

Sirica Sentences Magruder to 10 Months



United Press International

Jeb Stuart Magruder: "Between ambition and ideals."

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Jeb Stuart Magruder, who said he got carried away by his ambition, was sentenced yesterday to a minimum of 10 months in federal prison for his part in the Watergate scandal.

U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica drily imposed the 10-month to 4-year term without a word of comment from the bench.

Former deputy director of President Nixon's re-election campaign, Magruder, 39, admitted helping plan the Watergate bugging and then lying and scheming to cover up the scandal, even to the point of perjuring himself in Sirica's courtroom last year during the original Watergate trial.

One of the first to break ranks by reporting the conspiracy to government prosecutors, Magruder said that the months since then have been "immensely painful" for him.

"It has been nearly impossible," he said softly, "for me to face the disappointment I see in the eyes of my friends, the confusion I see

in the eyes of my children, the heartbreak I see in the eyes of my wife and, probably more difficult, the contempt I see in the eyes of others. . . . My ambition obscured my judgment."

By now, Magruder told Sirica, "I know what I have done and your honor knows what I have done. You cannot measure the impact on this administration or on this nation of Watergate. But whatever the impact, I am confident that this country will survive its Watergates and its Jeb Magruders."

The judge gave him until June 4 to wrap up his personal affairs and said he would endorse a request by Magruder's attorneys that he be confined at the minimum security prison at Allenwood, Pa.

Former White House aide with a clean-scrubbed, all-American look, Magruder stood silently as sentence was passed. His wife, Gail, sat in a front row, dabbing

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tears away with a small white handkerchief.

The White House, through its spokesman Gerald Warren, had a brief statement on Magruder:

"The President has a personal concern for all persons who are concerned with this matter."

"I can't say that I'm looking forward to going to prison, but I expected to," Magruder told reporters outside the courthouse a few minutes later. He said he hoped the public would accept the penalty he is paying.

He faced a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Two reportedly "very personal" letters describing his cooperation in uncovering the scandal were submitted to Judge Sirica by Watergate prosecutors, but kept under seal.

Magruder has testified that former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, his boss at the Nixon re-election committee, approved the break-in and bugging at Democratic Party headquarters here. Magruder said that former White House aide Gordon Strachan was kept informed of the bugging plans and was also shown some results of the spy work. Magruder said he assumed that Strachan

passed the information on to his boss, former White House chief of staff H. R. (Bob) Haldeman.

On the West Coast when the five Watergate burglars were first arrested on June 17, 1972, Magruder was the first to be called with an inside report on the incident by Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy. Magruder said he, Mitchell, former Assistant Attorney General Robert C. Mardian, and Nixon campaign deputy Frederick LaRue immediately began casting about for ways to cut the losses.

"No one ever considered that there would not be a cover-up," Magruder has written in his forthcoming book, "An American Life: One Man's Road to Watergate."

He said, "It seemed inconceivable that with our political power, we could not erase the mistake we had made."

In excerpts from the book published in Sunday's New York Times magazine, Ma-

gruder also said that he told Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, just two days after discovery of the break-in, that it was "our operation." He said the then-Vice President frowned and told him, "I don't think we ought to discuss it again, in that case."

Yesterday's short, nine-minute court session made Magruder the sixth former Nixon White House aide to be sentenced on charges stemming from the Watergate scandal. He had originally been assured that his sentencing would be withheld until after completion of any criminal trials where his testimony might be needed, but he recently told Judge Sirica through his attorneys that he wanted to "get it over with" as soon as possible.

A former paper salesman who first met Mr. Nixon in Kansas City in the 1960 campaign, Magruder began talking to government prosecutors on April 14, 1973, a few days after then-White House counsel John W. Dean III

had also secretly broken ranks.

"Mr. Magruder has been serving a sentence for the past 13 months," one of his lawyers, James E. Sharp, said in the courtroom yesterday. "He has exposed himself and his family to a year of unremitting humiliation and contempt. And he watched, helpless to protect them, as his wife and children were forced to share his disgrace."

Sharp asked Judge Sirica, before sentence was passed, "that you not knock him down to where he can't get back up again."

Speaking up with his own prepared statement, Magruder said that he was full of ambition and "eager to succeed" when he first joined the White House staff in 1969.

"Somewhere between my ambitions and my ideals, I lost my ethical compass," he said. He said he was still distressed, and puzzled, at the ease with which that happened.