

Mardian Tells

By George Lardner Jr.
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Watergate cover-up defendant Robert C. Mardian said yesterday that former Attorney General John N. Mitchell once admitted approving a \$250,000 budget for Watergate spy G. Gordon Liddy.

A former Nixon campaign coordinator, Mardian said Mitchell made the admission at a meeting in the offices of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President on June 24, 1972—just a week after the Watergate arrests at Democratic National Committee headquarters here.

Testifying under cross-examination at the coverup trial here, the gravel-voiced Mardian, 51, said he had been assigned to handle the legal headaches growing out of the breakin and had been trying to find out how much money had been given to Liddy.

Nixon campaign deputy Jeb Stuart Magruder, who was also at the meeting, put the figure at \$40,000, the jurors were told.

"I expressed amazement," Mardian said. "Mr. Mitchell expressed equal amazement."

Sirica Jury Sees 'Six Rms Riv Vu'

United Press International

The Watergate grand jury had a night on the town Sunday—with only three federal marshals tagging along.

The 12 jurors and six alternates attended a production of the play "Six Rms Riv Vu" at a Washington-area dinner theatre.

A spokesman said the play—about a man and woman, both married, who meet in an empty apartment and have a brief affair—was chosen because it had no political content.

At that point, the witness recalled, "Magruder turned to Mitchell and told him, 'you approved a budget of \$250,000.'"

"Mr. Mitchell said 'Yes, but the campaign hasn't even started yet.'"

Mardian held firm to his own protestations of innocence in the alleged cover-up conspiracy. He acknowledged that Liddy had given him what amounted to a lengthy confession in the Watergate scandal a few days earlier. But he insisted that his lips were sealed by an impromptu attorney-client relationship.

A formal assistant attorney general, he described what Liddy told him as "the most shocking disclosure that's been made to me as a lawyer and as a person."

As Mardian recalled it, Watergate spy Liddy also told him that his burglary squad had planned to bug the campaign headquarters of Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern later on June 17 after finishing up at the Watergate.

Mardian exhibited reluctance in testifying about the Liddy disclosures. He said Liddy had refused to release him from his promise of confidentiality. Mardian called it "a little incongruous" for him to have to testify about the meeting after Liddy had gone to jail rather than break his silence.

U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica, who had ruled months ago that Mardian could not properly invoke the lawyer-client privilege, told him yesterday that he was being too argumentative. It was an admonition that the judge made repeatedly during the slow-moving session and that Mardian steadily ignored.

The balding and dour-faced Mardian said the meeting with Liddy took place on June 21, 1972—a day later than Watergate prosecutors have charged—in the apartment of Nixon

of Mitchell's Role



ROBERT C. MARDIAN
... testifies on payment

campaign strategist Frederick C. LaRue.

Mardian said Liddy, who had asked for the meeting, began by turning on LaRue's radio and standing by it to prevent what he said from being recorded.

"He indicated to me that he thought I had a recording device," Mardian testified. "He said he wanted to talk to me as his attorney."

Mardian said he told Liddy that he was the re-election committee's lawyer, but assured him that what Liddy said would be kept confidential because he was a committee employee.

With that assurance, Mardian said, Liddy explained how he, E. Howard Hunt, Jr., Nixon campaign security chief James W. McCord Jr. and the four Cuban-Americans Hunt had recruited had handled the break-in at Democratic headquarters in an effort to repair a bug in the offices of committee chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien.

Liddy also spoke of a reconnaissance trip past McGovern headquarters which Liddy highlighted, Mardian said, by standing on the shoulders of

one of the Cubans and knocking out a back entrance light with a single gunshot. Mardian said Liddy told him the incident had taken place the night of June 16 although the testimony of other witnesses has indicated that this actually happened in late May, before the first Watergate break-in.

In any event, Mardian related, Liddy tried to assure again and again that his involvement would never come out. He said none of the Cuban-Americans knew him except by an alias, claimed that Hunt and McCord would never talk, and insisted that he had always been careful to wipe out his fingerprints.

Admittedly "an impatient man," Mardian said he caustically asked Liddy whether he has ever used the bathroom at the Howard Johnson Motor Lodge suite across the street which served as a listening post for the Democratic National Committee phone conversations that had been bugged.

"I said, 'Did you use the john?'" Mardian recalled. He said Liddy conceded he might have left some fingerprints there.

Liddy told of keeping various stairway doors in the Watergate office building open with horizontal slices of tape that showed around the sides of the doors and then replacing them, again with easily discovered horizontal pieces, after the first set had been discovered and removed by a building guard.

Mardian said he told Liddy it seemed obvious from this "that there was a double agent involved" who wanted the burglars caught, but Liddy "denied that emphatically."

"He said the men with him were absolutely trustworthy," Mardian testified. "He said Hunt was the CIA planner of the Bay of Pigs."

The defendant said Liddy also told him "they had pulled off two jobs under my nose," Mardian's stint as assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's Internal Security Division. One was the 1971 break-in at the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist when the Internal Security Division was pressing Ellsberg's prosecution in the Pentagon Papers case.

The other caper that Liddy proudly claimed, Mardian testified, was getting International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. lobbyist Dita Beard out of town during the 1972 Senate confirmation hearings on the appointment of Richard G. Kleindienst as Attorney General.

"I recall venting my displeasure," Mardian said, explaining that he had served as Kleindienst's lawyer at those hearings. He said Kleindienst had been confident of knocking down charges of administration favoritism towards ITT despite a memo Dita Beard had supposedly written alleging a deal.

Kleindienst wanted nothing more than to have "that boozy broad" [Mrs. Beard] testify at the Senate hearings, Mardian declared, calling her sudden disappearance "a disaster."

"This was the tragedy of the Kleindienst hearings," Mardian protested. "And what he [Liddy] was telling me in effect was that the White House had gotten her out of town."

Under questioning by his own defense lawyer, Thomas Green, Mardian said Liddy also told him of destroying all documents that might link him to the break-in, even shredding \$100 bills in Nixon campaign money along with souvenir soap wrappers that he had collected from telltale hotels.

"He saved the soap and destroyed the money," Mardian said. "Which was kind of incongruous."