

Eyewitness Bares Watergate Details

Phone Monitored for 3 Weeks

The following account of the June 17 Watergate raid is by a key government witness before the grand jury that indicted seven men in the break-in-and-bugging case. He spoke out for the first time in a five-hour interview with the Los Angeles Times.

By Alfred C. Baldwin III

As told to Jack Nelson

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POP
10/6/72

NEW HAVEN, Conn.—Across the street in the Democratic National offices I could see men with guns and flashlights looking behind desks and out on the balcony.

It was a weird scene at Washington's Watergate complex. The men were looking for several persons, including my boss—James W. McCord Jr., who was security director for both President Nixon's re-election committee and the Republican National Committee.

A short while later, McCord and four other men, all in handcuffs, would be led by police to patrol cars and taken to jail. And a White House consultant would rush into my motel room across the street from the Democratic offices and peer down on the scene before fleeing the area.

See BALDWIN, A38, Col. 1

BALDWIN, From A1

I had been using a walkie-talkie and acting as a lookout for McCord and his men, who were engaged in a bugging operation. For three weeks I had monitored conversations on a tapped phone in the Democratic offices.

My mission had been to record all conversations. McCord appeared to be especially interested in any information on Sen. George McGovern and the Democratic Party Chairman, Lawrence O'Brien, and anything having to do with political strategy.

When the Committee for the Re-Election of the President hired me for security work with Martha Mitchell, nothing was said about eventual espionage missions involving electronic eavesdropping.

But then the man I worked directly under, Jim McCord, was not given to long explanations about anything. You would have to know McCord to understand what I mean.

Like myself, McCord is an ex-FBI agent. But he also served 20 years in the Central Intelligence Agency and he is one of those ex-CIA men who do more listening than talking. When he wants you to do something else, he just tells you. No buildup or anything.

When McCord was ready to switch me from protecting John Mitchell's wife to other security work, he simply told me that the President's re-election committee had other work for me. Contrary to some press reports, I got

along fine with Mrs. Mitchell during the days I protected her. She is a vivacious person and I found working with her fascinating.

But I felt any work with the re-election committee would be fascinating and I like Jim McCord.

I never questioned McCord's orders. I felt he was acting under orders and with full authority. After all, his boss was John Mitchell, the committee director and former Attorney General of the United States.

If that was not enough to impress me with McCord's authority and official standing, we were surrounded by former White House aides McCord said were "on loan" to the committee.

My involvement with the committee began May 1 when McCord telephoned my home in Hamden, Conn. He had secured a resume I had filed with the society of ex-FBI agents in New York and had reviewed it and several other resumes on file with this society. He felt that because of my age, background and marital status—I am 36 and single—I was best suited for the position.

He said they (the committee) needed someone immediately so I took a plane to Washington that night and registered at the Roger Smith Hotel where we met the next morning. He emphasized that although the job was temporary, it could be a stepping-stone to a permanent position after President Nixon's re-election.

We walked a block down the street

to the re-election committee headquarters at 1701 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., a block from the White House, and McCord took me on a tour of committee offices on several floors. As different persons passed, McCord would say things like, "That's so and so, he's from the White House" or, "There's another one who's on loan from the White House."

We went to the office of Fred La Rue to get approval for my employment and McCord said, "Mr. La Rue is over from the White House. He's John Mitchell's right-hand man."

La Rue was friendly enough, but very businesslike. McCord read some brief data he had jotted down on the back of an envelope: "Al Baldwin, ex-FBI agent, former Marine captain, law degree, taught police science . . ."

La Rue looked me up and down. I was in standard FBI dress—conservative suit, white shirt and tie and black, wing-tipped shoes. Our conversation was brief. I think he asked if I was prepared to travel and I said, "Yes, sir," He replied, "Okay, that's fine."

La Rue Issues Baldwin A Gun

McCord later issued me a loaded .38-snub-nosed police special and said, "You'll wear this." I had no permit or official identification and questioned whether I was authorized to carry it.

