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The Watergate Bunch Skips Lunch

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GUESS WHO'S not coming to lunch at the Sans Souci? Haldeman and Ehrlichman and Kleindienst and Ziegler and Colson and Clawson and Magruder . . .

At Monday's lunch hour, the restaurant closest to the White House — where President Nixon's aides have commanded the best tables — was occupied by Democrats, and alors, tourists.

One quartet, clearly on a first-time pilgrimage,

stopped tentatively at the top of the stairs, murmured of the maitre d', "I think his name is Paul." They may have been the first strangers to ever immediately get a table there at high noon.

When William Safire, former Nixon speechwriter-turned-New York Times-columnist, walked in, columnist Art Buchwald and his table broke into applause.

Paul Delisle, the maitre d', asked why they were applauding — could it be another late development? — and Safire said, "It's because I'm the only one who has the guts to show up."

Asked by a waiter if he wanted a drink, Safire said, "Good God, yes," then said, "It's a sad day," referring to the White House cleaning that had just been announced — the resignations of White House aides H. R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman, John W. Dean III, as well as Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst — in the wake of the Watergate scandal. As Safire looked over his shoulder, Buchwald joked, "don't bother to look, Bill, no one's here."

Delisle cased the room and said there were no well-known Republicans. "Only one person from the

White House had a reservation, and he canceled.

"Kissinger has a reservation with Ambassador David Bruce for tomorrow but I don't know if he's going to show up or not. You never know these days," the maitre d' said.

Like other Washington power watchers, Delisle shook his head over the six former high-ranking Nixon aides who abruptly left government service during the past week.

"It's going to be like after the elections. I will have to learn who is who and what is what all over again."