

Watergate Case's Opposing Lawyers Mutual Admirers

By Edward Walsh

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Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen more than once has remarked that if he were in trouble, "I'd want Bill Hundley to represent me," according to a lawyer who knows them both.

Now Petersen, President Nixon's choice to head the federal investigation and prosecution into the Watergate bugging affair, may find himself pitted against his close personal friend, William G. Hundley, the man former Attorney General John N. Mitchell has chosen as his attorney in the case.

Mitchell, according to sources in the White House and the Committee for the Re-election of the President, has been accused along with White House counsel John W. Dean III of having approved and helped plan the Watergate bugging. The sources said that Jeb Stuart Magruder, the President's former special assistant, made the accusation to federal prosecutors in a meeting last Saturday.

Magruder also told the prosecutors that Mitchell and Dean had arranged to buy the silence of the convicted Watergate conspirators, the sources said.

The Washington Post reported Thursday that one source familiar with Magruder's statements and the investigation by prosecutors expects that both Mitchell and Dean will be indicted.

On Thursday, Mitchell visited Hundley's law office on 17th Street NW, arranging to retain the services of the lawyer who accompanied him yesterday to the federal courthouse for testimony before a grand jury probing the Watergate case.

"Bill has known Mitchell for a couple of years, but their relationship has been strictly professional," Plato Cacheris, Hundley's law partner, said yesterday. "I'm sure Mitchell chose him because he knows his reputation—Bill has handled some



WILLIAM G. HUNDLEY
... a "knowledgeable guy"

very, very delicate matters and done it well. I'm also sure that Henry (Petersen) had nothing to do with the choice."

There is, however, from talking to Cacheris and others who know both men, no question that the government's chief prosecutor and the former attorney general's defense attorney are the closest of friends. Their close professional and personal relationship has been nurtured over the years since the 1950s.

In January, 1971, for example, Petersen, Hundley and their wives traveled together to the Super Bowl game in Miami. Hundley mentioned the trip in a sworn statement he made a month later, referring to Petersen as "a very able lawyer . . . a very great guy."

Looking at Hundley's 22-year law career, there is also a sense that inevitably the 47-year-old specialist in criminal law would be drawn into the sensational Watergate case. For much of that career, he has been involved in some of the most publicized cases of the time, his name associated with those of Robert F. Kennedy, Joe Valachi—who told what he knew about organized crime—and Pete Rozelle, the commissioner of the National Football League.

He was born in Pittsburgh on Aug. 16, 1925, but his formative years were spent in Brooklyn and he graduated from Fordham University and Fordham Law School in New York.

After graduating from law school, Hundley joined the Justice Department in 1951 and for six years was a trial attorney in the department's internal security division. In 1958, he became chief of the departments organized crime division—where he dealt with Valachi during the time Valachi was telling what he knew about organized crime in this country. After about a year as head of the organized crime division, Hundley asked Petersen to be his deputy.

During the early 1960s, Hundley also served as a special assistant to the then Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. Kennedy and Hundley, Cacheris said, "were philosophically, professionally and socially very close, illuminating one of the ironies in Republican Mitchell's choice of a lifelong Democrat to represent him."

Hundley left the Justice Department in 1966 and for three years was a full-time counsel for the National Football League.

Hundley went into private practice in Washington in 1969. His clients have included an investigative reporting team that worked for Life magazine, West Virginia Gov. Arch Moore, for whom he helped settle a federal income tax case, and Victor Frenkil, a Baltimore contractor whom a special grand jury wanted indicted on fraud charges in connection with construction of the Rayburn House Office Building garage. Mitchell, attorney general at the time, refused to approve an indictment.

A former prosecutor who asked not to be named said he admires Hundley and that Mitchell has chosen "an extremely knowledgeable guy to represent him in the Watergate case."

"Hundley's great stock in trade is that he's an enormously congenial and disarmingly nice guy," the former prosecutor said. "Whatever evils his clients might be accused of could never be attributed to him . . . It's very tough to be mad at Bill Hundley."