He handed me a card bearing his name and the name of the re-election committee and said: "You're working for the former Attorney General and there's no way a policeman or any other law enforcement officer is going to question your right to carry that weapon. But if you have any problem, have them call me."

In McCord's office at committee headquarters I noticed extensive electronic equipment—walkie-talkies, television surveillance units and various other devices. The top to a fancy briefcase was open, exposing considerable electronic equipment. I was told it was a debugging unit.

McCord told me I would be accompanying Mrs. Mitchell on a trip to Michigan and New York. He issued me \$800—eight brand new \$100 bills—and said it was for food, drinks, tips and incidental expenses for the trip.

In Michigan, where Mrs. Mitchell attended several affairs, we were joined by La Rue. He mentioned to me at one point that the pistol I was carrying had once been his weapon. As far as I knew, he was not in security work and I did not know why he would have needed a pistol. But I asked no questions.

From Michigan we went to New York City. One of the FBI's bullet-proof limousines used by the late J. Edgar Hoover met us at Grand Central

Station and took us to a suburban town where we stayed for two days. When we left, the same limousine picked us up and carried us back to Grand Central Station. I was impressed.

Appreciation from John Mitchell

The campaign trip lasted for seven days. Upon our return to Washington, I was called up to the Mitchell apartment in the Watergate where Mitchell thanked me for the job I had done.

I had expected to leave in two days on another trip with his wife, but McCord said she was not feeling well and the situation was so "delicate" that Fred La Rue was accompanying her. He said he had other security work for

me and he advanced me another \$500—five brand new \$100 bills.

At McCord's direction, I moved from the Roger Smith Hotel to the Howard Johnson Motel across the street from the Watergate. I checked into Room 419, which he had registered under McCord Associates, the name of his security firm.

McCord gave me a code name, Bill Johnson, and instructed me to investigate antiwar demonstrations that were occurring in Washington about that time. I was supposed to try to learn of any plans of demonstrators to damage Republican headquarters or to disrupt the Republican convention in Miami in August.

I still had no committee identification, however, and twice authorities had to telephone the committee to establish my credentials. Once a Secret Service agent stopped me at the Capitol and another time security police stopped me at Andrews Air Force Base. Both times the committee vouched for my credentials.

On May 24, after about two weeks of covering demonstrations, I visited my home in Hamden. When I returned to Washington the next day, I found Jim McCord in Room 419 surrounded by an array of electronic equipment, including walkie-talkies and the debugging case that had been in his office at the re-election committee.

A sophisticated receiving set, which McCord later said was worth approximately \$15,000, was in a large blue Samsonite suitcase. There was a portable radio with shortwave band and an array of tape recorders and other pieces of equipment.

"You'll Be Doing Some Monitoring"

McCord said, "I want to show you some of this equipment and how we're going to use it." Just like that, no preliminaries and no explanations of why we would use it.

"You'll be doing some monitoring on this equipment," he said, and proceeded to show me how to operate the monitoring unit.

Then he took the room telephone apart and inserted a tap in it. To test the device, he dialed a local number

for a recorded announcement. The tap picked up the message.

McCord pointed across the street to the Watergate and said, "We're going to put some units over there tonight and you'll be monitoring them." He didn't have to tell me; I knew the Democratic National Committee offices were in the Watergate.

From the balcony outside Room 419, I watched McCord walk across Virginia Avenue and enter the Watergate complex. Subsequently he appeared at a window of the Democratic offices and I could see at least one other person and perhaps two with him.

McCord later returned to the motel room and said, "We've got the units over there." He began adjusting the monitoring unit.

We were not sure whose telephones had been tapped. They had tapped one telephone they believed belonged to Lawrence O'Brien and had tapped another one they hoped belonged to a staff official close to O'Brien.

