

Ten years later, the buffs are still on the case.

## AH, WATERGATE!

BY RON ROSENBAUM

"I AM AWARE," H. R. Haldeman writes, "that there is a cult of people in this country who collect every scrap of information about Watergate because of its many fascinating mysteries." He's more than aware: his memoir, *The Ends of Power*, is a seething nest of almost every conceivable scrap of Watergate conspiracy theory developed to date. The Democratic Trap Theory, the CIA Trap Theory, the Black-mail Demand Theory: you name it, H. R. Bob buys it. Indeed, the former chief of staff is nothing if not a buff himself, and he spices his book with tantalizing buff-to-buff hints for further investigation of the "fascinating mysteries." "I'll only pause to bring out one more fact about the \$350,000," he teases, "this one for the Watergate buffs. . . ."

Although such recognition is welcome, the tone of the reference is regrettably uncharitable. By calling serious students of Watergate a "cult" of "buffs," he is, of course, lumping us with the much-abused "assassination buffs" and the aura of bad taste and futility that is associated with their efforts.

But there is a difference between these two domains of buffdom. Perhaps because—as Nixon partisans like to remind us—"nobody drowned at Watergate," the conjectures and conspiracy theories that have sprung

Ron Rosenbaum wrote the "Wallowing in Watergate" column for the *Village Voice*, and later a novel, *Murder at Elaine's*, in which the mystery is resolved by the contents of the eighteen-minute tape gap. His latest book is *Rebirth of the Salesman: Tales of the Song & Dance '70s* (Delta).

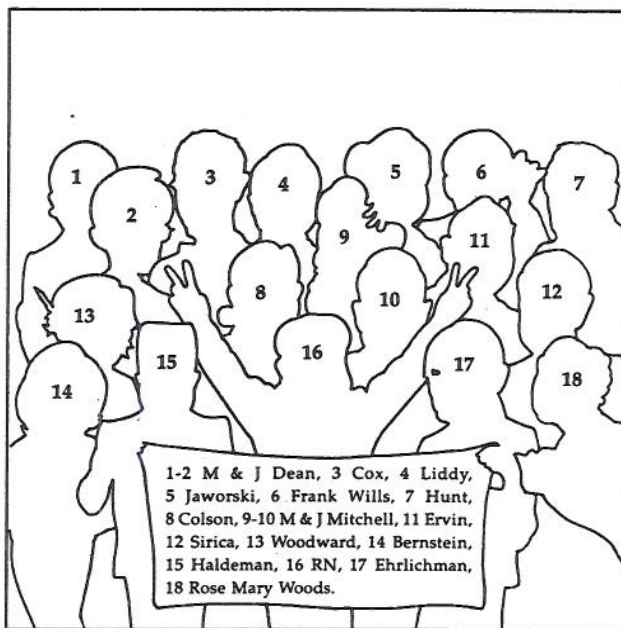
up in its wake lack the taint of ghoulishness that has continued to plague grassy knoll theories, the most recent excrescence of which (David Lifton's *Best Evidence*) insists on conjuring up a gruesome postmortem surgical alteration of the fatal wounds to fit a favored bullet trajectory theory. Although certain Watergate theorists venture equally far into fantasy (I have in my

Watergate collection a curious vanity press volume called *The Journal of Judith Beck Stein*, written by a former patient in the Chesnut Lodge sanitarium, which seems to allege that the entire Watergate conspiracy and cover-up was engineered to cheat her out of a legacy and silence her exposure of the banking system), the eyes of Watergate buffs tend to twinkle rather than stare. Ours is a civilized passion.

Who, then, are the Watergate buffs? Not, as you might expect, a coterie of Nixon-haters still savoring each delectable detail of his demise,

"wallowing in Watergate," as the ex-President put it. No, many of the most relentless and dedicated Watergate buffs are pro-Nixon revisionists determined to prove that the whole episode was a dirty trick perpetrated upon, rather than by, Richard Nixon. (Reed Irvine's *Accuracy in Media* newsletter has tirelessly pursued the Democratic Trap Theory for seven years now.)

Some of us are reporters who were stationed in Washington for the thrilling Final Days, and have developed a lasting taste for the arcana, however tangential, of the case. I, for example, can claim credit for being the first to uncover both a prophetic mention of Watergate in the Bible and an anticipation of the



DRAWING BY ALLEN CARROLL FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC



Plumbers Squad in the historical etymology of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In the Book of Nehemiah (Ne:8:1) the people of Israel gather after their return from Babylonian exile to hear the prophet Ezra read the law of Moses to them for the first time since they regained their freedom. Where do they gather to hear the Word? At the entrance to Jerusalem known as "the Watergate." And the *O.E.D.* offers an eerie foreshadowing of the substance of the twentieth-century scandal in the eighteenth-century usage of the verb "watergate": to void urine. That is, in effect, to leak.

