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A Bombshell Dutifully Dropped

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WASHINGTON, July 16 — There's nothing like a "mystery witness" to pick up a hearing that's beginning to droop around the edges.

And it's a bonus if he drops what is known as a "bombshell" in the jargon that takes root in such proceedings with the inevitability of crabgrass on a suburban lawn.

Today, the Senate Watergate committee brought on its first "mystery witness" and he dutifully (though somewhat apologetically) let loose his "bombshell."

It was probably just as well. On the third day of the cheerful but halting testimony of Richard A. Moore, a special counsel to the President, some were surmising that the nationally televised inquiry might have to yield to something at least as zippy as "Howdy Doody" reruns.

Then came Alexander Porter Butterfield, as he introduced himself when he was sworn in as the first witness of the afternoon.

Mr. Butterfield may not have been exactly a "mystery witness." But it took a while for reporters and other followers of the Watergate proceedings to find out whom Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr., the committee chairman, and Senator Howard H. Baker Jr., the vice chairman, were meeting with when they broke early for lunch after Mr. Moore finished testifying.

And when it was discov-

Butterfield, Head of Aviation Agency, Enlivens Hearing

ered that they were in a first-floor room in the new Senate Office Building with someone named Aleander Butterfield, there was a fair amount of headscratching over the identity of a man who was to many only vaguely familiar at best.

Haldeman's Assistant

Actually, he is head of the Federal Aviation Administration and until March 14 was an assistant to H. R. Haldeman, President Nixon's former chief of staff.

As it was rumored that he would appear ahead of Herbert W. Kalmbach, who until recently was the President's personal lawyer, speculation about what Mr. Butterfield was there for ricocheted through the corridors of the Senate complex.

Lecture on Patience

But when Senators Ervin and Baker, with a protective wall of aides, emerged at 1:40 P.M. from their meeting accompanied by a tall, dark man in a blue suit (who everyone guessed must be Mr. Butterfield), they would not say why he was there or whether he would testify ahead of Mr. Kalmbach.

Pressed by newsmen, Sen-

ator Ervin, smiling, gave a kindly lecture on patience before going into an elevator. Senator Baker just grinned.

All that — repeated over the grapevine — sent a tingle through the crowd that waited in the caucus room on the third floor of the old Senate Office Building.

By the time the Senators returned to the committee table in the hearing room a little after 2 P.M., the crowd's patience had been rewarded.

Mr. Butterfield had eased himself into the witness chair. Mr. Kalmbach, who had been photographed and interviewed over and over during the morning, was again back in a rear row of the witness section—looking a little left out.

Mr. Butterfield may not have been a "mystery witness" in the purely classic sense, but he was a surprise witness—even, apparently, to himself.

No Counsel

"Although I do not have a statement as such," he said, looking uncomfortably alone as the bright lights found the bald spot in the midst of his thick dark hair, "I would simply like to remind the committee membership that whereas I appear voluntarily this afternoon, I appear with only some three hours' notice and without time to arrange for permanent counsel or for assistance by a temporary counsel."