

Responding With Hindsight to the

By Art Buchwald

Long after Watergate is over certain phrases repeated during the hearings will remain with us.

Already they are being used by Middle America to cover various situations.

The other day at exactly 2:30 a.m. Mintonburger staggered into the hallway of his house. His tie was askew, there was lipstick on his collar and there was a strong odor of alcohol on his breath.

Mrs. Mintonburger in her dressing gown was waiting for him. "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

"Yessir."

"Where the hell have you been?"

"I'm sorry. I didn't hear the question."

"I said where the hell have you been?"

"To the best of my recollection I was at Reilly's Bar Grill."

"Whom were you there with?"

"I don't have all my records with me, but I believe I was there with Sam Carlsberg, Ed Tuborg, and Charlie Schlitz."

"What was discussed at the bar until 2:30 in the morning?"

"What meeting are we talking about now?"

"The one you just came from."

"Well, let's see. As far as I recall, we discussed the trade of running back Duane Thomas to the Washington Redskins."

"Is that all you talked about?"

"To the best of my knowledge I believe that is all we talked about. You must remember, Senator . . . I mean dear . . . that we're talking about something that happened several hours ago, and although I'm trying to be as candid as possible it is very difficult for me to remember everything that took place last night."

"All right," Mrs. Mintonburger said, going over some notes she was holding in her hand, "let's go on to another subject. What's that lipstick on your collar?"

"I never heard of any lipstick on my collar."

"It's right there."

"I believe we have to put this in the proper context. I recall during the evening brushing past a lady

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who had been pushed into me by a man. Her lips hit me right on the collar."

"And that is your story?"

"As far as that particular incident is concerned I would say it is an accurate description of it at that point in time."

"Would it surprise you, Mr. Mintonburger, that I called Reilly's bar at midnight and spoke to Reilly, and he said you hadn't been in all evening?"

"What night are we talking about now?"

"Tonight."

"I believe Reilly is mistaken. I specifically remember being there."

"Then you would say that Reilly is not telling the truth?"

"On this particular point I would say he is not."

"Why would Reilly lie about your not being in his bar?"

"To protect himself. Reilly has perjured himself on many occasions and he is constantly seeking ways of getting immunity."

"Well, let me ask you this. Do you think you have a right coming in drunk at 2:30 in the morning with

lipstick on your collar?"

"In hindsight it was probably a bad idea. But at that point in time when I did those things I was only following the orders of my superiors, Sam Carlsberg, Ed Tuborg and Charlie Schlitz. As I look back on it now, I should have inquired as to why they were asking me to do certain things, which may under present atmosphere appear to some to be evidence of wrongdoing."

"One final question, Mr. Mintonburger. What is your advice to other husbands who might find themselves in the same position?"

"Well, sir, I would say that I am not proud of what I did, and I guess I am lacking in moral fiber which caused me to go along with what everybody else was doing."

"Mr. Mintonburger, thank you for your candid and forthright testimony. You have been a very cooperative witness. One more thing, will you be available for further questioning tomorrow morning if it is needed?"

"That's why I'm here."