

Watergate Spy Says Defendants Were Under 'Political Pressure' to Admit Guilt and Keep Silent

TO TALK TO JUDGE

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McCord Writes That Others Escaped — Liddy Sentenced  
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WASHINGTON, March 23—A key figure in the Watergate conspiracy said in a letter read in court today that he and other persons caught spying on the Democrats last year had been under "political pressure to plead guilty and remain silent."

James W. McCord Jr., chief of security for President Nixon's political organization through-

McCord letter, excerpts from judge's remarks, Page 12.

out the espionage effort, wrote that "others" had escaped capture and that witnesses could have named them at his trial last January, at which he was convicted of conspiracy, burglary and eavesdropping.

The development came as sentences were imposed on other principals in the Watergate case, although sentencing of McCord was postponed in light of his letter.

6-20 Years for Liddy

G. Gordon Liddy, former counsel to the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, who was convicted along with McCord, was sentenced to not less than 6 years 8 months and not more than 20 years in prison. Five others, who had pleaded guilty to second-degree burglary, were sentenced "provisionally" to maximum terms in prison—40 years for four and 35 years for the fifth.

McCord and his lawyers arranged today to discuss the politically volatile case in detail with Chief Judge John J. Sirica of the United States District Court here in a secret session tentatively scheduled for next week.

McCord asked to meet privately with the judge because

he said "I cannot feel confident" talking in the presence of Federal Bureau of Investigation agents, attorneys for the Department of Justice or "other government representatives."

"I do believe that retaliatory measures will be taken against me, my family, and my friends should I disclose such facts [as those behind the Watergate case]," McCord said in his letter to Judge Sirica.

Judge Sirica put heavy pressure on McCord under oath and with a stenographer present, but he warned that he would make no promise that "my lips will be sealed" regardless of "what he (McCord) might tell me."

The judge mentioned specifically that a Federal grand jury and a special Congressional committee under Senator Sam

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J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, might find a record of McCord's disclosures useful.

Earl J. Silbert, the principal assistant United States attorney, announced that the grand jurors would meet Monday and asked that McCord's convicted co-conspirators be held in the Washington area pending a summons before the panel.

Judge Sirica put heavy pressure on five of McCord's six convicted associates by sentencing them "provisionally" to the maximum terms.

"I recommend your full cooperation with the grand jury and the Senate Select Committee," the judge said, adding that "some good can and should come from a revelation of sinister conduct whenever and wherever such conduct exists." "You must understand that I hold out no promises or hopes of any kind," he went on. "But I do say that should you decide to speak freely I would have to weigh that factor in appraising sentence was imposed on E. How what sentence will be finally imposed in each case."

The 40-year maximums were tentatively imposed on Bernard L. Barker, Eugenio R. Martinez, Frank A. Sturgis, and Virgilio R. Gonzalez, all of Miami. They have often been associated in various clandestine activities against the Castro Government.

The four were arrested with McCord during the June 17 break-in at the Watergate complex offices of the Democratic National Committee. They pleaded guilty to seven counts on an indictment charging conspiracy, burglary and eavesdropping.

35 Years for Hunt

The tentative 35-year sentence for Hunt Jr., a former agent of the Central Intelligence Agency who served in 1971 and 1972 as a consultant for the White House. Hunt also pleaded guilty at the outset of the trial.

While not caught inside the Democratic offices on June 17, Hunt was waiting nearby and was named in six counts. These included the central charges of conspiracy, burglary and eavesdropping.

All five men pleaded guilty to two counts of second-degree burglary, which carries a 15-year maximum penalty, but legal experts said that for sentencing purposes they could serve a term for only one.

Liddy, the sixth conspirator who was sentenced today, worked in the Treasury Department and in the White House before joining the re-election committee staff. He was convicted on six counts of conspiracy, burglary and eavesdropping.

The letter of McCord, 48 years old, was one of the most remarkable documents to surface throughout the nine-month Watergate affair. It was delivered to Judge Sirica by McCord on Wednesday. The judge refused, through a law clerk, to accept it on the ground that he should have no direct dealings with a defendant.

The convicted conspirator did not elaborate on this remark, just as he did not go into detail in setting forth the more explosive points of his letter. The implications were apparent, however.

