

# Liddy as Teen-ager Was Intense and

## His Boyhood Friends Recall Early Years in New Jersey

By PHILIP WECHSLER

Special to The New York Times

WEST CALDWELL, N.J., Aug. 21—It was spring of 1943, in the middle of World War II when patriotic fervor gripped small rural American towns like West Caldwell.

Five young boys, barely into their teens, were playing a game with toy guns called "Soldier," in which one youth was designated the "German" and hid in the woods to elude his playmates, the "G.I.'s."

The "German" in this particular game was G. Gordon Liddy.

Just as the game began a sudden and heavy rainstorm burst, forcing the four G.I.'s to take shelter in a barn. They sat there for 30 minutes until the storm subsided, assuming that Gordon would also seek cover and the game would be temporarily suspended.

"We canceled out, but Gordon was always one, as he would say, to 'complete a mission,'" William Jacobus Jr., one of the G.I.'s and a close boyhood pal of Liddy's, recalled. "All during the storm, there was Gordon, drenched, still darting from tree to tree trying to elude

### Tenacity Recalled

Gordon was intense about such things, he had this tenacity that when he started something he didn't want to quit," said Mr. Jacobus, now a senior editor of an engineering trade magazine in New York.

Some friends and classmates of Liddy believe that it was, perhaps, this trait to "complete a mission" that was among the factors that spurred him to head the Watergate break-in and bugging team. Liddy is now serving a 6- to 20-year Federal prison sentence for that role.

He spent most of his youthful years here in West Caldwell, then a sparsely populated town of 5,000 that was prosperous, peaceful and Protestant.

The Liddys were one of the few Roman Catholic families in town, and like just about everyone else they were Republican and conservative. Two decades later when the population doubled and West Caldwell became suburban instead of rural, Liddy's father, Sylvester, a prominent patent lawyer, became the only Roman Catholic ever elected Mayor here.

His boyhood friends and

neighbors remember Liddy as an average teen-ager of that era: well-behaved, athletically active, good student, devoted churchgoer, shy with girls, as well as impressionable and tenacious.

George Gordon Battle Liddy was born in Brooklyn on Nov. 30, 1930, and was named after a prominent lawyer and Tammany Hall leader, George Gordon Battle.

In 1935, the family moved across the Hudson River to Hoboken and five years later to a huge, 16-room, six-fireplace home here on one acre. In addition to Gordon, his younger sister Margaret and their parents, the household included a younger cousin, Dennis Reardon, and an aunt and grandmother.

His parents, now in their seventies and said by friends to be "crushed" by their son's Watergate conviction, still live here in the white three-story home. His sister, who bore a striking resemblance to Elizabeth Taylor, the actress, is married, a mother and lives in a nearby town.

### Respect for Law and Order

Growing up with a father who was a lawyer and named after an attorney, Gordon had instilled in him a respect for the law and for law and order (before the phrase became a political slogan).

The law-and-order influence was in great part derived from his uncle, Ray Abaticcio (his mother's brother), a career agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"Gordon was always talking about his uncle being an F.B.I. agent," said Thomas Hedden, who lived around the corner from the Liddys and was another close friend of Gordon.

"Those were the days when it was an F.B.I. associated with the rip-roaring days of John Dillinger, of G-men capturing public enemies," Mr. Hedden said. "And it was quite a thing for Gordon, as it would have been for all of us, to have an uncle who was a G-man." Mr. Hedden later became an F.B.I. agent and served briefly under Mr. Abaticcio, who is now dead.

Mr. Hedden and Liddy were both F.B.I. agents in the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties, but

they never served together. Mr. Hedden is now an executive in charge of security for a corporation based in San Francisco.

"Not only were we impressed with the capture of the John Dillingers and the other public enemies, but the F.B.I. was also helping to save the country from German and Japanese spies," he recalled. "It was all very exciting and glamorous to us as teen-agers, using two-way mirrors and listening devices."

### Dated Liddy's Sister

Mr. Hedden, who dated Liddy's sister while in college, also remembered Liddy as a determined youth when he wanted to achieve a goal.

"Running was a popular sport back then and Gordon wanted to make the high school track team. But he didn't have the speed to be a sprinter or even a miler. So he took up cross-country.

"It takes a lot of endurance to run long distances, but Gordon stuck to it and he did make the team."

Liddy became good enough — although not a star — to make the St. Benedict's Preparatory team that won the New Jersey prep state championship in his senior year, 1948. Liddy's father also graduated from St. Benedict's, which is in Newark, 10 miles east of here.

Liddy was a better-than-average student and was on the school's wrestling team. He also lifted weights and developed a muscular frame.

