

# WATERGATE

The untold story

**SUMMARY:** An author and an attorney from Tampa are locked in a lawsuit that may shed new light on the mother of all political scandals.

By **PHIL WILSON**  
and **MICHAEL FECHTER**  
of The Tampa Tribune 1/19/97

**WASHINGTON** — In the city of special prosecutors, where scandals crop up as often as committee hearings, the one scandal that topped them all this generation refuses to die, even after two decades.

## Watergate.

It lives inside the U.S. District Court in Washington, thanks to a Tampa author and a bitter, five-year libel lawsuit that may eventually rewrite the accepted history of the scandal that took down President Nixon.

The lawsuit, filed by former White House counsel John Dean and his wife, Maureen, has produced thousands of pages of new evidence about the 1972 burglary of the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate hotel and office complex, the break-in that ultimately led prosecutors and congressional investigators to Nixon's front door.

The focus of the Deans' lawsuit is the 1991 book "Silent Coup," written by Len Colodny of Tampa and journalist Robert Getlin.

The book lays the blame for the Watergate burglary and subsequent coverup on Dean, historically considered to be the only White House official who came clean and told the



Some of the main players in the Watergate scandal are, clockwise from top left: Richard Nixon, John Mitchell, John Ehrlichman, Maureen and John Dean, and H.R. Haldeman.

ANDY DORSETT/Tribune art



" 'Silent Coup' provides an interesting approach ... worthy of future investigation."

Archivist Fred Graboske

truth to investigators.

According to the theory put forth by "Silent Coup," Dean masterminded the burglary to collect dirt about the sexual escapades of national Democratic leaders, in an effort to expose a scandal that

would increase his stock in the Nixon White House.

Dean knew the Democrats were using the services of a high-priced Washington prostitution ring — an

See WATERGATE, Page 18 ►

◀ From Page 1

operation run by a Washington madam who was a friend and former roommate of Dean's girlfriend and future wife, Maureen Biner, the book contends.

Many critics initially dismissed "Silent Coup" as a conspiracy-infested hatchet job feeding off the corpse of Watergate. But it has gained supporters among some historians, and the evidence unearthed in the libel suit may erase some of the earlier criticism.

At the very least, the new evidence discredits Dean's version of Watergate. During questioning in this case, Dean even disavowed his memoirs, "Blind Ambition."

Even those not swayed by the book's theories said that "Silent Coup" and the lawsuit have provided new information about Watergate, especially the motives behind the break-in.

"That had never adequately been explained," said Fred Graboske, the archivist for the U.S. Marine Corps who handled the Nixon tapes while he worked at the National Archives.

"Silent Coup" can't "be proved or disproved," Graboske said. But it provides "an interesting approach ... worthy of future investigation."

By attempting to drive a stake through the book's heart, the Deans also opened their own lives to intense scrutiny when they filed the lawsuit. Dean was compelled to testify under oath about his role in Watergate and the different versions he has presented under oath over the

last 25 years.

"What we always wanted was a public debate. We have never claimed 'Silent Coup' was the ultimate truth" about Watergate, said Colodny, the book's co-author. "We wanted an alternative to John Dean as the only version out there."

**NOW HISTORIANS** and journalists can read all the accounts of the affair, examine the evidence contained in the court file and decide for themselves, Colodny said.

John Garrick, the Los Angeles-based attorney representing the Deans, said Colodny is dreaming if he thinks the evidence legitimizes his book.

Garrick said the Deans will be able to dissect Colodny's characterizations "point by point along the way." He declined further comment because the case is still pending.

The Deans also would not comment, although John Dean has called the book "absolute garbage" and a fraud.

So far, no trial date has been set, and given the contentious nature of proceedings so far, there may never be a trial. All parties have been talking about a possible settlement.

Garrick declined to comment about a possible settlement, as did attorneys for the authors. The attorney representing the book's publisher, St. Martin's Press, did not respond to inquiries about the case.

Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy, a defendant in the law-



suit, said he opposes any settlement.

Liddy openly despises Dean, the man whose testimony helped send him to prison for 52 months. A nationally syndicated talk-radio host, Liddy became a defendant because of comments he made while promoting "Silent Coup."

The Deans, Liddy said, want the court file, which includes a 4,500-

page motion filed by Colodny and his lawyers, sealed as part of a settlement agreement. No way, Liddy said. "I want a trial. All the stuff we've accumulated proves what we've been saying. We've got to have a trial to bring it before the American public."

Historically, the break-ins at the Democratic headquarters have been described as an effort by the Nixon re-election team to gather political intelligence on Democratic National Chairman Larry O'Brien.

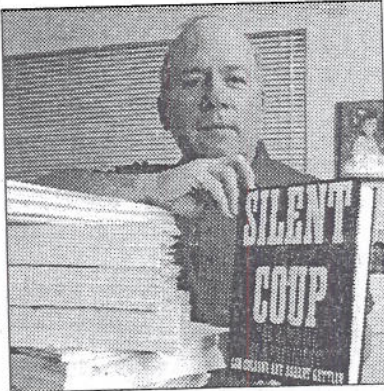
**"SILENT COUP,"** however, contends that the true mission was to learn about the sexual liaisons of Democratic leaders.

In fact, the bugs placed by the Watergate burglars during the first break-in on May 29, 1972 — the one that went undetected by police — targeted a different telephone line, not O'Brien's telephone.

The authors of "Silent Coup" contend the telephone bugged was on the desk of the secretary for

## Watergate: The battle for history

The 1991 publication of "Silent Coup" by Len Colodny and Robert Gettlin presented a different view of the Watergate scandal that cost Richard Nixon his presidency. Former White House counsel John Dean was no longer the conscientious aide that exposed many of the details of the scandal; instead, the book showed him as the instigator for the unsuccessful break-in and subsequent coverup.

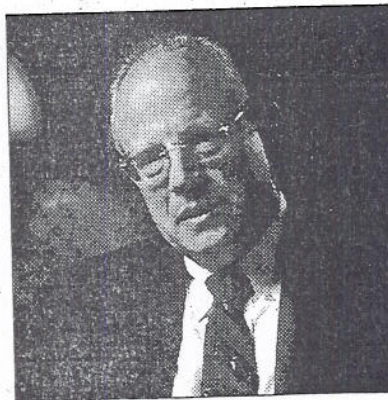


### Len Colodny

The Tampa-based author worked with journalist Robert Gettlin to write "Silent Coup." The book maintains that Dean ordered the June 17, 1972, break-in of the Democratic National Committee in order to find out what the Democrats knew about a call-girl ring whose leader was the roommate of Maureen Biner, then Dean's girlfriend and now his wife. The book and legal research, Colodny says, show the extent of Dean's involvement and the inconsistencies in his testimony and writings.

### John Dean

Dean sued Colodny, Gettlin, St. Martin's Press and Watergate figure G. Gordon Liddy for libel and slander following the publication of "Silent Coup." In a 1996 deposition in the case, Dean said his ghostwriter, Taylor Branch, was responsible for parts of Dean's memoirs that differ greatly from his public testimony. Branch is a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and says he stands by the book, "Blind Ambition." Dean and his wife, Maureen, now live in Southern California.



CAITLIN HOPE WRIGHT/Tribune graphic

Spencer Oliver, then chairman of the Democratic governors' organization. That telephone was used to arrange dates with hookers.

This theory was confirmed, in part, by Watergate conspirator and wiretapper Alfred Baldwin, who acted as a lookout during the break-in. Baldwin is now a state prosecutor in Connecticut, and was the only person involved with the Watergate burglary who was not charged.

In his July 1996 deposition, Baldwin said one of his top priorities was to monitor wiretapped conversations of a "sexual nature."

