

A Forthright Witness

Alexander Porter Butterfield

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON

Special to The New York Times

7/17/73

WASHINGTON, July 16—

It didn't surprise his mother that Alexander Porter Butterfield gave Watergate investigators the unvarnished facts—including the information that disputed conversations between President Nixon and his aides are all on tape somewhere in the White House vaults.

Man
in the
News

House vaults. He always stood for moral integrity and straight-forwardness," said

Mrs. Susan Butterfield in an interview from Tacoma, Wash., this afternoon. "He doesn't like me to talk this way, but he was an Eagle Scout and he carried the Cross in church.

"He was a very unstanding boy, ambitious to succeed in everything he undertook. When the kids dressed up in costumes for Halloween, he wanted to be the best, and he was," she said. "His grandfather was a West Pointer, and Alec was brought up very strictly by a Navy father, who's trying to get me off the phone right now."

As a flying colonel in the Air Force, as a top administrative officer in the Nixon White House, and in the last four months as head of the Federal Aviation Administration, Mr. Butterfield seems to have impressed everybody as the sort of quiet, successful professional that any mother could be proud of.

Model of Dedication

Joseph A. Califano Jr., a Pentagon "whiz kid" in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, remembers him as an exceptionally bright, 14-hour-a-day policy planner — "a first-class staff guy, straight, essentially apolitical," Mr. Califano said today. He added, "If he disagreed with you, you knew it. I was thinking this afternoon, what if they had asked him to hold back about the tapes, but with Butterfield, nobody would have asked."

A former colleague at the White House recalled him as a model of dedication, without zealotry. It seemed typical that the morning after his wife and daughter were seriously injured in an automobile accident three years

ago, Mr. Butterfield was on duty as usual at 7:30 A.M. because, as he said, he knew that the President relied on him to get the morning schedule moving.

At the F.A.A. he told his staff that safety was henceforth going to be the agency's primary mission. "He read all the accident reports himself," said an associate. "He almost took them personally."

Between his first interview with the Senate Watergate staff on Friday and his televised testimony today, he spent large parts of Saturday and yesterday "as he normally does," in his F.A.A. office. Later this week he will fly to Moscow to open a technology symposium and

a sales promotion for American aerospace products in the Soviet Union.

Lifelong Passion

Mr. Butterfield was born under the noise of airplanes," his mother said, at Pensacola, Fla., on April 6, 1926. He was the elder son of Horace B. Butterfield, a Navy pilot now retired. Flying has been his career and his lifelong passion.

After failing the Naval Academy's eye test, he joined the Air Force and flew the twin-fuselage P-38's with the late Gen. Emmett (Rose) O'Donnell in the Pacific during World War II. According to his official résumé, he has logged approximately 5,000

hours in 34 types of fighter aircraft and a grand total of 7,800 hours—the equivalent of 10 months—in almost the entire range of flying machines.

Commander in Vietnam

For several years in his youth he flew with the Air Force stunt team, the "Sky Blazers," which won the aerobatic prize at the Paris Air Show in 1953. He is also a qualified parachutist. It is said that when he was an instructor at the Air Force Academy in the late nineteen-fifties, he would often take an F-80 to 35,000 feet and put it on automatic pilot to put himself in the proper mood to grade student pilots.

In Vietnam he commanded a squadron of low-level reconnaissance fliers, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He also holds the Legion of Merit.

On his last military assignment — as the Air Force's F-111 project officer and senior Defense Department representative in Australia—he appeared to be heading for major command.

Friend of Haldeman

But as H. R. Haldeman assembled a new White House staff at the end of 1968, he remembered an old friend from the University of California at Los Angeles—the man, as it happened, who had married Mrs. Haldeman's sorority roommate at U.C.L.A.—and persuaded Mr. Butterfield to take an early retirement.

To become the F.A.A. Administrator this year, Mr. Butterfield had to resign from the Air Force entirely, sacrificing a pension that would now be more than \$10,000 a year.

Mrs. Butterfield, the former Charlotte Mary McGuire, was his sweetheart in the fifth grade in the public schools of Coronado, Calif., the seaside town, across the bay from San Diego, that Mr. Butterfield now calls home.

The Butterfields' son, Alexander Jr., is a premedical student at Duke University. Susan Carter Butterfield is an undergraduate at the University of Virginia, and Elizabeth Gordon Butterfield goes to Fort Hunt High School in Alexandria, Va.