe because voters turned down a bond issue to lengthen the runway at the modest municipal airport. Nor has a Santa Fe passenger train ever stopped here, because that legendary railroad constructed only one spur line of track for freight trains to struggle up the outlying foothills near the city. Amtrak passengers get off at a whistle-stop named Lamy, eighteen miles away, and are driven to town without ceremony.

"Nobody tells you what to do in this town," testifies Mrs. Walter "Peaches" Mayer, a prominent native of Santa Fe in her seventies (and feisty political liberal), who became one of Ehrlichman's close friends. "You could paint yourself blue in the square and nobody would care. John kept his distance and people said, 'Leave the poor bastard alone.'"

Ehrlichman appreciated this. "The attraction for me," he explained, "was that I could be totally unplugged. I didn't want to stay where I would have community connections, including Seattle. I had too many clients, and been in too many controversies there—it was too much claim on my attention."

Of course, everybody wondered why he put distance between himself and his wife and children. "I have religiously refused to comment on my family situation," he told me. "I have never yet seen a public comment about a human relationship that improved the relationship."

His wife, Jeanne, told me, however, that she "accepted and approved" John's decision to live in Santa Fe. "I understood why he wanted to work things out for himself," she said. "The rest is nobody's damned business."

John and Jeanne Ehrlichman say there is no separation, legal or otherwise. Their friends believe the Ehrlichmans decided they should live apart for a while because the strain of the Watergate period had gotten to both of them. Rep. Paul

N. "Pete" McCloskey Jr. (D-Calif.), a long-time Ehrlichman friend, said, "John wants his marriage to succeed. Jeanne is a strong, stoical person, and John is a strong family man. But when he gets out of prison, he'll need warmth more than strength."

Ehrlichman married Jeanne Fisher in 1951. They were in that postwar generation which went to college, began careers and reared children, almost by rote. Jeanne converted to Christian Science. She taught school to help John through law school. Then she went about rearing a family that eventually numbered five children.

The Ehrlichmans lived a comfortable life in suburban Hunts Point, near Seattle, and got involved in the run of humdrum civic activities. Ehrlichman's earnings were halved to \$40,000 a year when he went to work in the Nixon White House. But they suffered no deprivation in suburban Washington, D. C., and life was vastly more exciting.

The family drew heavily on their Christian Science faith during the Watergate investigation and trials. Even before John was convicted, the Ehrlichman family returned to Hunts Point to put their lives together. Ehrlichman went back for a while, but it was no good.

"Christian Science teaches us not to dwell on it," Jeanne Ehrlichman explains. "Jesus teaches us to work for the moment. John had to go away from the past and learn about himself."

Jeanne took a \$10,000-a-year job as educational coordinator for the Seattle Symphony Orchestra which meant she worked to develop music appreciation programs for the public schools.

"It's such a challenging job that I spend twelve hours a day at it, and have no time to be lonely," she says. "My children are doing fine. They're super."

The Ehrlichman children are now all away from home. Peter, 26, is married, was law clerk for a federal judge in Seattle, and is about to go into private practice. Jan, 23, recently graduated from college and may settle in Santa Fe. Tom, 22, and Jody Ann, 19, are college students. Bob, 17, is at Principia, a Christian Science prep school in St. Louis, Missouri.

"We are waiting this thing

out," Jeanne says. "I could sell the house to improve our finances, but I won't. Everybody has problems, but it's how you cope with them. The worst is behind us."

A visit by Tom Ehrlichman to his father in the summer of 1975, led to the development of one Ehrlichman's closest friendships in Santa Fe. Tom had a favorite French instructor at Stanford whose parents, Walter and Vivian Kerr, lived in Santa Fe, and Tom phoned them. The Kerrs immediately invited him to their home, and suggested that he bring his father along.

The Kerrs took an immediate liking to Ehrlichman. Soon they were having dinner together, talking about history, the war, contemporary politics and John's situation. "I don't judge people or their actions," Kerr told me later. "I take people as I find them."

"I like John. He is engaging and articulate. He got caught in a difficult situation, hard for someone on the outside to understand—the pressures and obligations of working for a President. You can tell a publisher you don't want to do something. It's not so easy with a President."

