

Book Describes Nixon's 'Rambling Talk'

New York

In the early days of the Watergate impeachment investigation, Richard Nixon gave a dinner at the White House during which he was "jovial at first, bantering with those seated closest to him, but by the end of the main course he had begun to ramble," a new book says.

The book, by Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, will be published next month. The title is "The Final Days."

The guests at the dinner, given Dec. 21, 1973, included Mr. Nixon's political adviser, Bryce Harlow, and Senator Barry Goldwater (Rep.-Ariz.), one of Mr. Nixon's principal supporters in the Senate.

"The group left the table for after-dinner drinks and more conversation," says the account. "Nixon seemed to be trying to reach out to each person — as if to convince himself that this was his team, Harlow thought. But the President was having trouble getting his

words out. 'Bryce, explain what I'm saying to Barry,' he said several times, after having given up himself."

The book says a number of topics were touched upon during the evening, including Watergate, the conduct in office of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, opposition to Mr. Nixon by Democrats and the press and the partisan nature of the impeachment investigation.

"The next day," the book says, "Goldwater called Harlow, 'Is the President off his rocker?'"

"No. He was drunk."

"Goldwater was half-convinced."

"The President was trusting enough about those at the table to let down his guard. 'Barry, it's the highest compliment that can be conveyed by the President of the United States.' It was very healthy that Nixon had been able to do it," the book says.

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