With his ink-black hair

S, MONDAY, AUGUST 27, 1973

# Tenacious

**GORDON BATTLE LIDDY**

55 Hillcrest Road

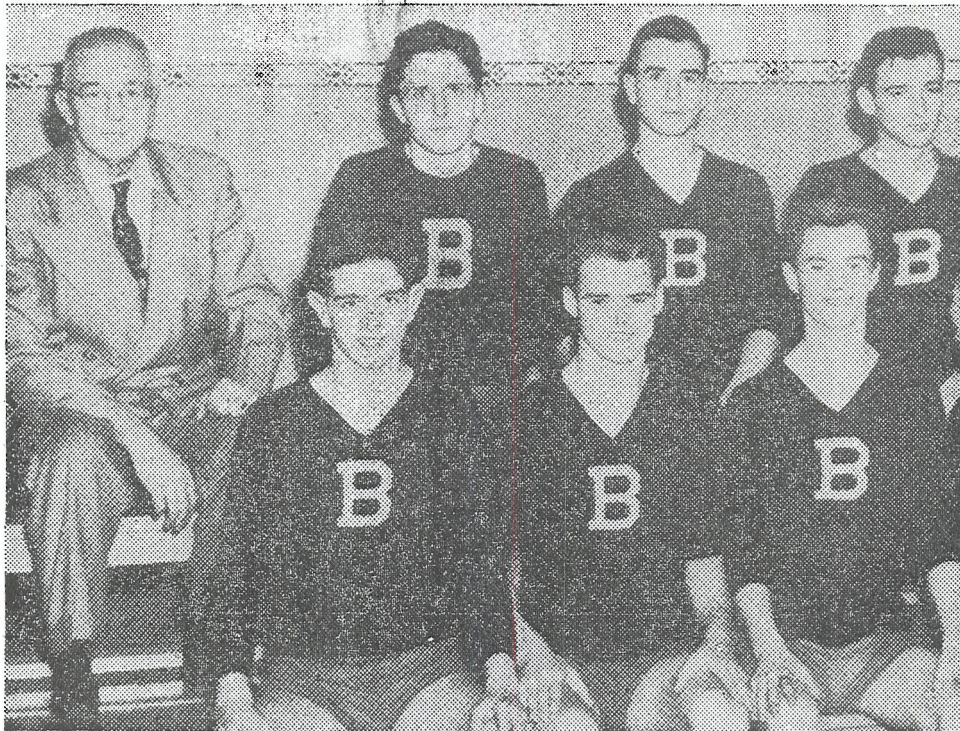
Caldwell

Gordon, while one of the better students in our class, has been a track man of outstanding ability. With his pleasant personality he has placed himself in the spotlight of school affairs. Gordon is always ready to assist his fellow students as a true friend and classmate. It is rumored that he plans to make the legal profession his life's work. Smooth sailing to you, Gordon.

Wrestling 3; Outdoor Track 3; Cross Country 4; Intramural Track 3.



G. Gordon Liddy's biography in the 1948 yearbook of St. Benedict's Preparatory School in Newark. He then entered Fordham and moved from West Caldwell, N.J., to the Bronx.



At a time when track was a popular sport, Liddy, second from the right, top, made the St. Benedict's cross-country team, winner of the state prep championship.

and eyes and engaging smile he was, as a classmate remembered, a "good-looking youth, sort of the type you would imagine escorting Shirley Temple to the prom."

But Liddy was never a ladies' man and friends rarely remember him dating girls while in high school, although in his senior year he and several classmates made frequent trips to Manhattan.

"But you would never consider us as a 'fast or loose' crowd," the classmate said.

After graduating from St. Benedict's — which signed off his brief yearbook biography: "Smooth sailing to you, Gordon," — Liddy entered Fordham University and moved from West Caldwell to the Bronx campus. That year he began using another variation of his name, listing himself in the 1949 St. Benedict's alumni directory as "G. Gordon B. Liddy."

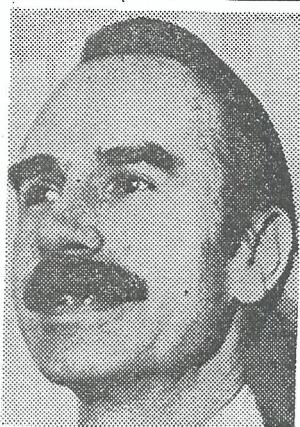
He then started dating more frequently and began to express political opinions, something he rarely did before entering college.

A long-time friend of the Liddy family, who asked not to be identified, said that Liddy believed strongly in the anti-Communist sentiments prevalent during that cold war era, and recalled a specific conversation with him during a college vacation.

had to stop the Communists in Korea."

However, Liddy suffered a major disappointment; he was set on becoming a paratrooper but was disqualified when he suffered an appendicitis attack. He later became a first lieutenant in the artillery and was honorably discharged and entered Fordham Law School, again following in the footsteps of his father.

In 1957—now using the name George Gordon Liddy



United Press International  
Liddy appearing at a House Armed Services subcommittee hearing on July 20, after six months in jail.

**First Lieutenant in Army**

"He had no use for the Communist element that was out to destroy this country," the friend said. "Liddy said that the Communists were 'a real danger to America and that we had better wake up to that fact.'" "He was very loyal to his family, to his country, to his church, or anything that he really believed in," the friend said.

These convictions were subsequently strengthened when he read J. Edgar Hoover's book, "The Enemy Within," in which the late F.B.I. director argued that domestic subversives represented a major threat to the nation's internal security.

After graduating from Fordham in 1952—by then listing himself as G. Gordon Liddy—he joined the Army during the Korean war because, as a family friend asserted, "he felt we

—he received his law degree, married the former Frances Purcell of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and joined the F.B.I. He spent most of his five years as an agent in Indiana.

When he moved to Poughkeepsie, after spending several years in his father's law firm, he reverted back to using G. Gordon Liddy.

Friends could not explain why Liddy used the three variations of his name.

And, of course, his former youthful friends and classmates could not explain why he would commit the Watergate break-in, a felony.

Mr. Hedden, the former boyhood pal and F.B.I. colleague, said in a telephone interview from San Francisco:

"He must have thought that what he was involved in was so tremendously important that the means must have, to him anyway, justified the end."