

The Watergate Scandal's

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THE FORGOTTEN man in the Watergate scandal is 35-year-old Spencer Oliver, the only Democratic official known positively to have had his telephone tapped.

Oliver claims he has been dogged by trouble ever since the tiny black "bug" was discovered inside his phone by FBI agents last September.

"I am the only one damaged," declared the good-looking, personable lawyer, a former national president of the Young Democrats.

His plight has been overshadowed by the fast-breaking headlines on sensational Watergate developments at the White House and elsewhere.

Oliver's legal push to collect hefty damages, among other things, has caused a rift with Robert Strauss, Democratic party chairman. Last week Strauss dropped Oliver from the national committee payroll.

But Oliver can be expected to remain a thorn in Strauss' side for some time.

Oliver said he and his wife have been targets of cocktail-party jibes and "ugly, vicious rumors" about his tapped conversation.

He suspects some were planted by Strauss' staff. One staffer said he had heard "interesting rumors about the personal talk" on Oliver's phone.

Oliver said he has had to retain two lawyers, to battle for his job and for what he sees as his rightful share of the damages expected from the Democrats' pending \$6.4 million civil suit against the Republican campaign committee for the break-in.

He claims the Democratic state chairmen have defied Strauss and twice voted to retain Oliver as executive director of their association. They want to double his salary, Oliver said.

In the early stages of the case, during the criminal trial of the Watergate Seven,

Oliver won two rulings from the circuit court of appeals, blocking release of his phone conversations.

His line was reportedly tapped for three-and-one-half weeks preceding the break-in.

No tapes of the conversations exist, Oliver said, merely records based on the wiretapper's memory.

Oliver called himself "the first victim of the attempted cover-up."

He said Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl Silbert hoped to confine the case to an alleged blackmail attempt and thus divert attention from the political spying allegedly known to higher-ups in the Nixon administration.

He professes to be "not wealthy. They couldn't get any money out of me if they tried. I live off my salary in a small house in the suburbs with my wife and three children."

He said Silbert and others told him they wanted to reveal his tapped conversations "to inflame the jury about this terrible invasion of privacy.

"Their attempt to establish blackmail as the motive spurred all kinds of gossip about me. They were trying to bring out conversations that would look as if I were doing something politically or personally not in keeping with my position.

"A hostile prosecutor can take that out of context and make you look pretty bad on the stand."

The publicity is still causing embarrassment to the Olivers. "My wife Florence has been upset about all the questions we get but she has been a real trooper," Oliver said.

He is regarded as a liberal and Strauss as a conservative, which may account for some of their differences. Oliver claims he stayed neutral in Strauss' fight for the

party chairmanship, but Strauss is said to feel otherwise.

The rift surfaced when Oliver called a news conference recently and blew the whistle on Strauss' secret negotiations with former Attorney General John Mitchell to settle the case out of court.

Oliver said Strauss' lawyers disassociated themselves from him "because there might be a conflict of interest if they decided they wanted to release my phone conversations.

"I'm an indispensable party to the case," he added.

"Under the wiretap laws the rights and damages for invasion of privacy run to individuals who use the phone. The Democratic National Committee doesn't have a suit without that count."