

## Capitol Punishment

# The Watergate Wallow

By Art Buchwald

President Nixon has said there are many people in this country who would rather wallow in Watergate than get on with the business of the country.

The only person I know who is really wallowing in Watergate is my friend Fitzhugh Fitzgibbon.

He told me the other day, "I've tried. God knows I've tried. But I just can't seem to get out of the wallow of Watergate."

"It's that bad, huh?"

"It's terrible. I've tried to think of inflation, the cost of food, the energy crisis, but none of it gives me the pleasure that Watergate does. It's a terrible thing to admit, but I really enjoy Watergate, and I look forward to every new scandal it produces. I don't get that feeling when I read about pollution."

"But the President has said we have to keep this thing in perspective. We just can't get sidetracked by Watergate."

He can't get sidetracked by Watergate, but I can. I tell you, it's made my life. Some people like to read about Cambodia, the Middle East or the fall of the dollar. But I can't wallow in those things. They just don't have the mud and slime that Watergate has produced. I could take a bath in it every day."

"Well, at least you're honest about it," I said.

"Most people who wallow in Watergate won't admit it."

"Don't get me wrong. I'm not a wallower by nature.

But Watergate is something else again. You've got the corruption of the White House, the Justice Department, the FBI, the CIA, the indictment of a former Attorney General and a former Secretary of Commerce and one of the great election frauds of all time. Now anyone who isn't wallowing in that just doesn't know how to enjoy himself."

"When did you first start wallowing in Watergate?"

"Probably after President Nixon announced he had just received new evidence involving members of his White House staff in the Watergate affair. I felt this warm surge come over me like nothing I had ever felt before. Then when the Sam Ervin hearings started, and I watched the long parade of witnesses who all gave details on how the American people had been hoodwinked by the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, I found myself waist deep in the mud. After Haldeman's and Ehrlichman's testimony I was up to my neck. And now that there is a court fight over the President's tapes, I have to fight to keep my head above water."

"When will you stop wallowing?" I asked him.

"When Martha Mitchell shuts up, when Charles Colson tells all he knows, when we get the true story on San Clemente and when Vice President Agnew is cleared of all rumors about corruption in Maryland."

"Good grief, man," I said. "That could be forever."

"It's not my fault. I had nothing to do with Watergate, and if I want to wallow in it, that's my own affair."

"Even if the President of the United States has asked you not to?"

"He can't just ask us not to wallow in Watergate. He has to give us something else to wallow in. But it has to be big. Americans are spoiled after wallowing in this for so long. Once you've wallowed in the Watergate swamp, you just can't get out and dry yourself off."