

What Plotter Told U.S. of Hush-up Try

By Harry Kelly

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WASHINGTON — Key witnesses have told government investigators details of efforts by high level officials in the White House and the President's campaign committee to conceal their involvement in the Watergate case, efforts that may lead to several indictments for perjury and obstruction of justice, reliable sources said today.

Jeb Stuart Magruder, former No. 2 man in the Committee for the Re-election of the President, was quoted by another former campaign official as telling him April 14, when the conspiracy of silence began breaking down:

"I saw Silbert (Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl Silbert) and told him everything. . . I mean everything. A lot of people are going to jail. I did the best I could. I went to see Earl hoping for five years instead of 120."

Former Aide

Investigator said that Magruder's conversation was reported to them by Herbert L. Porter, a former White

Exclusive Report

House aide who headed the Nixon campaign committee's scheduling and, who admitted that he agreed to give false testimony at the Watergate trial at Magruder's request.

Magruder's testimony, investigators said, has implicated former Attorney General John Mitchell, Frederick LaRue, 44, a former White House aide who was Mitchell's assistant at the campaign committee; former Assistant Attorney General Robert Mardian, another campaign official; former White House counsel John W. Dean; Charles Colson, a former top White House po-

litical troubleshooter; White House aide F. Gordon Strachan; as well as Porter and himself.

Indictment Chance

Porter told the government investigators Magruder told him that former White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman might also be indicted "if Strachan tells them what he told Haldeman."

The investigators said they have information that the coverup was orchestrated — in the days after the June 17 arrest of the Watergate raiders — by President

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Nixon's closest advisers, Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, who along with Dean resigned Monday at the President's request.

Porter, as Dean and Magruder had done, began to worry about the renewed grand jury investigation and finally approached Silbert, the Watergate prosecutor, to correct the statements he had given to the grand jury and during the subsequent trial.

Tells of Encounter

Porter, the investigator said, also related running into Magruder across from the White House April 14.

Porter said Magruder told him:

"It's all over. I just came from the White House. The President has directed everyone to tell the truth."

He apologized to Porter "for getting you involved."

Magruder told him, Porter reported to investigators, that he had also talked with Mitchell and that Mitchell "said he understands."

Porter quoted Magruder as saying Mitchell will "hold all the way—he has no other choice."

Dean reportedly has told Silbert that he can corroborate convicted wiretapper James McCord's second-hand testimony that Mitchell had attended a February meeting in the Justice Department, along with Dean and convicted conspirator G. Gordon Liddy, at which the

plans to bug Democrats were made and approved.

After having repeatedly denying any advance knowledge of the espionage plans, Mitchell has said he was present at three meetings when bugging plans were suggested but that he vetoed them.

Porter told the investigators how he was requested at a meeting with Magruder to give false testimony at the previous grand jury investigation and at the later trial of Liddy and McCord.

Porter said that about July 1 he was called into Magruder's office.

Magruder, 38, a former special assistant to the President under Haldeman, told him he had just met with Mitchell and LaRue and a third person whom Porter said he couldn't recall.

Magruder told him, Porter told the investigators, "your name was brought up at this meeting as someone intelligent, attractive, someone able to corroborate our testimony during the upcoming investigation."

Money Problem

Magruder said the money authorized for Liddy's espionage operation gave them a problem, as far as explaining it to a grand jury. Porter said Magruder

told him:

"You must agree (it) would be very bad if we admitted the money was authorized for dirty tricks. That would open up the office for investigation and de-

stroy the Nixon campaign. Surely as a strong loyalist your realize the importance. Haldeman is aware we are asking you to help us with this money problem."

To Pay Agents

When Porter said he indicated he didn't understand, Magruder went on to explain that as the head of scheduling for the presidential surrogates — the Republican members of Congress and Cabinet members who campaigned for Nixon in the primaries — "You were concerned with disruptions directed against the surrogate program. We have to justify \$100,000 for that. How could that cost \$100,000!"

Porter said he suggested, as was later told at the trial, that if the committee had 10 young agents around the country to watch out for demonstrations against the campaign, that could account for the \$100,000.

He quoted Magruder as responding: "That's great. If I testified to that would you corroborate me? It's important that we keep Mitchell and the President from involvement. That would be disastrous."

Porter told investigators that although Magruder mentioned the President's name several times it was not as an implication the President had knowledge of the plot but rather that it might appear that he had.

Talked to Lawyer

Porter said before agreeing he sought advice from a committee lawyer and discussed obstruction of justice but it was agreed such testimony could not constitute concealment of a crime.

Porter said the unnamed lawyer told him, "I wouldn't do it for Mitchell or Haldeman but I would for the President."

Porter went back to Magruder with his promise to cooperate.



EARL SILBERT
He heard "everything"

JEB S. MAGRUDER AS HE ARRIVED IN COURT TODAY
Former Nixon campaign deputy was accompanied by lawyer, James Bierbower
—AP Photo