Though studies of this sort may seem inadmissibly mystical to some, there are hard-nosed investigators among the buffs as well: former prosecutors, Congressional staffers, politicians—even an ex-President, the greatest buff of them all. All are united by undiminished delight in the "fascinating mysteries" to which H. R. Bob refers. And in fact there are genuine gaps in our knowledge that are more extensive than anything any eighteen minutes of tape could supply. There are obvious questions (quick: who ordered the break-in?) and subtle ones (just what was missing from the "Bay of Pigs report" that Richard Helms finally turned over to

Richard Nixon, and how did it shape the outcome of the CIA cover story fabricated in the famous "smoking gun" tape?). And there are more esoteric excursions into the ambiguities of the evidence. Did the White House tamper with the birth certificate of the alleged "love child" of George McGovern? Who was private eye Woolsten-Smith's source of information in The November Group? And what was the mysterious "red box" the President keeps harping on in his September 15, 1972, talk with John Dean? ("What is the situation on the little red box?" asks P. "Have they found the box yet?" Could this be a childhood toy—Nixon's Rosebud?) Finally, of course, there are the larger motivational questions: was the downfall of the President pure self-destruction, or was he undermined by subterranean power struggles which have yet to be fully

analyzed? (See "How Nixon Got Strung Up," by Nicholas von Hoffman, page 24.)

Some buffs will stop at nothing in an effort to find some rational explanation for the actions of Richard Nixon. Consider the heroic efforts of Professor Douglas Muzzio, author of *Watergate Games*, an attempt to translate major Watergate turning points into mathematical game theory decision matrixes. Game theory proves, according to Muzzio, that far from acting as he did "because he was 'mad' or 'needed to fail,'" RN "acted rationally in response to events and actions by other Watergate players." Even if the professor's "payoff matrixes" and "decision trees" fall short of convincing us of that conclusion, he is an extraordinarily well-read buff, and his analysis of the other "Watergate players" is often illuminating. Take, for instance, the game theory rationale he constructs to rehabilitate the much maligned original Watergate prosecutor, Earl Silbert. Muzzio claims that a Silbert prosecutorial "ploy"—tricking Dean into believing Liddy was already talking—was the key to cracking the case. If you find that hard to believe, just study Professor Muzzio's chart of the game at left.

While such reductionist efforts are good

for a chuckle, the idea that all Watergate mysteries were "solved" by the smoking gun is no less laughable. In fact (and this is what raises Watergate cultists from buffdom to scholarship) there is still uncharted territory to be explored. With that in mind, let's take a brisk tenth anniversary wallow in the muddled fields of Watergate theory and survey the state of the art in the kingdoms of conjecture built by the buffs.

Foreknowledge Theory, in its many forms, has been a consistent growth area of buffdom over the past ten years—a steady performer compared to, say, Deep Throat Theory, which proceeds by fits and starts of guesswork. Foreknowledge Theory has blossomed into a major revisionist heresy. In its "Democratic Trap" variation, it's become a vehicle for the quest of

**a. LIDDY-DEAN GAME  
BEFORE SILBERT DECEPTION**

		DEAN		
		COOPERATE	DEFECT	
LIDDY (actual preferences)	COOPERATE	A. (4,4) (1)	B. 3,3 (3)	← Dean has no dominant strategy; anticipates Liddy's choice of "cooperate" strategy.
	DEFECT	C. C,1 (x)	D. D,2 (4)	

↑  
Liddy has dominant "cooperate" strategy.

**b. APPARENT LIDDY-DEAN  
AFTER SILBERT DECEPTION**

		DEAN		
		COOPERATE	DEFECT	
LIDDY (Silbert)	COOPERATE	A. 2,4 (1)	B. 1,4 (3)	← Liddy has (apparent) dominant "defect" strategy.
	DEFECT	C. 4,1 (x)	D. (3,2) (4)	

↑  
Dean has no dominant strategy; anticipates Liddy's choice of "defect" strategy.

**NOTE:**

1. x, y Liddy (Silbert), Dean.
2. Liddy's ranking of outcomes C and D in 1.9a is unknown. Any of three possible rankings (A,C,B,D), (A,B,D,C) or (A,B,C,D) produce the same result given the strict preference of both A and B to C and D respectively, for Liddy.
3. Dean's perception of Liddy's ranking of the 1.9b outcomes is assumed to be (C,D,A,B).
4. Silbert's preferences (in parentheses) are (D,B,A) in both games. Outcome C is not considered since Liddy's defection is not real, hence, (x).
5. The circled outcomes are the rational outcomes.

FROM "WATERGATE GAMES" (NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1982)



die-hard Nixon loyalists for historical vindication. Trap Theory traces its origins to seven volumes of executive session testimony taken by Howard Baker's minority staff of the Senate Watergate committee. (The seven volumes, which have come to be known among foreknowledge buffs as "The Seven Volumes," are not to be confused with "The Baker Report," a separate minority staff investigation which, when reinvestigated by the Nedzi Committee of the House, developed into the CIA Foreknowledge Theory.) The Seven Volumes tell a provocative and fairly well-corroborated story of Watergate-eve intrigue among RN's enemies. The story begins with a British-born, New York-based private eye named A. J. Woolsten-Smith, who came to Kennedy Democrat William Haddad in April 1972 with what he said was reliable information that the Republicans had targeted a sophisticated spy operation against the Democratic National Committee. Haddad introduced Woolsten-Smith to Larry O'Brien's DNC deputy and to Jack Anderson. In conversations with them, specific tips about the Watergate target and the Cuban composition of the break-in team were passed along. It also happened that Jack Anderson was an old friend of Frank Sturgis and ran into him at National Airport the night before the break-in, just as Sturgis was arriving from Miami with the Cubans in order to make their second entry into O'Brien's office—the one that would end with their arrest and the beginning of Richard Nixon's fall.