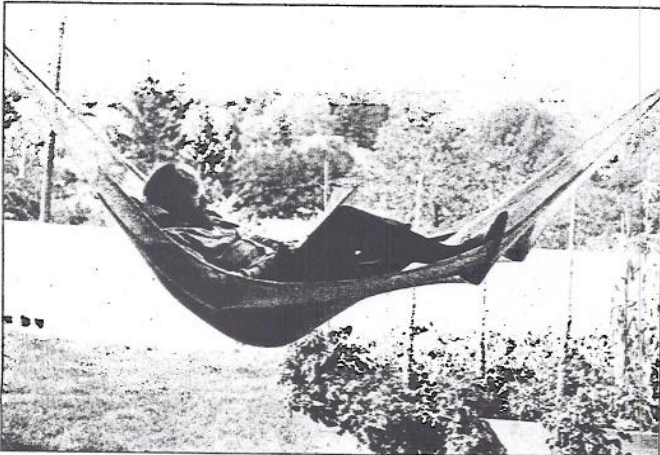
Kerr and his French wife had both been journalists. He covered World War II for the New York Herald Tribune, and had been at Stalingrad shortly after the fierce battle had finally been won by the Soviets there. Kerr and Ehrlichman found themselves reminiscing about the war.

Ehrlichman was an Air Corps navigator, flew twenty-six missions in a "pathfinder" squadron, which had the dangerous job of flying ahead of the main bomber group to find targets. He was aviation-minded because his father, Rudolph, was an American flier in World War I. Rudolph Ehrlichman also tried to enlist in World War II. When he was rejected as over-age, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and was killed in a plane crash. John was 16 at the time.

John Ehrlichman's grandfather, Walter Ehrlichman, emigrated from the Odessa area on the Black Sea, near the Romanian border. He was part of a German population which colonized the Southern Ukraine. Walter Ehrlichman is buried in Bikur Cholim, a Jewish cemetery in Seattle.

Enjoyable as the Kerrs were, the social evenings were occasional because Ehrlichman got deeply involved in his book. He says he had long considered writing a mystery story because "I read them and thought, Gosh, I could write one as good as that." He first planned a Washington murder mystery. He wrote a synopsis, but friends who read it made faces.

Then, during the second Watergate trial, he had lunch with columnist William Safire, and Safire sent the synopsis to his literary agent.



By Stephen Northrup

The idea was immediately sold to Simon & Schuster. The plot changed from murder mystery to a tale involving the President and the CIA. Ehrlichman admits that the project began as "exploitation" of his name, but claims that half-way through the manuscript "they started talking about it being a decent book."

Ehrlichman's editor is Michael Korda, a vice president of Simon & Schuster, and an accomplished author in his own right. Korda was no fan to the Nixon administration, and took on Ehrlichman as a physician takes a patient.

"John Ehrlichman never gave me a problem at all with the book," Korda told me. "He is very efficient, and better organized than most writers. He is terribly disciplined and has a quick intelligence. He set out to learn how to be a writer . . .

"I don't see John moving in art and literary circles, however. He wouldn't have much patience with the

bullshit those people throw around at, say, Elaine's restaurant [in New York]. And John will always be ill-at-ease with liberal media journalists."

About 50,000 copies of *The Company* have been sold, and Paramount bought the movie rights. Simon & Schuster quickly signed Ehrlichman to write a second novel, and this time, according to Ehrlichman, the setting will not be in presidential places and the characters will bear no relationship to real people. When he was in Washington this past year,

novelist's skill. John Kenneth Galbraith praised it and so did other reviewers. The CIA does not come off well in this yarn about how a young President allowed the CIA to murder a priest, spiritual leader to an anti-Castro force, in order to sabotage their invasion of Cuba. Two presidents later, Monckton can hold this over the CIA director, but the chief spook is able to blackmail the President when he learns the inside story of a strange break-in at Democratic headquarters. This is where we all came in.

and Cushman originally agreed to forget a phone conversation they held in early July 1971 on the Ellsberg case, and that Cushman later testified that it took place, thus contradicting Ehrlichman at a crucial time. At first Cushman couldn't produce written record of that call, but later he "found" it, explaining that his secretary had filed it. During that July 8 call, according to Cushman, Ehrlichman requested that the CIA provide assistance to Hunt, who was working on the Ellsberg situation for the White House. One former top CIA official describes Cushman's reversal as a "save your ass move, common at the CIA."

Speaking of these officials he wouldn't name, Ehrlichman said, "Their subterfuge, and in some cases their downright falsehood in covering up their involvement, really got to me."

