

Juror Dismissed After Call to Wife

By Raul Ramirez

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Isolated from the outside world by "courteous but firm" U.S. marshals, the jurors in the Watergate bugging case spend their time reading old magazines and censored newspapers and "joking a lot," a juror relieved from duty on the fourth day of the trial said yesterday.

"They talk about their families and joke about everything but the case, but you find yourself watching every word you say so as not to be indiscreet," said Gabriel Oleaga, 60, one of the four men and eight women originally chosen for the jury.

Oleaga was dismissed from the case by Chief U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica after Oleaga's wife mentioned a newspaper account of the trial during a telephone conversation.

Sirica has ordered the jury sequestered to insulate its members from publicity that might prejudice their deliberations.

Oleaga said he had called his wife yesterday morning to ask her to pack "a clean suit and a few shirts" for him when she "blurted out about the trial," and prompted his immediate dismissal from the case.

"The policeman (U.S. marshal) I think was supposed to talk to her and warn her not to mention the trial, but he didn't," Oleaga said yesterday in an interview.

"I got on the phone and, before I could say anything, she blurted out, 'I read in the paper about one of the men in the case saying he was guilty,'" Oleaga said.

"I said, 'No, no, no talking about this,' and the policeman monitoring the call on another phone said it, too, but it was too late," the for-

mer juror said.

Oleaga, a Cuban-born waiter who has lived in Washington with his American wife since 1951, was immediately summoned before Sirica and sent home.

"I'm disappointed but I don't blame the judge. I agree with him. The law is such a strict thing and he doesn't want any irregularities. You must admire that in a person," Oleaga said.

Oleaga has been replaced on the jury by one of six alternate jurors who are also sequestered for the duration of the trial.

Since Tuesday, when he was chosen for the jury, Oleaga said he lived in a "comfortable" 9 by 12 foot room furnished "just like a motel," with a bed, chair, bedside table, dresser, mirror and rug, but no television or telephone.

Each juror has been assigned a similar room, the women on the eighth floor and the men on the seventh floor of the U.S. District courthouse. They are under strict instructions not to discuss the case among themselves until the end of testimony. They are paid \$20 a day.

The jurors have developed a routine closely supervised by U.S. marshals, Oleaga said.

It's up before 7 a.m.,

breakfast in a dining room in the courthouse basement ("where you can order from a menu, like in a regular restaurant"), lunch in the same room and dinner at a nearby hotel, where jurors are allowed to sip a drink or two during their meal, he said.

When they're not sitting in the courtroom listening to the lawyers, the jurors gather in a large adjacent jury room, where they sit, "mostly silently," around a rectangular table under the watchful gaze of at least two marshals, Oleaga said.

The jurors are allowed to buy daily newspapers that are thoroughly censored by marshals who clip out all references to the case. In the communal areas in the seventh and eighth floors, they also have coffee, medicine, and can read old magazines, also carefully clipped, he said.

"The marshals are just perfect, very kind, very respectful and very firm," Oleaga said. "You can't move to even buy chewing gum."

"I didn't do much talking. I just concentrated on thinking about what the judge said, what the defense lawyer said and what the prosecution said."

"I'm disappointed about being dismissed. I haven't eaten since I was there. I wanted to see the end and cast my vote," he added.

Oleaga said he has "some ideas" about the guilt or innocence of the defendants, but declined to discuss them "until the whole thing is over."