**A**T THIS POINT, the foreknowledge scenario becomes more speculative. The man who led the cops into Watergate to arrest the burglars, one Officer Shoffler, is said to have signed up for an unusual second eight-hour tour of duty that night. Shoffler turns out to be the closest cop to the Watergate when the guard, Frank Wills, called police headquarters. An acquaintance of Officer Shoffler, one Edmund T. Chung, testifies that in a post-Watergate dinner conversation he got the "impression that Shoffler had advance knowledge of the break-in." According to the Trap Theory, the Democrats learned about the first, May 27, break-in and bugging after it was over and contrived a plan to lure the Committee to Reelect the President (CREEP) team back into Watergate on June 17, at which point they tipped off the cops. How did they lure them back in? With the malfunctioning bug on Larry O'Brien's phone. According to Reed Irvine, that bug "may not have died a natural death." In other words, the Democrats exterminated the bug to lure the CREEP repair team back to be trapped in the act.

Other possible tipsters to Officer Shoffler postulated by other variations of Foreknowledge Theory include Jack Anderson, the CIA, Howard Hughes's p.r. man Robert Bennett, or a double agent on the break-in team itself (usually identified as McCord). If all the people with alleged foreknowledge *had* actually decided to tip off the cops and trap the burglars, you'd think at least

one of them would have been able to get through to Officer Shoffler. But Shoffler flatly denies being tipped off, and there is no smoking gun to contradict him. Foreknowledge Theory, in consequence, has bogged down in fanciful embellishments of the supposed Democratic (or CIA or Jack Anderson) conspiracy to trick Dick Nixon. For the most part, foreknowledge has degenerated into inconclusive foreplay.

**O**NE PERSON who hasn't given up on foreknowledge, however, is Richard Nixon. In *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, a volume which is unquestionably the masterwork of Watergate buffery, RN claims that shortly before he resigned he became aware of "new information that the Democrats had prior knowledge and that the Hughes organization might be involved. . . . And there were stories of strange alliances" between his enemies and moles within the White House. It is easy to see the appeal of Foreknowledge Theory for Nixon. It's the embodiment of the darkest Nixonian fantasies: a hideous congeries of his hypocritical enemies use dirty tricks to lure him into essaying a dirty trick himself, then stumble over themselves in the shadows in their haste to call the cops.

In fact, the more you pursue Foreknowledge Theory, the more it begins to seem as if Richard Nixon was the only person in Washington who *didn't* know about the break-in ahead of time. Which brings us to a surprisingly stagnant and neglected subdivision of Foreknowledge Theory, the Richard Nixon Foreknowledge Question: did RN order the break-in or approve it in advance?

Of course, we have RN's word for it that he didn't. Moreover, RN claims that this has been *proved conclusively*. How so? The release of the White House edited transcripts back in 1974, he writes in *RN*, "proved conclusively that I had not known about the break-in in advance." In other words, because RN is not heard *confessing* to ordering the break-in on tape, because he denies it several times (when he knew he was being recorded), it's been proved that he didn't do it. RN frequently shores up this "proof" with copious citations from his "diary entries" immediately after the break-in. Time after time, it seems, he confided to his diary his total bewilderment at the strange and unexpected news that anyone would want to bug the Democratic National Committee.

Most Watergate investigators have been content to let RN by with this Big Surprise version of his reaction, there being no concrete evidence to the contrary. Neither the Ervin Committee, the Impeachment Committee, the Woodstein team, nor the Special Prosecutor's office had evidence or belief enough to conclude that RN knew in advance. The only Watergate observer to take an unequivocal *Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!* stand on Nixonian foreknowledge has been Mary McCarthy. Why so shy, the rest of them? Perhaps they



# WATERGATE THEORY & CONJECTURE

[A COMPENDIUM]

**BIG BRIBE THEORY:** The only explanation for the disproportion between the cover-up and the third-rate burglary is that RN was concealing—and still conceals—an even more brazen and corrupt act than any reported. RN's professed fear that LBJ bugged his '68 contacts with Dragon Lady Claire Chennault is a clue to the possibility that a big "gift" to RN by South Vietnamese diehards to encourage him to continue the war is the real "White House horror." (Renata Adler)

**BIG CABAL THEORY:** During "vacations" in South Florida in the 1940s and 1950s, RN became part of nexus of gamblers, gangsters, and Cuban casino interests that included Meyer Lansky, Howard Hughes, Bebe Rebozo, and the CIA. Watergate was fallout of falling out among these factions in aftermath of JFK and Castro assassination plots. (Howard Kohn)

**BIG DEAL ON ROMAINE STREET THEORY:** RN was obsessed by fear that defeated Hughes deputy Robert Maheu would feed damaging info about the Hughes loan and the secret Rebozo money channel to RN enemies such as Larry O'Brien. The damaging Hughes/Maheu documents which RN feared were stored in O'Brien's Watergate office or Hank Greenspun's Las Vegas safe were actually stashed in Hughes's old Romaine Street headquarters in L.A. Two months before RN resigned, burglars broke into the Romaine Street place. They stole a huge treasury of handwritten Hughes memos which has reportedly ended up in the hands of investigative reporter Michael Drosnin whose forthcoming book will reveal the material RN feared most. (Published reports)

**CIA VENGEANCE THEORY:** From the beginning of his first term RN had been pestering CIA Director Richard Helms to deliver the dirt implicating JFK in Castro assassination plots. Helms held out, threatening to expose RN's own role in Eisenhower

planning for related plots. By the time RN fired Helms in 1973, the agency had already engineered his downfall by using its plants to expose "White House horrors" and sowing confusion with false blackmail demands. (Ehrlichman, Halde- man, Colson, RN, and others)

