

Colson Pleads With High Court Not to Disbar Him in Virginia

From News Dispatches

RICHMOND, Dec. 2—Former White House aide Charles Colson pleaded with the Virginia Supreme Court yesterday to show judicial compassion and not revoke his license to practice law.

"I cannot minimize, justify or excuse my conduct," Colson said in a statement read to the court by his attorney. "But do put me to the test to redeem myself."

Colson, who is serving a one to three year sentence in Maxwell Air Force Base prison in Montgomery, Ala., for obstructing justice in the Ellsberg break-in case, directed his plea to the same court that last February disbarred John Dean, former White House counsel, for "unethical, unprofessional and unwarranted conduct" during the Watergate affair.

Colson was unable to appear in person at the proceedings, in which the Virginia State Bar seeks revocation of his license to practice law for "a deliberate scheme to subvert the administration of justice" because of his scheduled appearance yesterday as a witness in the Watergate cover-up trial.

Throughout his long statement, Colson made frequent reference to his "heartfelt remorse" and his "long and agonizing struggle."

At the time of the break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, sensitive and secret negotiations were under way with China and the Soviet Union, and peace talks were being held in Paris and North Vietnam, Colson said.

When the Pentagon papers were made public through

Ellsberg, Colson said, "we thought this might be a wholesale breakdown of internal security."

Colson said he was ordered by then-President Richard Nixon to do everything possible "to expose and neutralize"

Colson conceded the White House also was concerned about the political damage Ellsberg might do to the President.

"All too often, we did confuse the public interest with our own political interests," he said.

Arthur Mason, Colson's attorney, urged the state's high court not to heap further punishment on Colson, who he said, already had suffered enough.

"This man languishes in disgrace in federal prison for following the orders of the President," Mason said.