At this very moment, as Ehrlichman works in the Federal Prison Camp at Safford, Arizona, he is convinced that his actions in the Ellsberg case were motivated by concern for national security, that he was following presidential orders and imitations of Kissinger, and that the CIA knew what was going on.

"I was in a minority in the White House who felt the prosecution of Ellsberg and Russo was a mistake," Ehrlichman told me in his Santa Fe home. "I had the President persuaded that way at one point, but Mitchell turned him around. I felt prosecuting Ellsberg was out of proportion to the offense, and bad politics, too. We were coming into an election, and it was giving a platform to his [Ellsberg's] point of view which was inimical to the President."

"We had to respond to Ellsberg, and my idea was more devious. I wanted us to have Ziegler announce that we discovered Ellsberg did not steal the Pentagon Papers. That would have shifted the burden onto Ellsberg. Besides, I think somebody at the New York Times stole the actual documents which got into print. Ellsberg's theft was separate."

In early summer of 1971, according to Ehrlichman, Kissinger was vehement over Ellsberg, pointing out that he also had the Vietnam option papers and the U. S. nuclear deterrent targeting plans. Nixon had assigned

Ehrlichman the job of investigating the Ellsberg situation and leaks, so there were meetings in John's office.

"Kissinger attended a number of these," Ehrlichman said, "and there are in existence in the Nixon papers records of Henry's rather vigorous insistence that something be done about Ellsberg. At other times, Henry was upset about Ellsberg in front of the President and that's on tape."

"Al Haig sat in for Henry at some of these meetings. So either he or Henry were discreetly involved in the Plumbers, though that name was never used. Henry was aware there was a unit organized to deal with the Ellsberg problem."

"Once Henry and I had a spirited argument over whether his aide, David Young, should be a part of it. Henry had no objection to the activities of our unit; he just didn't want David in it."

"It was finally argued aboard a helicopter en route to San Clemente, and the President said, 'Oh, Henry, it isn't that important. Let's go ahead and do this.' That's where it was decided on David Young . . .

"Henry had all sorts of stories about the nonconformist life Ellsberg led, and the problems Rand [the California think tank] had with him, and basically what an unreliable guy he was. This was the foundation for the unit to go to California to find out what sort of bird he was and what sorts of facts could be developed as to what he would do in the future—what his motives were. It had to be done by somebody."

"Kissinger was the moving and efficient force that caused the push on Ellsberg. I don't know, however, that Henry was aware that the unit was sent out in lieu of the FBI. But he assumed it was being taken care of by somebody, by some government entity."

What happened next, back there in 1971, is why Ehrlichman is at Safford prison now. Krogh and Young, now with Howard Hunt and E. Gordon Liddy aboard, sent Ehrlichman a memo dated August 11 recommending "that a covert operation be undertaken to examine" the medical files held by Ellsberg's psychiatrist, Dr. Lewis J. Fielding, in Beverly Hills. In the space for "Approve," Ehrlichman entered "E" and

he sketched buildings, and took notes about their details, so his descriptions would be richer. He turned in about 100 pages of manuscript before he entered prison. He tries to conceal his pleasure over the good reception his first work got.

No scorecard is required to identify the characters in *The Company* (a code term for the CIA). President Richard Monckton is profane, ornery, overly suspicious, susceptible to fatigue and can't take much alcohol. He is Richard Nixon. National Security adviser Dr. Carl Tessler is a former Harvard professor turned egomaniac so no clues are necessary. Oh well, throw away the names of Ehrlichman's characters. This work of fiction is peopled by Richard Helms, Bob Haldeman, E. Howard Hunt, John Ehrlichman and others, including Spiro Agnew.

What surprised many with an aversion to Ehrlichman is that his book is well done, and displays a professional

But it is not where John Ehrlichman departs. He seems obsessed with the CIA. His book reflects that. He scans the dailies and clips everything about the agency. It is the one entity which can unrelax him.

"I read everything I can get my hands on about the CIA," he told me. "The CIA had a heavy hand in the Ellsberg case. Their subterfuge, and in some cases, their downright falsehood in covering up their involvement, really got to me."

Ehrlichman won't name the names of his CIA villains on the record, but according to sworn testimony, Ehrlichman had a number of contacts with the CIA, particularly with Brigadier General Robert E. Cushman, the deputy director. Ehrlichman becomes exasperated in trying to describe his travail, and sputters about CIA officials "with connections to the Fielding (break-in) case."