**COLORED SHIRTS AT THE FBI THEORY:** Rebellious deputies at FBI headquarters, angry at RN appointee Pat Gray for liberalizing Hoover's white-shirts-only formality, leaked Watergate details to the press to show RN Gray couldn't control the Bureau, hoping thereby to get Gray fired and replaced by a no-colored-shirt traditionalist. (Edward Jay Epstein)

**GRASSY KNOLL CONNECTION THEORY:** Howard Hunt and Frank Sturgis were the "mystery tramps" photographed being arrested near the grassy knoll a few minutes after JFK was shot. (A. J. Weberman)

**JAMES McCORD DOUBLE AGENT THEORY:** The break-in and bugging were so thoroughly bungled it had to be deliberate. CIA loyalist McCord must have been acting under Company instructions to sabotage RN's intelligence operation and later, in post-arrest communications, kept the Company apprised of the cover-up. (Jim Hougan, Frank Sturgis)

**OCCULT CURSE THEORY:** Gordon Liddy won his spurs as law-and-order toughie by spying on and raiding Timothy Leary's Millbrook, N.Y., commune. Watergate is RN's punishment for cosmic bad karma incurred by bringing Liddy into the White House. (Timothy Leary)

**REVENGE OF HO CHI MINH THEORY:** Almost all the "White House horrors" can be traced to secret conduct of the war and secret persecution of war protestors such as Ellsberg. Immorality of the war led to immoral domestic actions exposed and punished by Watergate. (Tom Hayden)

**SELF-PARDON THEORY:** RN forced

Ford's hand on the pardon by threatening to cause constitutional chaos with self-pardon power. On August 1, 1974, one week before resignation, Fred Buzhardt tells Haig (see *The Final Days*) that he's researched the question and the President has the power to pardon himself. RN writes out pardon and puts it in sealed envelope, then tells Haig if he gets guarantee of pardon from Ford he'll forget about self-pardon, resign, and go quietly. Otherwise, even if he's out of office, he'll produce envelope, revealing that while still President he pardoned himself and everyone else in the Watergate case. Checkmate. Ford accepts, agrees never to discuss the negotiation. (R. R.)

**THE CAIN AND ABEL THEORY:** Something more than a big bribe or conventional corruption is necessary to explain RN's guilt-ridden response to almost everything—including things of which he's not guilty. A shocking and disturbing suggestion about the "mysterious death" of RN's younger brother Arthur by RN biographer Fawn Brodie is her effort to explain it all. Brodie cites RN's changing recollections of the cause of young Arthur's death (when RN was just a lad). In one version, Arthur was struck by a rock "thrown by another boy," according to RN. Could the "other boy" be RN? Only evidence Brodie offers to support this are characteristic RN denials ("I am confident that if the rock throwing story is in fact true, it did not produce a fatal concussion and it had nothing to do with Arthur's death which was from tubercular meningitis," an RN spokesman told Brodie after consulting with RN). In addition, Brodie cites RN description of the devious nature of the Communist mind in *Six Crises*: "If we accuse X of having killed his mother, two brothers, and five friends, X's friends would shout back, 'That's a lie! X only wounded one brother.' The counterattack would be on, with attention diverted from the five friends and the other brother X had indeed, actually killed." (Halde- man's notes on what was said during the 18-minute gap cite RN calling for a "p.r. counterattack" and demanding "diversion." Could the gap contain the smoking gun on the Arthur case?)



don't want to be perceived as knee-jerk Nixon-haters eager to believe the worst about RN. Perhaps everyone is still waiting for another smoking gun to surface.

Well, another smoking gun *has* surfaced, it just hasn't been obtained yet. I came across a clue to its existence and whereabouts in Haldeman's book. If Haldeman is to be believed, the decisive testimony on the RN Foreknowledge Question may be on tape—but not a White House tape. Haldeman writes that he learned of this potentially explosive tape from Ken Clawson, the former *Washington Post* reporter who'd become an aide to Chuck Colson and later was promoted by RN to head the White House p.r. operation during the Final Days. According to Haldeman, an anguished, conscience-stricken Clawson came to him in May 1973, shortly after the chief of staff was forced to resign by RN, and told him: "Chuck Colson is blackmailing Nixon. He's got Nixon on the floor. Nixon didn't know that Colson was taping all of his telephone calls with Nixon *before and after* Watergate happened. He's got on tape just what Nixon said all through the whole Watergate mess."

Now, the novelty of this putative evidence is not in the blackmail revelation (everyone in the White House was blackmailing everyone else by that time), nor is it in the fact there are tapes of Colson and RN. It is that, unlike the thousands of pages of White House tapes we already have, RN *did not know his Colson calls were being taped*. He made four calls to Colson from Key Biscayne in the twenty-four hours after he learned about the break-in arrests: nearly two hours of talk with Colson would be on these Colson tapes, but not on the White House tapes. RN tells us that, according to his "diary," Watergate was not discussed in those four calls. He and Colson talked about George Meany. About the polls. About the press. He just can't recall anything about Watergate. "Watergate," RN writes, "was the furthest thing from my mind."

