

Watergate bail nixed by Sirica

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge refused to release five jailed Watergate conspirators yesterday, and turned his anger on Sen. Herman E. Talmadge (D-Ga.).

Judge John J. Sirica denied requests that the five be freed on bail pending disposition of motions to have their guilty pleas thrown out.

Sirica had imposed provisional sentences of 30 to 50 years on the men, noting the law requires that the maximum be listed in provisional sentences. However, he told them he did not plan such long terms when he imposes final sentence.

In requesting the bail, Sidney S. Sachs, a lawyer for conspirator E. Howard Hunt, quoted Talmadge as saying it is "very strange" that the five were in jail while the men who planned the Watergate break-in remain free.

Sirica bristled, and said that if Talmadge had taken the time to read the statute he would have known that the judge was required to impose the maximum terms.

The judge said he had received hundreds of letters from people who mistakenly thought he had sentenced the men to the long terms as a final decision.

Sirica added that a television station in Miami has criticized him for sentencing the five to 40-year terms.

"Telling those people that I gave these men 40 years — now I think that's disgraceful," Sirica said.

Besides Hunt, the men seeking to have their pleas overturned were Virgilio R. Gonzalez, Eugenio R. Martinez, Bernard L. Barker and Frank A. Sturgis.