What probably angers Ehrlichman most is that he

Quote-Acrostic

(Milton) Berle: Best comedienne Lucille Ball... She's a tremendous perfectionist who's always paying her dues, rehearsing and rehearsing even after she became a superstar... she's the most multi-faceted comedienne-actress since Marie Dressler.

Word List

- A—Bugloss
- B—Eisenhower
- C—Recess
- D—Laces
- E—Erie Canal
- F—Titles
- G—Highs
- H—Ethan Frome
- I—Bosc
- J—Enterprise
- K—Seis
- L—Tempered
- M—Chess
- N—Off chance
- O—Massour
- P—Edgar Award
- Q—Depths
- R—Ill-devised
- S—Emmentaler
- T—Nurseryman
- U—Neutrality
- V—Euthanasia

Cryptogram

Cabbie took girl friend for unforgettable ride around race track.

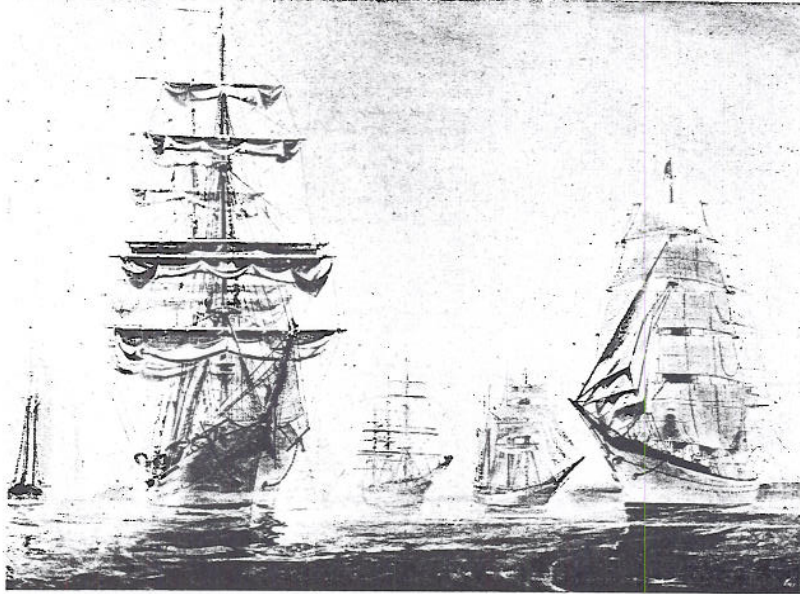
Chess

1 Q-K3! threatening N-K5. If 1... RxQch 2 NxQ. If 1... N-B4 1 N-R5. If 1... N-N4 2 RxP. If 1... NxP 2 N-Q6. If 1... N-K3 2 QxB. Bob Lincoln, USA.

Crossword



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The Washington Post/Potomac/January 2, 1977

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Gerrald E. Bauer, Dallas, Tx.

"I have just received a print of the 'Tall Ships' by Kipp Soldwedel from my niece. It is truly a lovely work of art. It is in my foyer and has added much charm to that area. I am sure that other people

below it penned, "If done under your assurance that it is not traceable."

To this day Ehrlichman insists that he didn't know the "covert" operation was going to be a burglary. He claims that there are at least fifteen ways insurance adjusters manage to look at private records without violating someone's civil rights or pulling a break-in. Krogh told me: "John never specified break-in. He never used those words."

When prosecutors learned about the Fielding break-in, Ehrlichman had David Young get the files out for him. Ehrlichman did not know that Young also made copies of the damaging memos for himself, altered some and then turned them over to the prosecutor in return for immunity. Consequently, Ehrlichman's sworn statements were somewhat at odds with the facts the prosecutor already had, and he was indicted for perjury, lying to the FBI, and conspiring to violate the civil rights of Dr. Fielding.

"Young flat-out lied," Ehrlichman says now. "He stole those documents and lied under oath about the memos and conversations with me. I didn't mind him talking if he had only told the truth."

Ehrlichman has little respect for Young, who was out of sight during much of the Watergate uproar. After his court appearance, Young left quickly for England, where he now lives. William H. Merrill, who prosecuted the Plumbers, says, "Young was protecting Kissinger."