If Colson did make tapes of those calls, and if he didn't destroy them as a relic of his sinful past when he got religion, then it's safe to assume they're stashed in a Colson-controlled safe deposit box somewhere. The contents of that safe deposit box would probably prove in his own words whether RN had that all-important foreknowledge, and how actively and immediately he collaborated in the subsequent cover-up. It would change our entire understanding of the internal dynamics of the collapse of a government.

**A**MONG THE DELIGHTS of buffdom are the unexpected discoveries one makes about apparently unrelated Watergate mysteries while tracing a single strand of the tangled web. And so it was that, while pursuing the question of Clawson's motives in telling the Colson blackmail story, I came across a surprising Clawson reference in *All the President's Men* which seemed to clinch the case for Clawson as the elusive Deep Throat. To all but the most deeply versed initi-

ates of Deep Throat mysteries, the passage was an innocuous bit of background on Clawson: "Wallace had been shot by Bremer about 4 p.m.," Woodward and Bernstein write. "By 6:30 a *Post* editor had learned the name of the would-be assassin from White House official Ken Clawson."

This sent me searching madly for *Washington Post* (and Woodstein) editor Barry Sussman's book *The Great Cover-up*, where, I recalled, Sussman provides the only intra-*Post* clue to Deep Throat's identity. I found it. It looked like the clincher at last: "On May 15, 1972, hours after George Wallace was shot," Sussman writes, "we at the *Post* had not learned the name of the man who shot the Alabama governor. Woodward mentioned to me that he had 'a friend' who might be able to help. As we began to get into the Watergate scandal, 'my friend' as Woodward called him, came to play a mysterious, a crucial role. Over the months, 'Bob's friend' became more and more important to us and Howard Simons gave him a new name: 'Deep Throat.'"

**I**T LOOKED AS THOUGH I'd cracked the Throat case: Clawson was the guy who got Bremer's name for a *Post* editor. Woodward's editor says the source from whom Woodward got Bremer's name for the *Post* later became known as Deep Throat. In the movie version of *All the President's Men*, which was made in close consultation with Woodward, Robert Redford appeals to Deep Throat by reminding him, "You helped me out on the Wallace thing."

I was ready to tell the other Deep Throat theorists to close up shop. But I still had just enough doubt—Clawson had a reputation as an unusually rabid Nixon loyalist—that I decided to violate a cardinal rule of buffdom: I made some phone calls. (Buffs, unlike mere reporters, do not make phone calls except to other buffs. They are content with the pleasures of the text, the wealth of resonances already in the literature.)

When I tried to track down Clawson through fellow RN loyalist Victor Lasky (author of *It Didn't Start With Watergate*), I learned that Clawson had fallen ill several years ago and Lasky had lost contact with him. Lasky thought my clue intriguing but had his doubts about Clawson as Throat. "He was one of the last ones to go down in the bunker," Lasky told me. "He was defending the Old Man right down to the last minute. It makes no sense to me—*unless he was putting on the act of acts...*" (My emphasis.)

At the *Post*, Barry Sussman confirmed that Woodward had turned to his "friend" for help with the Bremer name, but wouldn't say for sure that "Bob's friend" had actually been the one to succeed in getting the Wallace suspect's name—in other words, Deep Friend wasn't necessarily Clawson.

What about the line in the movie: "You helped me with Wallace"? Sussman thought that the director of the movie, Alan J. Pakula, might have gotten that



detail from Sussman's own book rather than from Woodward. Or that he might have been wrong about the Bremer source being one and the same as Deep Throat. Sussman didn't like the Clawson theory at all. Of course, Sussman would not *want* it to be true, wouldn't want the clinching clue to have come from a slight detail he inadvertently let slip in his book. He did tell me that the only other person who had ever delved deeply enough to ask him about the relationship between the Bremer passage in his book and the Wallace line in the movie was John Dean. Dean has been a long-time Deep Throat buff, Sussman said, and in fact had called him recently to speculate about a new suspect.

"Oh, I know, Dean's candidate is Dave Gergen," I said smugly, recalling that Dean's ghostwriter, Taylor Branch, had written about Dean's Gergen theory back in November 1976. Not anymore, Sussman told me: Dean has switched suspects, but not directly from Gergen. There was another intermediary suspect before he settled on his brand-new tenth anniversary Throat candidate. (Sussman didn't tell me either one.) I sympathize with Dean. Before I came upon the Clawson clue, I'd been working the Henry Peterson angle, and I'd never *really* given up my lingering Leonard Garment and Seymour Glanzer suspicions. It was comforting to know that Dean too suffered from similar Throat-switching tendencies. It seems that after ten years his wily ex-antagonist is destined to continue to elude definite detection.

**S**OME SUGGEST that after ten years the real mystery of Deep Throat is his continued silence. "If he's such a big national hero, why doesn't he step forward and claim all the credit?" Victor Lasky asks. "I'll tell you why," Victor Lasky answers. "Because there is no Deep Throat." One possible explanation for the silence of Throat—and it does lend support to the Henry Petersen theory—is that if Throat were, like Petersen or Glanzer, part of the Justice Department prosecutorial team, the disclosure of his identity might give all the Watergate felons cause to petition for a reversal of the verdicts on the grounds of prosecutorial misconduct. Who knows, they might have to restage all the big Watergate trials. As John Dean said, "What an exciting prospect."

