

McCord, Caulfield: They Meet Again In a Different Light

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WASHINGTON, May 22— James W. McCord Jr. and John J. Caulfield came face to face again today, not at the second scenic overlook of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, but at the very center of the Senate investigation of the Watergate conspiracy.

This time, instead of the January night that cloaked their initial meeting on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River, their encounter was amid the dazzle of television lights.

This time, there was no handshake.

This time, they did not exchange a word.

But McCord and then Mr. Caulfield told essentially the

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People leaving the Caucus Room of the Old Senate Office Building after yesterday morning's session of the select committee investigating the Watergate affair. The New York Times

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same story to the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, and their combined effect was to confirm the charge that someone in the White House had tried to mask the extent of political intrigue in the 1972 campaign.

McCord sat impassively, his legs crossed and hands folded in his lap, as Mr. Caulfield took his place at the witness table in the caucus room of the Old Senate Office Building and confirmed the skeletal outline of their January meetings to discuss White House clemency in return for silence by McCord.

There were clear differences in the tenor of their recollections of clandestine conversations and surreptitious meetings during the period that McCord was on trial for his part in the burglary and bugging of the Democratic party's national headquarters.

Versions Differ

But Mr. Caulfield described, in a careful 26-page prepared statement, the same meetings that McCord had discussed last Friday when he read a 10-page summary that electrified the Senate hearings.

McCord had recounted last week a meeting at which he said Mr. Caulfield had specif-

ically told him President Nixon was aware of the offer of executive clemency. Mr. Caulfield insisted today that he had invoked only the authority of "the highest levels of the White House."

McCord had attributed the cover-up to Mr. Nixon, H. R. Haldeman, then the White House chief of staff, or John D. Ehrlichman, then the President's principal domestic adviser. Mr. Caulfield declared today that the clemency discussion had been initiated by John W. Dean 3d, then the White House counsel, and added that he could only "guess" it had been authorized by Mr. Ehrlichman.

McCord had told of a ride in Mr. Caulfield's car, during which he had been threatened that the Nixon Administration would "have to take steps to defend itself" if he did not follow the "game plan" and remain silent.

Mr. Caulfield's statement today denied that he had made any threats, but it referred to his "small piece of friendly advice" to McCord that the White House could be "as tough-minded as you and I."

McCord had recalled an apprehensive comment by Mr. Caulfield that "the President's ability to govern is at stake" and that the Administration could not afford "another Teapot Dome scandal."

Mr. Caulfield's recollection

was that he had underscored the sincerity of the clemency offer by saying that his White House contacts "were extremely concerned about the Watergate burglary developing into a major scandal affecting the President."

Despite the variances, the effect of the two witnesses was to describe in full, public view a web of involvement by someone in the White House in an effort to clamp a tight lid on the Watergate revelations.

The suggestion implicit in the testimony of both witnesses was that the Senate committee would find the ultimate source of the conspiracy somewhere within the executive mansion.

Curiously, just as McCord's testimony had seemed all the more credible because of his calm detachment, Mr. Caulfield's appearance seemed enhanced by the manner of the professional.

Mr. Caulfield read his 26-page statement as though it were a description of the investigation into a robbery ring that earned him detective's rank in the New York City police force in 1955. His grip was rock firm on the glass of ice water that he picked up to sip from occasionally. He read slowly, nearly rearranging the pages as he went from one to the next.

McCord sat three rows behind Mr. Caulfield at the cen-

ter of the caucus room in the seats reserved for witnesses and their lawyers. He had the poker face of the former operative for Central Intelligence. The only time he moved was to pinch the bridge of his nose. Once.

McCord remained in the hearing room until the seven Senators recessed briefly for a roll-call vote on the Senate floor. Then, without a glance at Mr. Caulfield, he picked up his briefcase and made his way through the milling onlookers and past the television cameras, declining comment, to an elevator. He did not return.

Mr. Caulfield remained at the witness table throughout the recess. He shook hands genially with those who approached him. He laughed at some comment from Jimmy Breslin, the writer.

When the committee members returned, Mr. Caulfield resumed his recitation. He acknowledged at its end that he had been involved in "questionable activity."

But, he added, "I felt that it was important for me to carry this message for the good of the President."

He offered to tell what he knew of his role as messenger in the offer of clemency to McCord. If it turns out, Mr. Caulfield said, that he is guilty of some wrongdoing, "I will still feel that the truth is my best defense."