Interestingly, Ehrlichman voices no hard feelings about Kissinger. He observed that "the pressure Henry put on the President about Ellsberg" caused the White House response, and adds that "Kissinger was not aware of the break-in, nor was I, until afterwards. But even then, it could be just-

fied on a national security basis."

Ehrlichman hasn't given up on the Plumbers case. The U. S. Court of Appeals in May 1976 reversed the convictions of Bernard L. Barker and Eugenio R. Martinez, who helped perform the Fielding burglary, on the grounds that, in effect, they were operation at the discretion of the "superiors," namely, Hunt, Liddy and Ehrlichman. Ehrlichman's lawyers feel that since the U. S. Supreme Court must soon take on the question of "warrantless entry"—break-ins by the CIA and the FBI for "national security"—they will also have to consider Ehrlichman's case.

In striving to get the "national security" argument into his trial, Ehrlichman asked that White House papers and tapes be subpoenaed. At one point Judge Gesell demanded that the White House submit, under the Brady rule, any materials which were exculpatory in the Plumbers case, but set restrictions on what had to be produced. Gesell had already ruled that national security was not a defense.

The White House complied, but the materials did not satisfy Ehrlichman. Presidential counsel J. Fred Buzhardt then signed an affidavit that he familiarized himself with the case, had examined the subpoenaed notes, and concluded that the materials already sent were sufficient to bear on the question of Ehrlichman's innocence or guilt.

The Watergate prosecutors had intimated to Buzhardt that some of his actions on behalf of the President were pushing the margins of what a lawyer could ethically do. Ehrlichman's lawyers saw this situation as a threat to Buzhardt and believe Buzhardt was playing ball with the prosecutors to protect himself

Ehrlichman says he made many mistakes in the Watergate situation, but admits no guilt. If any member of the Nixon White House had as much overview of what generically came to be called "Watergate," as Nixon did, it was Ehrlichman. The seeds of the tragedy were in the Plumbers operation because the same operatives later did the Watergate break-in.

I was out of the Water-

gate break-in situation for months and months," Ehrlichman said. "Nixon told me Dean was handling it, and for me to stay out. I got into it when McCord's letter to Sirica broke. I was charged, though, with conspiring with a bunch of people from June 17, 1972, on.

"The specific acts by me were supposed to be the conversations with Dean where he said I told him to get Hunt out of the country, and later to 'deep six' the contents of Hunt's safe. A conversation with Kalmbach was the basis of another charge. Those conversations never took place. Colson testified that it was Dean who volunteered to him that he had told Hunt to get out of the country, so that corroborated my testimony.

"It came down to a credibility question, between individuals. Remember the temper of the times. When I walked in and out of that courthouse I was booed and people spit at me. Washington had a pressure-cooker climate."

A year before, Ehrlichman defended Nixon in his senate testimony. But in 1974, he says, "My faith in Nixon greatly diminished. I had to sit there, day after day after day, and listen to the tapes for my attorneys, and I heard conversations that I wasn't party to, between Nixon and other people, and some developed facts that were diametrically opposite to representations that he had made to me. That shook my confidence.

"I got a trapped feeling before I left the White House in 1973 because the President told me that Henry Peterson reports that John Dean says, you did this and you did this. I said, 'Good night, Dean is plea-bargaining and he is trying to deliver people's heads on a plate.' The President said, 'Yeah, but I've got to be concerned about this.'

"I began to see the difficulty I was in. That's why I got Wilson for a lawyer before I left. I never practiced criminal law. I didn't know what conspiracy was or obstruction of justice. It was out of my field."

The Watergate prosecutors have a different story on Ehrlichman's role in the cover-up. When the facts were sorted out, it was clear to them that in the period right after the Watergate break-in, Ehrlichman was under pres-

sure to keep Howard Hunt happy lest he expose the Plumbers operation, then still undiscovered.

Kalmbach, a White House lawyer who arranged the hush money, testified that on July 26, 1972, Ehrlichman told him how important it was for him to raise money secretly for Hunt and the other Watergate burglars, or "they'd have our heads in their laps." Dean testified that within two days of the break-in, Ehrlichman was told of the meetings where the operation was planned and told that Liddy and Hunt were involved.

Moreover, the Nixon tapes showed Ehrlichman acknowledging to the President that money had been paid to the Watergate break-in defendants to "keep them on the reservation." Finally, Kalmbach testified that on April 6, 1973, he met with Ehrlichman, who told him that the coverup money action should be blamed on Dean. Kalmbach said he told Ehrlichman: "And you, too, John."