In defense of the non-dottiness of Deep Throat speculation, let me point out that Watergate and its aftermath was a subterranean war of leaks, of attempts by one faction or another to divert press and prosecutorial attention to rival power centers. Several significant civil wars within the White House and within the bureaucracies and agencies acted themselves out in deep background attacks. Deep Throat might have been a conscience-stricken loner seeking absolution in underground garage confessionals. But he also might have been a cynical game-player trying to use the *Washington Post* for some factional gain. Without know-

ing his identity, our understanding of Watergate history will be incomplete, although I have a feeling we all prefer the continuing mystery to the inevitable disappointments of certainty.

RN certainly does not consider Deep Throat speculation an idle question. He's as big a buff as anyone on the subject. Haldeman gives us fascinating glimpses of RN and his ex-chief of staff batting around Deep Throat theories in buff-to-buff chats. According to Haldeman, RN's personal Deep Throat candidate is Robert Bennett, the Hughes p.r. man who was Howard Hunt's boss in a p.r. firm that also served as a CIA cover. According to Bennett's CIA case officer (cited in the Nedzi Committee hearings), Bennett boasted that he was feeding Bob Woodward information and that Woodward was "suitably grateful," a quote which has become the basis for entire Robert Bennett theories of Watergate, some of them spread by Chuck Colson and all of them misguided.

As a buff, however, I find it troubling to see fellow buff RN mired in the dark ages of Deep Throat speculation. All serious analysts of the question have long since abandoned the Bennett-as-Throat hypothesis. Bennett was a source for Woodward, but a source he acknowledges on the record in *All The President's Men*. In fact, J. Anthony Lukas, who boomed Bennett big in a *New York Times Magazine* article, abandoned him and switched to lukewarm endorsement of Mark Felt (Edward Jay Epstein's candidate), the Deputy FBI director who was feuding with RN's pet, Pat Gray.

Haldeman's own candidate is Fred Fielding, the former John Dean deputy who now serves President Reagan as White House counsel in charge of ethical questions. There's a wonderful description of ethics counsel Fielding in John Dean's book which depicts the future arbiter of integrity drawing on "rectal gloves" in order not to leave fingerprints on the potentially incriminating contents of Howard Hunt's safe. Fielding, by the way, is one of three key Deep Throat candidates in powerful positions in the Reagan high command. He and the others (communications director Dave Gergen, John Dean's one-time choice, and Alexander Haig, a frequently mentioned contender) will be suitably grateful, I hope, now that my Ken Clawson solution has gotten them off the hook.

**O**F COURSE, no survey of buffdom is complete without an appreciation of the achievements of RN: *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*. Only fellow buffs can appreciate the indomitable, never-say-die spirit of buffery in this work. If the White House transcripts are the Bible for buffs, RN may be considered the Gnostic Gospels, the great heretical reinterpretation of the central sacred texts. One thinks of comparable heroic acts of real misinterpretation—William Blake's notion that Milton's Satan is the true hero of *Paradise Lost* comes to mind.

But for the most precise literary antecedent to RN,



we must consider nothing less than Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*; for the best parts of *RN*, like Nabokov's novel, take the form of an obsessive, elaborate explication of an established text. In *Pale Fire* we have a mad professor misinterpreting his murdered friend's poem to fashion himself the central character. In *RN* we have a defrocked President doggedly taking on the tape-recorded text of his own words and, with a heroic act of the explicative imagination, transforming guilt-laden utterances into evidences of utter innocence, raising explication to the level of high art.

Consider the balletic leaps of ratiocination he takes with the notorious "I don't give a shit what happens, I want you all to stonewall it, let them plead the Fifth Amendment, cover up or anything else, if it'll save it, save the plan" passage in the tapes. It emerges from the smithy of *RN*'s art as "my oblique way of confronting the need to make a painful shift in our Watergate strategy."

Then there's his marvelous explication of the famous March 21 "cancer on the Presidency" talk with Dean, the one in which he repeatedly insisted he wanted to pay a million-dollar hush-money bribe to

keep the cover-up going. This, he explains, was his way of ensuring that the truth would come out "in an orderly and rational way."

But *RN* is not content with exegetical virtuosity. He has brand new theories to offer buffs. Take his fascinating suggestion about the real culprit in the creation of the eighteen-minute gap. He knows that his explanation of the erasure is a kind of command performance. He knows we're expecting a dazzling effort from him on this one. But he's confident: "I know my treatment of the gap will be looked upon as a touchstone for the candor and credibility of what I write," he begins. It's a breathtaking gesture, almost like Babe Ruth pointing to the stands. He's convinced he can pull it off and make us believe that neither he nor Rose Mary Woods had anything to do with erasing that tape.

What he delivers is less an explication than an epic innuendo implying extended Secret Service conspiracy and treason within the White House:

I think we all wondered about the various Secret Service agents and technicians who had had free daily access to the tapes, and even about the Secret Service agents who

## DEEP THROAT FINALISTS

**BOB BENNETT:** had big boom in '75 when tapped by Lukas and Kohn. All the right CIA-Hughes-*RN* connections. Problem: is a Mormon, and Woodward's Throat drinks scotch.

**ALEXANDER BUTTERFIELD:** *RN* and Haldeman suspect him of knowing arcane unrevealed secrets of Watergate. Had the right access. Problem: why didn't he tell Woodstein about the tapes (or would that have pointed the Deep Throat finger too directly at him)?

**KEN CLAWSON:** former *Post* reporter; Woodward-Sussman cross-references suggest him. Problem: flag-waving *RN* loyalist.