Links to White House

The Watergate case, linked to the White House through the arrests and through many facets of the subsequent investigation, was embarrassing for Mr. Nixon through last year's campaign.

It has grown successively more sensitive for the Administration as more disclosures, some by the acting F.B.I. director, L. Patrick Gray 3d, have implicated higher-ranking Presidential advisors in a broad espionage effort against the Democrats.

Judge Sirica, often complaining that the trial had not reached the bottom of the affair, had posed questions to McCord—and presumably to the other convicted men—through the probation officer preparing a presentence report.

McCord said he felt "whipped" by the questions. The answers might incriminate him, he said, but to refuse them "may appear to be noncooperative, and I can therefore expect a much more severe sentence."

"Several members of my family have expressed fear for my life if I disclose knowledge of the facts in this matter, either publically or to any government representative," he added as another "consideration."

He wrote to Judge Sirica that he did not "share their concerns to the same degree" but that he did fear "retaliation." Mr. Alch said his client had told him he "felt less danger outside prison than inside."

'Perjury During Trial'

Among the points McCord then made were the following: "Perjury occurred during the trial in matters highly material to the very structure, orientation, and impact of the Government's case, and to the

motivation and intent of the defendants."

"The four Miami men have been 'misled by others' into believing the espionage effort was sponsored by the C.I.A., but 'I know for a fact that it was not.'"

"Some statements were unfortunately made by a witness which left the court with the impression that he was stating untruths, or withholding facts of his knowledge, when in fact only honest errors of memory were involved."

This was presumably a reference to one of two Government witnesses in the trial toward whom Judge Sirica had expressed open skepticism and whom the judge had pressed unsuccessfully for more detail.

Baldwin and Sloan

One was Alfred C. Baldwin 3d, who served McCord in monitoring the Watergate wiretaps but who insisted he could not remember the official at Nixon headquarters to whom the information had been delivered.

The other was Hugh W. Sloan Jr., former treasurer of the Nixon fund-raising unit, who distributed \$199,000 in cash to Liddy. Mr. Sloan said he had been unaware of the use to which the conspirator had put the funds.

Judge Sirica told Mr. Alch that in 15 years on the Federal bench he had "never done this before" but that if McCord wanted to talk privately under the conditions the judge specified it could be done.

Mr. Alch said he expected the session to take place immediately after conclusion of a trial in Chicago in which he is involved. He forecast that the other case would end next Tuesday or Wednesday.

It appeared that only the judge, McCord, McCord's lawyers, and the stenographer would be present. There was no indication when Judge Sirica might release the transcript, if he chooses to do so.

The Justice Department said that if McCord's statement to

Judge Sirica "contains evidence supporting these allegations" or indication of other violations the department "will, of course, take appropriate action immediately."

The judge postponed sentencing McCord until next Friday, and the suspect was released

after today's session on the \$100,000 surety bond he had posted several weeks ago.

The judge also urged the five men under tentative sentences to spend the week thinking about making a clean breast of things to the grand jury and Ervin committee. He said he

would also get them back to court on Friday.

Attorneys for those sentenced today pleaded for leniency, but Judge Sirica said he had concluded that the crimes involved "can only be described as sordid, despicable and thoroughly reprehensible."

Only Hunt, the author of more than 40 novels, spoke for himself. In a long prepared statement read to the court, he said he was "alone, nearly friendless, ridiculed, disgraced, destroyed as a man."

Hunt, who lost weight and looked very pale upon pleading guilty, appeared more haggard than before. Liddy also seemed to have lost weight and color, but he nevertheless winked at a co-conspirator after sentencing.

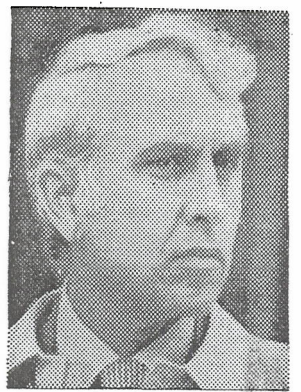


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**Bernard L. Barker**



**Frank A. Sturgis**



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**Eugenio R. Martinez**



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