

Final cover-up arguments begin today

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Nixon re-election committee lawyer Kenneth W. Parkinson told on Wednesday of passing notes he hadn't read, relaying messages he didn't understand and of shredding some of his files.

Parkinson, the fifth and last defendant to testify at the Watergate cover-up trial, said he refused to go along with a suggestion that he forget about seeing secret FBI files or altering important notations in a diary.

Except for a handful of character witnesses, Parkinson's appearance on the witness stand was expected to wind up testimony in the trial, now in its 12th week.

Final arguments begin Thursday, U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica said he would give his instructions to the jury the day after Christmas, thereby allowing the jurors a holiday with their families.

All through the questioning by his own lawyer, Parkinson insisted he acted in his professional capacity to defend the Committee for the Re-election of the President against civil lawsuits filed

after the Watergate break-in. He said he had no intention of obstructing justice.

"I did not have facts; I did not know certain things. All I had was third- and fourth-hand information, much of which was hearsay," Parkinson said.

He is charged, along with former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell, former White House aides H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, and committee official Robert C. Mardian, with conspiring to hide the Watergate affair.

Parkinson, 47, told of a telephone call from William O. Bitman, a lawyer for Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt, who said that he had "received a mysterious telephone call from a man named Rivers and did I know anything about him?"

Parkinson said he didn't and asked election committee official Frederick C. LaRue who said, "Tell Bill Bitman, Mr. Rivers is okay," Parkinson said.

Q. Did you know Mr. Rivers was a code name for Tony Ulasewicz?

A. No. Ulasewicz was the "bagman" who delivered money raised by Nixon's personal lawyer, Herbert W. Kalmbach, to the defendants in clandestine ways.

The day after the conversation Parkinson described, \$25,000 was left at a telephone in the lobby of Bitman's building.

Sometime after Thanksgiving, Parkinson said Bitman asked to come to his office because, he said, "he had a very important memo or item that would be of importance to my client."

"I asked him what it was and he said he didn't know. I thought it was rather peculiar."

Parkinson said he made a copy of the one-page, hand-written memorandum, put it into his coat pocket and took it to former White House counsel John W. Dean III.

Q. Did you read the contents?

A. I did not... I didn't want to read it. I didn't feel it was any of my business.

The contents were not discussed in court. But LaRue has testified that the memorandum were notes by Mrs. Hunt on the money needs of the Watergate defendants.

Parkinson also testified he talked to Dean about statements by Bitman concerning some kind of commitment for his client, Hunt.

Dean "suggested simply 'you don't know anything about any commitments. You don't know who made any commitments but any commitments made will be honored.'"

Parkinson said he carried that message back to Bitman.

One accusation against Parkinson is that Bitman had told him of a memorandum from Hunt saying that in return for their silence the Watergate burglars would receive pardons and support money. But Parkinson said he had not heard about that Hunt memo until Bitman disclosed it during the course of the trial.

Parkinson said he interviewed Magruder, who made accusations against Mitchell, Dean and a great many others in the White House and re-election committee. Parkinson had testified that Mitchell told him none of it was true.

Parkinson said he shredded his notes of his interview with Magruder because there were so many leaks in the press and he did not want the notes to get out.