**MARK FELT:** according to Edward Jay Epstein, he's the candidate of the Silbert-Glanzer prosecutorial team because Throat made one statement about something only Felt could have known. Bernstein is said to have spied the initials M. F. on Woodward's Throat notes. Woodward claimed M. F. stood for "My

Friend." Problem: Felt did not have internal White House access.

**FRED FIELDING:** Dean's deputy. Haldeman's candidate. Good access. Problem: doesn't fit the world-weary man-of-many-battles Throat that Woodstein depicts.

**LEONARD GARMENT:** a logical choice, the liberal conscience of the Nixon White House—*RN* often complains of his softness. Problem: almost too obvious a suspect to have escaped detection.

**DAVE GERGEN:** John Dean candidate as of November 1976. Secret Society, Yale residential college connection. Problem: convincing denial, Dean switched to someone else.

**SEYMOUR GLANZER:** if he was championing at the bit because of caution shown by eager-for-promotion fellow prosecutor Silbert, he might have tried an end run to the press to prod his partner into greater vigor. Problem: others have called Glanzer a Sy Hersh source.

**ALEXANDER HAIG:** despite denials, was clearly a major source for *The Final Days*. Problem: didn't have access to grand jury trivia on Segretti that Throat apparently had.

**MELVIN LAIRD:** good contacts, access. Problem: wouldn't he have told Evans and Novak?

**CHARLES LICHENSTEIN:** candidate of certain friends of Dave Gergen who were trying to convince writer Taylor Branch not to name Gergen as John Dean's Throat candidate. Was Dean Burch's deputy. Problem: convincing denial, too obscure.

**RICHARD MOORE:** close to *RN* inner circle, he had access, consulted with Dean over cover-up troubles. As *Skull and Bones* member, he shared secret society underground meeting place affinity with Yalie Woodward. Problem: no obvious motives.

**HENRY PETERSEN:** Ehrlichman's choice because of HP's Kennedy Justice background. Makes sense if Throat is looked at as prosecutorial technique à la *Absence of Malice*: HP's hands are tied at the top, but he aims to spook out the truth by stirring up press pressure. Problem: HP sounds like *RN* dupe on White House tapes.

**RAY PRICE:** speechwriter, ex-reporter, old Nixon hand, but no friend of the Haldeman-Ehrlichman Dobermans. Yale connection with Woodward. Problem: followed *RN* to Elba, worked on memoirs.



had provided Rose with the new but apparently faulty Uher tape recorder just half an hour before she discovered the gap. We even wondered about Alex Butterfield, who had revealed the existence of the tape system. . . . But it would have taken a very dedicated believer in conspiracies to accept that someone would have purposely erased 18½ minutes of this particular tape in order to embarrass me.

RN is just such a dedicated believer, and the more you study RN, the more you realize just how dedicated he is. He suspected Watergate was a set-up from the first. Barely two weeks after the break-in, he was entertaining "the possibility that we were dealing with a double agent who purposely blew the operation."

Indeed, RN is so preoccupied by the idea that he is the *victim* of the break-in and bugging of his opponents that he repeatedly fantasizes that his own party headquarters were bugged. He attributes to Haldeman, in one of his "diary" entries right after the June 17 arrests, the story that "one of Chotiner's operatives had said that a McGovern aide had told him that *they* had our committee rooms bugged." Curiously, he deletes from his diary citation the name of this "Chotiner operative" and that of the McGovern aide who confessed to a Watergate-like crime against RN. RN seems to have an exclusive on this bombshell.

RN's greatest strength as a buff is his generosity as a guide to future 'Gate revelations—the ones destined to keep buffs busy for the next ten years of wallowing. RN's clues to what's in store take the form of elaborate denials of things he hasn't been accused of yet. When one comes across one of these in the text of RN, one senses that RN is signalling that there's a truly delicious incriminating morsel on a tape he fears might be released in the foreseeable future.

ONE OF THE BEST of these coming attractions is the passage in which RN attempts to deny offering clemency to Jeb Stuart Magruder about a year into the cover-up. It's April 1973. RN is in the middle of his famous "personal investigation" of Watergate following Dean's "cancer on the Presidency" talk. Magruder is about to go back before the grand jury he lied to the summer before. If he tells the truth, he can put all the President's men in jail and make a liar out of RN. Assured of clemency, however, he might be willing to risk continued protective perjury. And so, lurking behind RN's unusually detailed account of a chat with Ehrlichman back then, there must be a heretofore unnoted offer of clemency to Magruder; and it's possible to glimpse in the pale fire of his preemptive interpretation the reflected glare of the guilt he's trying to eclipse: "I had been thinking the night before about Magruder's young children," RN tells us, "sawing away at the heartstrings, "and about his wife. 'It breaks your heart,' I said. I thought back to Haldeman's comment two weeks before on how pathetic Magruder

had been with his plea for clemency. I told Ehrlichman that this was a painful message for me: 'I'd just put that in so that he knows that I have personal affection,' I said. 'That's the way the so-called clemency's got to be handled.'"

The single most tantalizing of these peeks into future revelations, however, is RN's teasing suggestion that he's got a hitherto unknown break-in in store for us, one that he personally ordered, presumably on tape. RN tells us that on Wednesday, June 21, 1972, with the cover-up still in its embryonic stage, he came up with a bold counterattack proposal: "I said that every time the Democrats accused us of bugging we should charge that we were being bugged and maybe even plant a bug and find it ourselves!"

