

# Watergate verdict: end of

WASHINGTON (AP) — The verdict in the Watergate coverup trial brought to an end the last major event in a scandal that has dominated American political life for two years.

The verdict came with the central figure of Watergate, Richard M. Nixon, secluded and ill 3,000 miles away at his estate in San Clemente, Calif. January would have marked the beginning of his sixth year as President.

Nixon left the White House on Aug. 9, forced to resign by evidence recorded on tapes he used to preserve conversations he had with his top aides — among them the defendants in the trial.

While still President, Nixon was named an unindicted coconspirator in the Watergate cover-up case.

But he was pardoned by his successor, President Gerald R. Ford. That precluded the possibility that he would be a defendant. And his illness, diagnosed as phlebitis, prevented him from appearing as a witness.

The scandal surfaced June 17, 1972, when White House and Nixon re-election campaign aides were discovered breaking in at the Watergate complex of offices and apartments to spy and eavesdrop on Democratic National Committee headquarters.

But it wasn't until July 24, 1974, when the Supreme Court ruled that Nixon had to surrender the tapes of 64 conversations sought for the trial, that the former president lost, in effect, his long battle to remain in office.

The defendants in the trial, which began Oct. 1, included three of the most powerful men in Nixon's first administration: former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell and former White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman.

The other two defendants were former Assistant Atty. Gen. Robert C. Mardian and Kenneth W. Parkinson, one-time lawyer for the Nixon re-election committee.

All were charged before U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica with conspiring to obstruct the investigation of the Watergate break-in.

Former White House aides Charles W. Colson and Gordon C. Strachan also were charged with participating in the coverup.

But conspiracy and obstruction of justice charges against Colson, former special counsel to the President were dropped after he pleaded guilty to conspiring to obstruct justice in the Pentagon Papers case.

Colson admitted disseminating derogatory information about Daniel Ellsberg, a defendant in the Pentagon Papers trial. He began serving 1 to 3 years in prison July 8.

Strachan is seeking dismissal of the conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury charges against him. Sirica has granted him a separate trial so he can wait for the U.S. Court of Appeals to rule on his dismissal petition.

The first witness in the trial was John W. Dean III, the former White House counsel who became Nixon's chief accuser. Dean, who pleaded guilty Oct. 19, 1973, to conspiracy to obstruct justice, is serving 1 to 4 years in prison.

In the same flat, matter-of-fact tone he used to tell his story during the nationally televised Senate Watergate Committee hearings, Dean described how he and others destroyed evidence, raised hush money and lied in an effort to conceal involvement of Nixon administration and campaign officials in the break-in.

Methodically, under questioning by chief prosecutor James F. Neal, Dean tied each of the five defendants to the conspiracy.

In their cross-examination, defense lawyers concentrated more on attacking Dean's credibility and character than on his testimony.

# two-year major scandal



## Not guilty!

Kenneth W. Parkinson is greeted by his wife, Pamela, outside District Court Wednesday after he was found 'Not Guilty' in the Watergate cover-up trial. Needless to say, the new year (1975) started off big for the former lawyer for the Nixon Re-Election Committee.—AP Wirephoto.

Nearly all major prosecution witnesses admitted on the stand that at one time or another, they had lied to investigators. The witnesses included Jeb Stuart Magruder, Fred C. LaRue and E. Howard Hunt.

Both LaRue, a campaign aide, and Magruder had pleaded guilty to participating in the cover-up and were cooperating with the prosecutors.

Magruder, former deputy director of the Nixon re-election committee, admitted he lied at an earlier trial for the half-dozen perpetrators of the break-in.

Hunt, the CIA agent turned spy novelist who had pleaded guilty at the break-in trial, confessed to having lied repeatedly.

The prosecution's case against the five defendants focused on these allegations:

—That Mitchell had approved a political intelligence plan proposed by G. Gordon Liddy, a campaign aid formerly with a White House intelligence unit known as "the plumbers," calling for illegal electronic surveillance of the Democrats; that after the break-in Mitchell had participated in devising a false story told to investigators; that he had suggested that Magruder destroy

evidence, and that he had approved hush money payments.