In the emotionalism of the period of the Senate Watergate hearings and the subsequent federal trials, Ehrlichman appeared obstinate, arrogant, and righteous. Ehrlichman, in the more relaxed time in Santa Fe before he entered prison, told me:

"I was impacted more by those trials than anything that has ever happened to me. That experience brought forth in me an aspect of vanity and of personal pride. It was very much an attack on my veracity, and a lot of my own image of myself at that time. It was a hard thing to let go. I am fairly well loose of it, at the moment."

The softening of Ehrlichman was first noticed in the last hours of the second trial (the cover-up) when he broke into tears on the witness stand. It was the realization that Nixon had deceived him which made Ehrlichman break down, and even then, he described how Nixon himself had burst into tears when he told Ehrlichman, on April 29, 1973, that he must resign. Ehrlichman recalled that he told Nixon that perhaps one day, he could explain those events to his children.

Ehrlichman was found guilty on a raft of charges. For his part in the cover-up, he was sentenced to serve

thirty months to eight years. The Plumbers case conviction got him twenty months to five years.

Before the trial, Ehrlichman says, "I was optimistic there would be a proper result. I knew it was a problem, but I had confidence in the system, and thought I could get a fair trial. Once the trials were under way, Ehrlichman told me, "the idea that a jury wouldn't believe me, was a very tough thing for me to contemplate. As hokey as the trial was, still the idea that any jury wouldn't believe me... But there was an irrationality existing at that time. It was literally, a runaway jury."

One October afternoon, with the leaves glistening with autumn color, and the sky a limpid blue, I asked the hypothetical question as to how Ehrlichman would react to an offer of a pardon by President Ford.

"I don't have the foggiest idea what he would do," he said. "I would accept such a pardon for purely practical reasons. There has to be an end to this, I'm looking at it from a very personal, pragmatic and financial viewpoint, if that's a quick and easy way out of this thing, fine."

I asked him when he came to this conclusion.

"About twenty minutes after the verdict in the second case," he laughed. "When I realized how heavily the cards were stacked against me."

I asked him whether it was all worth it, the pursuit of Ellsberg, over Lawrence O'Brien, Democratic National Chairman in 1972, the driving curiosity which led to the Watergate break-in?

"I won't answer that," he said firmly, "because the answer goes to the premise of your question and that's the essence of these lawsuits which are still pending. Come back in ten years and let's kick it around."

"John feels sorry, but not guilty," Jeanne Ehrlichman told me one month after her husband entered Safford. "He will survive and do better. I have no plans to visit him, though I'd love to see John. He has to tell me whether it's easier for him to see me."

It is one matter to think about entering prison, and another to contemplate what your life will be like afterwards. Ehrlichman

had pretty much thought that one out too.

"Afterwards, I don't know that anything happens that's different from now," he said, "except that a measure of uncertainty is removed from my life. I'm no less nor more guilty than when I went in. That's a problem for other people. I'm not going to assume the burden of going around trying to persuade them one way or the other."

Ehrlichman will be in his early fifties when he is released from prison—or at least it looks that way—so he has a fair number of years left. "I will live those years with equanimity," he said, smiling again.

"There are so many unrequited activities, projects, curiosities that I have that I had three times as many years left to me, I'd never get them all done. I'm not afraid to make a living. It's not really a problem to make a living in this country, no matter what your circumstances are."

Ehrlichman says he doesn't expect to return to the practice of law. "I can write," he said. "I have two or three books stacked up that I'd like to do. I'm optimistic."

"There are advantages in being unplugged. I never wanted to work for big corporations under any circumstances. If my experience in Washington taught me anything, it was to reaffirm what I learned in the Army—that I am not cut out for that kind of thing."

Ehrlichman says some of the most meaningful, and pleasant experiences he has had in the past two years were with his children. He and his son, Peter, the lawyer, have talked openly about the ordeal, how it has affected the family, and what is ahead.

"I had a session with my sons after I resigned," Ehrlichman recalled. "We went out and sat by the beach for a couple days and talked about all this, and what was liable to happen. I told them then it was a ten-year process from 1973 [to 1983]. That was intuitive, and not analytical."

"I just felt that a thing of that magnitude and passion would take that long to work out. I didn't think there was any reason to get their expectations up, so they wouldn't think this was something that was going to blow over."