He seems to have been mulling this idea over for ten days when, in a conversation with Colson for which RN feels compelled to offer a preemptive pre-tape-release explanation, he makes it sound as if he gave a definite go-ahead order: "Colson and I talked about the exaggerated publicity that was being given to the break-in. In sheer exasperation I said it would help if someone broke into our headquarters and did a lot of damage—then we could launch a counterattack. Colson agreed. . . ."

THIS SOUNDS like the authentic RN. Two weeks after the Watergate break-in, he's champing at the bit to order a break-in on himself to prove that his break-in on his enemies was retroactively justified by the one he'd blame on them. Of course, no such break-in at RN's campaign headquarters has been reported. But would RN have brought up the subject in his memoirs and tried to excuse it ("in sheer exasperation . . .") in advance if the order did not sound serious on the yet-to-be-released tape?

And it happens that not long after this conversation, a break-in took place at the Long Beach office of RN's former physician, Dr. John Lungren.

According to RN, "No money or drugs were taken but my medical files were removed from a locked closet and left strewn about the floor of the office." Note that RN's medical records were not removed from the office. And if the Lungren break-in team had merely wanted to photograph the records, why leave them so conspicuously scattered around? From the description RN provides, it seems as if the only purpose of the Lungren break-in was to advertise the fact that RN was the target. Such advertising comes in handy to RN. He cites it later as evidence that his enemies used the same tactics against him as he did in having his men break into Daniel Ellsberg's doctor's office. The symmetry is so pleasing to RN that one wonders if he had a share in shaping it. RN seems not at all outraged that damage was done to his doctor's office, only that just one network carried the news of the Lungren break-in while all three made a big deal over a 1973 report of a break-in into JFK's doctor's



office during the 1960 campaign (another RN job?).

Yes, while other investigators have retired from the field, RN is still probing these baffling break-ins. Haldeman provides us with a fascinating glimpse of Inspector RN at work on the Ellsberg break-in case. Shortly after the November 1976 election (which would soon put a Democratic Administration in charge of the disputed storehouse of White House tapes), RN summoned Haldeman to San Clemente "to probe my memory," Haldeman says. According to Haldeman, Inspector RN has been toying with the hypothesis that he—RN himself—ordered the break-in: "I was so damn mad at Ellsberg in those days. And Henry was jumping up and down. I've been thinking—and maybe I did order that break-in."

But Inspector RN is not completely satisfied with this deft solution to the Ellsberg case. He'd called in Ellsberg operations chief Egil Krogh, and Krogh told him *he* didn't remember the President ordering him to do it. "Again and again that afternoon Nixon returned to the subject," Haldeman recalls. "Finally he said, 'I'm

just going to have to check it out further.'"

Surprisingly, Haldeman has doubts about the good faith of Inspector RN's continuing investigation:

And then I realized the situation. If Nixon had ordered the break-in while in the Oval Office his order was preserved on tape. And those tapes might well become public some day. Nixon was debating whether to reveal what he had really said in that office about the break-in or wait it out. It might be years before that particular tape was unearthed.

Now, it seems to me that this is an extremely uncharitable interpretation of Inspector RN's motives. If you recall, RN has told us that as soon as he heard the shocking news of a cover-up in the White House from John Dean back in March 1973, he proceeded to launch his own intensive investigation of the entire affair. So this account of RN probing to see whether anyone remembered *him* ordering the Ellsberg job is just another indication among many that after ten years, RN *is still on the case*. And, at long last, he may be closing in on Mr. Big.

Tricky Dick had nothing on Honest Abe.

## HOW NIXON GOT STRUNG UP

BY NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN

**T**HE TENTH ANNIVERSARY of the Watergate burglary will be marked, celebrated, and observed by liberals as the American version of Guy Fawkes Day, and by the minority of Republicans who still care as a miscarriage of justice. Enough time has passed since that silly band of ex-CIA Cubano-Americano hysterics broke into the offices of the Democratic National Committee and precipitated our only Presidential resignation to do a bit of detached beard pulling. It's still too early for the historians to take over, but not too soon to dispense with the erroneous view that the exiled President was our second Benedict Arnold, the greatest traitor to the Constitution we've ever had. We need to drop the notion that the defenestration of Richard Nixon saved the Republic, and we need to take a fresh look at those events, because they tell us much about our political system and processes.

Before proceeding to the argument, a personal digression, please. What follows is not Nixon revisionism. I yield to no one in my abiding belief in Mr. Nixon's quintessential nerdliness. Old Swoop Nose is

an unreconstructed dork and ever shall be. But there is more to the Watergate saga than an ex-President's oh-so-obvious dislikability.

Traveling back to the circumstances of January 1969, when Nixon was sworn in, you have to wonder if any man coming into office then could have escaped with his hide intact. The remarkable thing is not that Nixon was thrown out of office but that it took the best part of six years, a landslide reelection included, before he was given the gate. The man faced a problem which might have defeated a loved and inspirational figure.

Nixon was the first American President since Lincoln to guide the nation through a war that fundamentally divided the ruling classes. Lyndon Johnson got out in time to suffer no more than a high degree of denunciation. It was only when Nixon took office that the prestigious props and stays of every wartime President began to bend and snap in great numbers. Harvard, that ivied nursery of cold war managers, gave the new President Henry Kissinger and then began to back away from policies that the most distinguished