—That Haldeman had tried to get CIA officials to convince the FBI to limit its investigation of the break-in, and that he had approved the use of a secret \$350,000 White House cash fund for payments to the burglars.

—That Ehrlichman, had joined with Haldeman in the effort to use the CIA to limit the FBI investigation; that Ehrlichman also had tried to get CIA funds channeled to the burglars; that he had ordered the "deep sixing" of material found in Hunt's White House safe, and that he had been involved in the raising of hush money.

—That Mardian had participated in meetings during which discussion included destroying evidence, raising hush money and giving authorities a cover story.

—That Parkinson had participated in the cover story and had relayed demands for money from the burglars.

Each of the defendants testified in his own defense and denied each of the allegations.

Mitchell's defense alleged it was Colson who approved the Liddy plan and that Nixon White House insiders, including Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Colson and Dean, were determined to make the former attorney general the "fall guy."

Haldeman's lawyer described Watergate as "a pimple on the mound" of his other duties as Nixon's top aide. Haldeman denied knowing that any of the \$350,000 would be used as hush money.

Ehrlichman said he was a silent observer during the June 23, 1972, meeting at which CIA officials were ordered to try to limit the FBI probe. But the keystone of Ehrlichman's defense was his direct attack on Nixon, whom he accused of lying to him, misleading him and using him in an effort to save himself.

Mardian emphasized that his total involvement in Watergate lasted only about 35 days. He contended his only role was as a lawyer advising the Nixon re-election committee and said he had been bound by legal ethics not to disclose what he learned as an attorney.

Parkinson also cited his role as an attorney for the re-election committee as the reason he had not disclosed what he had learned about the break in. He also said he was misled by Mitchell and Mardian, into believing that the Watergate burglars had been acting on their own.

The trial climaxed the history of the special Watergate prosecution force, created in May 1973, with Nixon still in the White House.

Appointment of a special prosecutor was a condition set by the Senate before it would approve Nixon's nomination of Elliot L. Richardson to succeed Richard G. Kleindienst as attorney general.

Kleindienst had resigned in the Watergate turmoil on April 30, 1973, along with Haldeman and Ehrlichman. Dean was fired the same day.

Archibald Cox, a Harvard Law School professor who had served as solicitor general under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, was appointed special prosecutor. He recruited a staff of 38 lawyers. One of the first he recruited was Neal.

Paralleling the investigation headed by Cox was the Senate Watergate Committee probe. The committee, headed by Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr., D-N.C., opened its hearings on May 17, 1973.

James W. McCord, former security director for the Nixon re-election committee and one of the five men arrested inside Democratic National Committee headquarters, described hush money payments and offers of executive clemency. McCord accused administration officials from Nixon down of being involved in the scandal.

Dean testified before the committee during the last week in June. The former White House counsel said that Nixon had approved paying hush money to Hunt.

It became Dean's word against that of the President and his former top aides.

The break-through came on July 16, 1973, when Alexander P. Butterfield, a former White House aide, disclosed the existence of the White House tapes.

Cox swiftly subpoenaed tapes of meetings Dean had described.

Nixon rejected the subpoena saying that to turn over the tapes would destroy forever the principle that presidents are entitled to receive advice from their aides in confidence.

Sirica upheld Cox's argument that not even a president had the right to withhold evidence in a criminal investigation. Nixon appealed the decision, but in October the U.S. Court of Appeals upheld Sirica.

On Oct. 19, Nixon offered a compromise. He would supply edited transcripts of the subpoenaed tapes to be verified by Sen. John C. Stennis, D-Miss.

Cox rejected the compromise, and on Oct. 20, Nixon fired him.

The firing of Cox prompted Richardson and his deputy, William D. Ruckelshaus, to resign.

It also touched off an impeachment inquiry by the House Judiciary Committee.

Three days after he fired Cox, Nixon agreed to give Sirica the subpoenaed tapes. And Texas lawyer Leon Jaworski succeeded Cox.

Jaworski proved as persistent as his predecessor.

On April 16, 1974, Jaworski subpoenaed tapes of the 64 conversations. It was that demand which led to the Supreme Court order of July 24, 1974. A little more than two weeks later, Nixon was out of office.