

Magruder and The Secretary



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THE STORY can now be told how one word, "Gemstone," slowly tightened the Watergate noose around the neck of Jeb Stuart Magruder until he decided to confess.

Magruder has confirmed Watergate wiretapper James McCord's written statement quoted to us on April 2 that the Watergate bugging was planned in the Justice Department office of then-Attorney General John Mitchell in February 1972.

Present were Mitchell, Magruder and White House counsel John Dean. They were briefed on the bugging plan by Watergate ringleader G. Gordon Liddy who used huge, professionally prepared charts to illustrate how he would tap the telephones of Democratic party officials.

Magruder has also confirmed our reports of December 26, January 11 and January 15 that the Watergate defendants were offered money to plead guilty and keep their mouths shut. The attempt to buy their silence, Magruder has now said, was ordered by Mitchell and Dean.

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THROUGHOUT McCORD'S revelations, Magruder stuck to his sworn testimony at the Watergate trial that he had no knowledge of the bugging. It was Liddy's secretary, Sally Harmony, who finally shook his story.

In secret session, she told how she had

typed up the telephone conversations of Democratic party official Spencer Oliver on secret stationery marked with the code word "Gemstone."

"Do you remember" asked Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl Silbert "whether or not there was ever any reference by any of the participants to conversations with anyone?"

"Yes," she answered. "There was one conversation dealing with the name of Terry Sanford (former Democratic governor of North Carolina)."

Mrs. Harmony also testified that "I have on occasions typed a couple of memos that have come from (Sen. George) McGovern's headquarters."

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BUT IT WAS the code word, "Gemstone," that upset Magruder's applecart. His assistant, Robert Reisner, testified that he had been instructed by Magruder to remove all sensitive material from his office after the Watergate burglary-bugging team was arrested. One of the files that was removed, stated Reisner, was a blue folder marked "Gemstone."

This was evidence that Magruder had received the Watergate bugging reports from Liddy. The handsome, cavalier Magruder, facing perjury charges for denying any advance knowledge of the bugging, decided to turn state's evidence.