

New Job for 'Spy'

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RONALD REAGAN defended ex-President Richard Nixon's Watergate record until the last incriminating tape was made public. Now Reagan has signed on a key member of the Watergate team, Kenneth Rietz.

Throughout the Watergate uproar, Reagan went out of his way to defend the Nixon "spies" because, he contended, they were not "criminals at heart." Now he has assigned a major role in his campaign to one of Nixon's chief spies.

For during the 1972 campaign, Rietz ran a junior Watergate operation. He formed a network of young spies and dirty tricksters who came to be called the "Kiddie Corps."

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ONE OF HIS undercover operatives, a George Washington University student, was paid \$150 a week to infiltrate a peace vigil at the White House and set up the demonstrators for arrest on drug charges.

Rietz also directed the colorful John "Fat Jack" Buckley, who planted a spy in the headquarters of Senator Edmund Muskie (Dem-Me.). For \$1000 a month, the spy slipped folders full of intra-office memos to Buckley, who photographed them with a 35-millimeter camera and delivered the film strips to Rietz.

Like a couple of characters in a

spy thriller, Rietz and Fat Jack would meet on street corners near the White House to transfer the clandestine negatives. This was how President Nixon kept tabs on the man who was then considered his most likely Democratic rival.

H.R. Haldeman, was so pleased with the results that he began grooming the 32-year-old Rietz to be the next Republican National Chairman. Rietz actually was preparing to take charge of the 1974 Republican congressional campaign when his Watergate activities hit the headlines. He resigned under fire.

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NOW REAGAN has brought him back into politics. At age 34, Rietz is a shrewd political operator, who handles special events for the Reagan campaign and is also Reagan's chief organizer in California. In fact, Rietz' home is the temporary Reagan headquarters in the state. Rietz told us he has received "no heat" because of his Watergate connection. But the un-scent-ed odor or Watergate lingers.

Footnote: Reagan's press adviser, the able, affable Lyn Nofziger, also has a slight Watergate aroma. In 1972, he slipped \$10,000 of Nixon's ill-gotten campaign cash to a political promoter who used the money to hire members of the American Nazi Party to woo George Wallace supporters into the Nixon camp.