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Was Liddy a Knight

While in Federal prison at Terminal Island, Calif., Robert Dellinger began teaching a class in creative writing for inmates. Released in 1973, he continues to teach his class at the prison and a similar one at California State University at Long Beach.

By Robert Dellinger
Los Angeles Times

G. Gordon Liddy has got to be the most labyrinthine character in the 1972 White House-Committee to Re-elect the President crusade.

Now in a District of Columbia jail waiting to appear in the current Ellsberg break - in trial, Liddy spent five months at Terminal Island Federal Prison in San Pedro, Calif., doing time for his role in Watergate, stoically stonewalling the world and quietly smoldering while his former associates maneuvered, manipulated and pressured for lighter sentences, presidential clemency, hush money and divine forgiveness.

What sort of man is G. Gordon Liddy, the man who some have called the mastermind of Watergate?

Liddy's first appearance in my class at Terminal Island set the tone. He had seemingly materialized out of nowhere. When I saw his face and his full, neatly trimmed Balkan-spy mustache, I mistook him for former CIA agent and fellow Watergate burglar E. How-

ard Hunt, the author of more than two dozen spy novels. (I have as much trouble as anyone keeping the cast of characters straight.)

I wanted the class to know of his writing achievements and started an introduction. Recognizing that I had confused him with Hunt, Liddy cut me off - cold. "Don't associate me with that guy," he said disdainfully, perhaps because Hunt had demanded



hush money rather than hold his silence, as a good clandestine operator should.

Once Liddy had said his piece in class and made his position unmistakably clear, he commented freely and constructively on student work in progress.

At one point he even volunteered that he himself had written a story. I asked him to read it aloud to the class.

When he stood to speak, I could see that Liddy has a physique like a welterweight boxer's, and it helps give

him the aura of a man in his 20s rather than 40s.

He was ramrod stiff as he gazed out over the class; his eyes showing an intensity not unlike that of a gladiator psyching himself up to do battle in the Colosseum.

A lawyer by training, he betrayed signs of the disease that infects so many of the breed: hamitis. I wondered how the class of get-down street people - gunsels, dirty dope fiends, smugglers, funny-money men and others from the underbelly of life would react to him.

But they weren't put off a bit. Instead they were drawn into the story, held by the machismo theme, the energetic writing style and the author's own intense reading.

Liddy is a good writer. His prose is crisp and forceful, which suggests why he was looked on with awe and respect by many in the White House. "His memos were brilliant," one official told me recently.

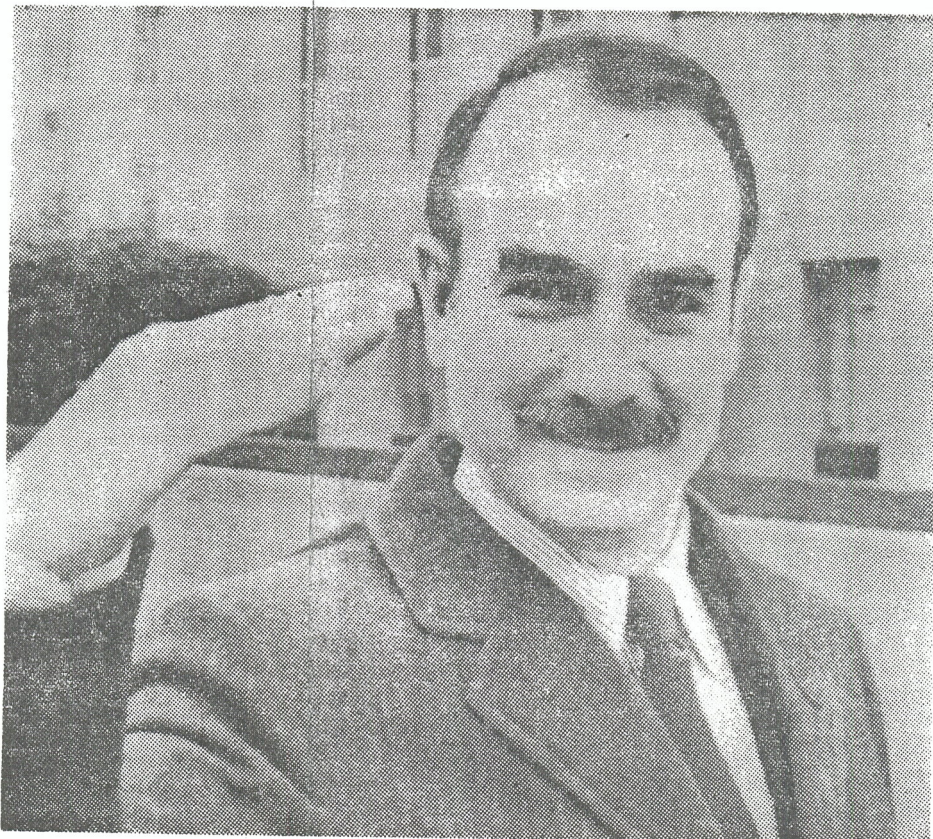
In his fiction, Liddy creates scintillating intellectual and philosophical dialogue, much in the manner of George Bernard Shaw.

He is preoccupied with warriors, honor, loyalty, obedience, respect for authority, the nobility of dying for one's country and for one's political beliefs.

He is preoccupied above all, with sacrifice.

Compassion however, was

Errant for Nixon?



G. Gordon Liddy: Themes of feudal loyalty ran through his writing

a subject he had difficulty with.

An assignment I gave to write about love resulted in an impersonal discussion between a man and a computer.

To me, Liddy's most revealing story was one revolving around the code of medieval knighthood.

A knight, who spent his life serving his overlord,

championed right against injustice and evil. Never flinching in the face of the enemy, he lived by a code of honor that applied only to members of his own class. He was free to act almost as he pleased toward persons of low birth or toward enemies. His training taught respect and humility to his superiors and bravery and vigilance at all times.

It seems to me that Ehrlichman, Haldeman and all

the rest did indeed practice a kind of feudalism in which the object of their homage was their lord, Richard Nixon. Liddy was one of the knights, always ready to do battle, forever loyal, never flinching in the face of adversity.

If the supreme test of knighthood is loyalty, Liddy passed that test with flying colors. His loyalty is his silence: he just smiles enigmatically, and does his time.