

Secret Watergate Papers Hidden by Campaign Aide

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By WALTER RUGABER APR 20 1973
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WASHINGTON, April 19— Written plans for the Watergate plot and other secret papers were hidden from the authorities last year by an unnamed employe of President Nixon's campaign organization, it was reported in court today.

A Washington lawyer, Peter H. Wolf, said a client had informed him that eight cardboard boxes of documents were taken from the White House complex on June 18, a day after the break-in at the offices of the Democratic National Committee.

The unidentified client kept the cartons hidden through the summer, Mr. Wolf said in a motion filed in the United States District Court here, and turned them over to the Committee for the Re-election of the President "shortly before the election."

The lawyer asserted that he had informed the principal assistant United States Attorney, Earl J. Silbert, of the documents "and received an opinion from him that he did not think my client was committing any crime."

Mr. Silbert, in a written statement, said in response that Mr. Wolf's contention that he "advised me that a client of his had in his possession eight cartons containing highly incriminating material is preposterous."

Mr. Wolf's account came in a order from Chief Judge John J. Sirica that would shield the identity of his client pending a ruling on whether the name should be disclosed.

Leaves Ruling to Judge

The lawyer said that representatives of the United States attorney had "urged me simply to reveal the name — and stated that if I refused they might seek to have the court hold me in contempt immediately."

Mr. Wolf told Judge Sirica that he believed the identity was covered by the privilege not to disclose communications between a lawyer and his client. Only if the judge rules otherwise, Mr. Wolf said, would he reveal the name.

In the late summer of 1972, Mr. Wolf said, he received a telephone call from the unnamed client asking whether he was "in danger of violating the law" by keeping hidden the cardboard cartons.

They contained, "among other things, the contents of E. Howard Hunt's desk in the White House before the F.B.I. got there, including plans to 'bug' the Watergate," the lawyer said in his motion.

Hunt, who had worked as a White House consultant, pleaded guilty in January to charges of conspiracy, burglary, and eavesdropping in connection with the effort to spy on the Democrats last May and June.

A safe used by Hunt in the Executive Office Building next to the White House was opened immediately after the Watergate burglary at the direction of John W. Dean 3d, counsel to the President.

There have been numerous allegations that not all the documents recovered by Mr. Dean, who has subsequently been mentioned as having been involved in the Watergate case, were turned over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

James W. McCord Jr., who was convicted with Hunt in January, has told Senate investigators that his fellow conspirator had prepared a "step-by-step" plan for wiretapping the Democratic telephones.

Mr. Wolf said that he had urged his client to turn over the documents to the authorities. The client indicated "a possible willingness to do so," the lawyer said, "and authorized me to ascertain the possibility of obtaining compensation to offset any potential harm to him."

There was no explanation by Mr. Wolf of what "compensation" his client had in mind, but the attorney said he had gone to Mr. Silbert and had "told him these facts."

Possible Violation Discussed

The two men discussed specifically the possibility that the client had violated statutes on the obstruction of justice, Mr. Wolf said.

The lawyer added that while he believed his client had "done nothing unlawful," the circumstances "could be used as links in a chain which might tend to incriminate him."

Later, Mr. Wolf said, he learned that his client was an employe of the Committee for the Re-election of the President and that the cartons had been picked up at the Executive Of-

fice Building on the day after the break-in.

The client was said to have been told by unspecified persons "that a pass would be waiting for him at the guard entrance, that no questions would be asked when the cartons were removed from the building, and none were."

Soon after the election in November, Mr. Wolf said, his client informed him that the materials "were no longer in his possession [and] had been turned back over the Committee for Re-election of the President shortly before the election."

Some of the documents that the client had hidden, Mr. Wolf said, "apparently included the contributors' lists turned over by the committee in the litigation by Common Cause."

Common Cause, a "citizens lobby," has sued the Nixon organization in an effort to obtain its record of receipts and expenditures before April 7, 1972. A new law requires disclosure after that date.

In a telephone interview this afternoon, Mr. Wolf said he would be "happy to contribute to an investigation that goes to the heart of our constitutional system" but that he wanted to protect himself against a charge of unethical conduct.