

Coverup testimony ends

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The jurors in the Watergate coverup trial heard their last witness Thursday, a former Nixon reelection campaign official who contradicted key testimony from defendant Robert C. Mardian.

The case involving five former aides and re-election officials for ex-President Richard M. Nixon is expected to go to the jury immediately after Christmas. All five are charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice in the investigation of the June 17, 1972, Watergate break-in.

More than 80 witnesses have testified.

The last was Raymond Caldiero, director of celebrities and athletes for the re-election coescribed a breakfast gathering of campaign officials at the Beverly Hills in Los Angeles on the day of the break-in in Washington.

Mardian, a former assistant attorney general, has testified he never learned of

the burglary until later that day, after G. Gordon Liddy sought release of those arrested at Democratic National Committee headquarters.

Deputy campaign director Jeb Stuart Magruder, serving a jail sentence for his part in the break-in, said Mardian was at the table in the hotel when first news of the break-in arrived.

Caldiero backed up Magruder in a colorful account of events that morning.

A husky, athletic-looking man, Caldiero said Magruder received a telephone call which precipitated "a great strain and a great state of shock" at the table.

In that call, Liddy gave Magruder first word of the arrest of the burglars.

Caldiero recounted how in-whispered tones, Magruder sought to locate a secure telephone. He settled for a telephone booth in the hotel to call Liddy back for more details, Caldiero testified.

Caldiero said when he asked Herbert "Bart" Porter, scheduling director for the committee, what was going on, Port "whispered one word in my ear and that was 'Liddy.'"

Magruder has also testified that defendant John N. Mitchell ordered Mardian to call Liddy in Washington and have him ask former Atty. Gen. Richard G. Kleindeinst to free the original defendants.

Both Mardian and Mitchell say they never learned of the unsuccessful approach to Kleindeinst until after it happened.