

Vignettes From the Watergate Follies



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THE WATERGATE FOLLIES, set to music, would make splendid comic opera. Here are just a few stranger-than-fiction episodes:

● **Bugging on credit:** President Nixon's fund raisers stashed millions in campaign boodle across the country, yet they still haven't paid for all the bugging equipment. The Watergate wire tappers were carrying when they were caught. The Committee to Re-elect the President still owes \$13,600 to Michael Stevens, whose Chicago company supplied the buggers with sophisticated electronic devices. Some of the equipment was actually in use, but six custom-made, high frequency transmitters and receivers, four of them suitable for bugging rooms, the other two for intercepting phone conversations, were ordered but never picked up.

One of the conspirators, James McCord, surreptitiously came for some of the equipment at 3 o'clock one morning. Through his attorneys, McCord acknowledged the purchases and said he had paid \$5400 in cash, leaving the balance due. Devan Shumway, spokesman for the President's committee, told us "it would be inappropriate to pay any such bill for equipment allegedly used for illegal purposes."

● **Spy in a closet:** Whodunit writer E. Howard Hunt, another Watergate conspirator, was assigned to reconnoiter the Watergate layout. He tried to enter through a dining room, but couldn't get a connecting door open without alarming a guard.

So the ex-CIA agent remained locked in the dining room all night, sleeping in a

closet. He finally escaped at 7 a.m. after the office building was opened and began to fill with people.

● **Aliases and disguises:** The three stooges of the Watergate Follies — G. Gordon Liddy (the Watergate ringleader), Hunt and McCord — took elaborate precautions to conceal their nefarious activities. Hunt sometimes wore a preposterous red wig to go with his patrician looks. All three used assumed names, carried false identification, communicated by pay phones and exchanged cryptic messages.

Liddy's most successful pseudonym was "George," the real first name he never uses. One day, Watergate conspirator Bernard Barker called Liddy's White House office and asked for "George." Puzzled, Liddy's secretary said there was a phone call for George. "Just who is George?" demanded George Gordon Liddy.

● **Oliver's secret:** Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent on the Watergate bugging and its consequences. Lost in all the hullabaloo has been the intelligence that the Republicans got for their money.

A wiretap was successfully installed on the office phone of Democratic party official Spencer Oliver. The first problem was that there were two Spencer Olivers, father and son. The most momentous information picked up by the wiretappers was that one of the Spence Olivers was planning a trip to either North Carolina or South Carolina to talk to North Carolina's former governor, Terry Stanford.