McCord finally picked up a conversation on one phone on the monitoring unit. At first we thought the phone was used by a man named Spencer, then we decided it was used by a man named Oliver. Finally, we realized it was used by a man named Spencer Oliver, who happened to be coordinator of the State Democratic Party chairmen.

A number of persons besides Oliver used his phone too. Over the next three weeks I would monitor approximately 200 telephone conversations. Some dealing with political strategy and others concerning personal matters. With several secretaries and others using the phone, apparently in the belief it was one of the more private lines in the Democratic offices, some conversations were explicitly intimate.

"We can talk," a secretary would say, "I'm on Spencer Oliver's phone."

Ed and George: Hunt and Liddy

McCord told me two men who were working with him were coming into the motel room and he would introduce us by code names since we were all involved in security work. He introduced them as Ed and George. I have since learned they were G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt Jr., former White House aides.

McCord explained the monitoring devices and other electronic equipment to Liddy and Hunt. They stayed a short while, then left.

On May 26 McCord told me, "We're going into another area tonight."

About midnight McCord and I left in his car and headed toward the Capitol. He was driving and holding a walkie-talkie, which he hooked on and held out through the car window. He finally contacted another unit as we neared the Capitol and said we were approaching the area.

He told me to keep an eye open for a Volkswagen, there was someone in it

who would be working with us. On a street near the Capitol we passed a small building bearing a McGovern Headquarters sign and McCord pointed and said, "That's what we're interested in right there."

Not until then did I realize the target was McGovern Headquarters. An upstairs light was on and a drunk was standing in front of the building.

McCord pointed to a row of buildings across the street from McGovern Headquarters and said, "We're trying to rent a place over there where you'll be doing the same thing you're doing in the other place."

As we passed a parked car about a block from McGovern Headquarters, a voice came in over McCord's walkie-talkie: "You just went by us, did you see us?"

McCord replied that he had and pulled our car alongside the parked car. There were people in the front and back seats.

A man stepped from the car, walked over to our car and slid into the seat

More national and foreign news will be found today on Pages beginning with B17.

beside me and started talking to McCord without even acknowledging I was there. It was Liddy. I could not identify the persons in the back seat.

Liddy, who acted as though he was McCord's superior, was carrying an attache case. But he did not open it. On a subsequent visit to the monitoring room at the motel he inadvertently left the case. The only item in it at that time was a high-powered pellet pistol, wrapped in a towel.

McCord cruised around the McGovern Headquarters as he and Liddy talked. Liddy, holding onto his attache case, expressed concern about a spotlight that illuminated the back of the building and asked, "Do you think we ought to take it out?" McCord said he thought it would not be a problem.

McCord and Liddy seemed to be nervous because the Volkswagen had failed to show up and because the drunk was still in front of the building. Finally, about 3:30 a.m., Liddy said, "We can't do it tonight; we'll have to do it another night."

We let Liddy out of his car and McCord drove me back to the motel where I would resume my monitoring activities. There was no set time for monitoring. The Democrats worked weird hours, like on Sundays and some days until 3 or 4 in the morning. And when I was in the room, I was monitoring from the time I got up until I went to bed.

How the Monitoring Worked

I would keep an eye on the little

TV-type screen on the monitoring unit. A constant line ran across the screen when the tapped phone was not in use. When someone started using the phone, the line would scatter and I would quickly put on the earphones.

The first couple of days I monitored it, I wrote a log of the calls in long-hand. But after that McCord brought a typewriter and I typed the logs from my notes. I kept them in duplicate and gave both copies to McCord.

Initially, I would write "Unit 118" in the upper right hand corner of the log. But McCord, realizing that this was the actual frequency monitored, told me to use a code number and I started using the number 418.

I would also write the date and page number in the upper right hand corner. In the body of the log on the left side I would designate the time and write "unit on." Then I would drop down a line and mark the time of the first recorded conversation and specify "call in" or "callout." I would then write the contents of the conversation.

McCord would come by once or twice a day to pick up the logs. Sometimes the logs would be only a page or two long, but on a busy day they might run to six pages.