Caught squarely in the middle of all of this was Tampa attorney John F. Rudy II.

In 1972, Rudy was an assistant U.S. attorney and in the midst of a high-profile investigation involving Phillip M. Bailey, a Washington criminal lawyer known for representing and consorting with local prostitutes. Bailey was accused of a variety of offenses, including sex crimes against young women.

Bailey was indicted by a grand jury in Washington on June 9, 1972, almost two weeks after the first Wa-



tergate break-in.

A story about the indictment ran in the Washington Star, reporting that Rudy's investigation also found that Bailey headed a high-priced call-girl ring staffed by secretaries from Capitol Hill and linked to at least one White House employee.

**THE DAY** the story ran, Rudy was summoned to the White House to meet with John Dean, according to Rudy's 1996 depositions. Dean wanted to review the evidence in the case to see how the White House may be involved, a highly unusual request during an ongoing criminal case.

In the book and depositions, Rudy said Dean was most interested in Bailey's address books, which listed his friends, clients and prostitutes. Dean made copies of the books, Rudy said.

At least one of those address books contained the name "Clout 18."

In a taped interview with Colodny, Rudy said "Clout 18" was a nickname for Maureen Biner — Maureen Dean's name before she married John Dean. Bailey also confirmed this in a taped interview with Colodny.

But in his 1996 deposition, Rudy said he never said this to Colodny.

See LAWSUIT, Page 19 ►

---

#### 4 From Page 18

Instead, Rudy said, someone had altered the tapes of the interviews in that instance and many others.

Last week, Rudy refused to comment about his role in the case.

During the deposition, Rudy said he remembered identifying "Clout 18" during the investigation, but he couldn't say for certain it was Maureen Biner. He believes her name could have been "Maureen Biner, Maureen Binner, Maureen Bower."

Within two weeks after Dean copied the address books, burglars were back inside the Democratic committee headquarters at the Watergate.

One of the burglars, Eugenio Martinez, was caught with a key to a staffer's desk.

Dean ordered the second break-in — the one in which the burglars got caught — to protect himself and his girlfriend from being hurt if the Democrats chose to disclose these relationships, the authors of "Silent Coup" concluded.

Rudy testified in the libel suit that his boss abruptly killed the investigation into the Democrats' link with the call-girl ring, because the Nixon administration didn't want to be accused of digging up dirt on the Democrats during the Watergate break-in investigation.

**THE DEANS** contend the authors of "Silent Coup" invented this theory out of thin air. The book is based on questionable information from unreliable people, including Bailey, a convicted sex offender, or those who have made no secret of their loathing for John Dean, they say.

Colodny and Gettlin said they used a variety of sources in their research, including Dean's book "Blind Ambition," along with Watergate books by other administration officials and journalists.

They contrasted Dean's book to



Tribune file photo (1973)

During testimony in Senate hearings in June 1973, John Dean said President Nixon was involved in Watergate. Today, Dean says that only his Senate testimony is accurate, not his own book, "Blind Ambition."

his testimony before the Senate Watergate committee and in the criminal trial of former Attorney General John Mitchell. But most of the information in "Silent Coup" came from interviews, almost all audio taped, Colodny conducted with administration officials, police and others involved in the affair.

**QUESTIONED IN** depositions about discrepancies in his Senate and trial testimony and his book, "Blind Ambition," Dean disavowed his book.

Dean said his ghostwriter, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Taylor Branch, made up some sections of the book "out of whole cloth." His Senate testimony, Dean said, is the

only accurate version of his view on Watergate.

When reached last week, Branch said Dean approved everything in "Blind Ambition," which was written while Branch lived in Dean's house.

**"EVERY MORNING** we would do tapings and discussions and I would draft all day and he would read what I would write," Branch said. "The collaboration was intense. Very intense."

Branch stands by the book and calls Dean "the Judas figure" of Watergate, "a convenient vehicle for anyone who wants to reinterpret history and make him the bad guy."