When something important in the logs would catch McCord's eye, he would quickly sit down and type up a memo from information in the logs. He would start the memo with, "A confidential source reports."

Sometimes when I monitored conversations I thought were especially important I telephoned him at the re-election committee and told him there was something of interest to him. The first couple of times I called I started to tell him about the conversation, but he said, "Don't talk about it over the telephone. I'll come over."

A few days after the monitoring began McCord instructed me to find another room that would give us a better view of the Democratic offices and perhaps help us establish contact with the tap there that we had been unable to monitor.

I checked us into Room 723 with a view directly across from the Democratic offices.

About June 6, McCord left for Miami, advising that the would be gone only a day. The next day he telephoned, however, and said he had been delayed. I replied that I had recorded some important conversations. He did not want to discuss them on the telephone but instructed me to deliver my original logs to an official at the President's re-election committee.

He said to put the logs in an envelope and to staple and tape the envelope. He gave me the name of an official and I wrote it on an envelope. It was someone I believed was superior to McCord, although I can't recall his name, but it was not Liddy or Hunt.

That evenings I carried the envelope

to the committee headquarters. An elderly guard was on duty in the lobby of the building and he took the envelope, recognized the name on it and said he would see to it that the official received it.

McCord's Mission in Miami

McCord told me that he was in Miami checking on security arrangements being made for the Democratic and Republican conventions. He said that during the Democratic convention we'd be needed in Miami for monitoring and other security work and that the President's committee had already opened a suite of hotel rooms down there. FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS WE HAD BEEN TRYING WITHOUT SUCCESS TO DETERMINE O'Brien whereabouts. Also McCord was interested in the precise location of O'Brien's office since he was uncertain that the tap he had been unable to monitor was actually on O'Brien's phone.

On June 12 McCord told me to visit the Democratic Committee offices under my code name to find out what I could about O'Brien's whereabouts and the location of his office. Since I am from Connecticut and familiar with the Democratic Party officials there, I passed myself off as a nephew of our state chairman, John Bailey.

"This is Bill Johnson of Connecticut, a nephew of John Bailey," said a secretary who introduced me around.

O'Brien's secretary said, "Oh, yes, would you like to see Mr. O'Brien's office? This used to be your uncle's office."

It was the first time I knew that Bailey was a former national chairman of the Democratic Party.

I made a mental note of the office's location overlooking the Potomac River, and I asked if anyone knew O'Brien's whereabouts. His secretary said he was somewhere in Miami and subsequently I was furnished O'Brien's telephone number in Miami.

I returned to the motel room and gave McCord the number and we went

over a sketch of O'Brien's office. He seemed extremely pleased.

There were also plans to return to McGovern's headquarters on the weekend. McCord said, "You know the place we were at the other night? We've got to go back there."

Later, Liddy and Hunt came into the motel room. With McCord they walked out on the balcony and looked over toward the Democratic offices.

Before Liddy left, he reached into his inside coat pocket and withdrew an envelope containing a thick stack of brand new \$100 bills. He counted off about 16 or 18 bills and handed them to McCord, who put them in his wallet.

On Friday evening, June 16, McCord displayed a unit that I thought looked like door chimes. He removed the unit's cover, exposing a sophisticated electronic device.

Then to test the device he put it next to the television set and turned the set on. The unit picked up the television reception. It was a bug, as opposed to a telephone tap, and was the first listening device I had ever seen unattached to a phone.

Later in the evening McCord displayed a shopping bag full of different kinds of tools and equipment—screwdrivers, wires, batteries and soldering irons. The room ended up looking like a small electronics workshop.

Waiting for the Lights to go Off

McCord indicated to me that in addition to placing new devices at the Democratic headquarters, the unit we had been unable to monitor would either be removed from the offices or put in a new location in the offices.

We both continued working on the devices for some time. During a telephone conversation McCord said he might have to wait until another night to carry out the mission... some guy was still working in the Democratic offices.

Suddenly I saw the light in the committee offices go off and I told McCord, "Hey, look. The guy's leaving now."

McCord told the other party that the light had been turned off and that they could proceed. Then he handed me a walkie-talkie and said he was going across the street. He said, "If you see anything unusual, any activity, anybody around, you get on this and let us know."

He took his wallet, change, car keys and other items from his trouser pock-

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ets and dropped them on the bed. He left the room with a rain coat over his arm. After he left, I noticed that the listening device that looked like door chimes was missing.

I walked out on the balcony and watched him cross Virginia Avenue and walk into the Watergate complex.

Less than an hour later, the lights on the entire floor above the Democratic Committee offices went on. I picked up the walkie-talkie—I don't remember whether I identified myself as "Unit 1" or "Base"—but I said, "We've got some activity."

A man whose voice I did not recognize—it was not McCord—responded, "What have you got?"

I mentioned the lights going on and he replied, "Okay, we know about that, that's the 2 o'clock guard check. Let us know if the lights go on any other place."

My watch indicated it was 2:15. I figured the guard check was late.

Not long after that a car parked in front of the Watergate and three men got out and went inside. I wondered if that meant anything, but I did not use the walkie-talkie at that time.

Suddenly, a few minutes later, the lights went on inside the Democratic offices. I noticed the figures of three men. At least two of them came out on the balcony. They were casually dressed and were carrying flashlights and guns. I could see one man in the office holding a gun in front of him and looking behind desks.

Watching from the balcony outside my room, I grabbed the walkie-talkie and said, "Base to any unit." A voice came back: "What have you got?"

I said, "Are our people dressed casually or are they in suits?"

An anxious voice asked, "What?" I repeated the question.

"Our people are dressed in suits," the voice said.

"Well," I answered, "we've got problems. We've got some people dressed casually and they've got guns. They're looking around the balcony and everywhere, but they haven't come across our people."

The man on the other end sounded absolutely panic stricken now and started calling: "Are you reading this? Are you reading this?"

Receiving no reply, he then added: "They don't have the unit on or it's not turned up. Are you still in the room?"

I replied, "Right."

He said: "Stay there. I'll be right over."

Police Are All Over the Place

By now, there was all kinds of police activity—motorcycles and paddywagons driving up and guys jumping out of patrol cars and running up to the Watergate. Then I saw two men carrying suitcases casually walking out of the hotel section. I recognized one as Hunt, he glanced up at the balcony where I stood, and then with the other man walked over and entered a car parked in front of the Watergate. The two of them drove away.

Moments later I was contacted on the walkie-talkie again and told: "We're on the way up. Be there in a minute." I said, "You'd better not park near this building, police are all over the place."

He said, "Okay."

Then I heard a voice from another unit whisper. "They've got us." Then McCord's voice came through: "What are you people? Are you metropolitan police or what?"

Another voice demanded: "What's that?" And then the unit went silent. I tried to renew the contact, but to no avail.

A few minutes later Hunt, wearing a windbreaker, rushed into the room. He was extremely nervous.

"What do you see?" he asked.

I told him I saw McCord and some other men being led away from the Watergate in handcuffs. He walked over, looked down at the scene and then said: "I've got to call a lawyer."

Picking up the phone, he dialed a local number. "They've had it," he told the party on the other end, adding: "Well, I've got \$5,000 in cash with me we can use for bond money."

Hunt, hanging up the phone, turned and asked if I knew where McCord lived. I said yes, I had been to his house in Rockville. He instructed me to pack all the equipment and take it to McCord's house and asked if I had a place to go.

I said I could go to my home in Connecticut and he said, "Well, get all this stuff out of here and you get out of here. Somebody will be in touch with you."

With that, he threw his walkie-talkie on the bed and rushed from the room. "Does that mean I'm out of a job?" I shouted after him. But he disappeared down the hallway without answering.