

The McCord Connections in

By James Houck

James McCord, 48, ex-CIA agent, ex-FBI employe, good soldier in the Cold War, was an unlikely star witness.

But in seven hours of testimony, he has provided the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities — and an alternately fascinated and bored television audience — with three connections.

His former lawyer added a fourth.

Together they provide the substance of the Watergate hearings so far.

All four are in part or in whole denied.

Some are hearsay; for example, his connections to President Nixon, John D. Ehrlichman, the President's former chief domestic adviser, John Dean, the former White House counsel, and John Mitchell, the former attorney general.

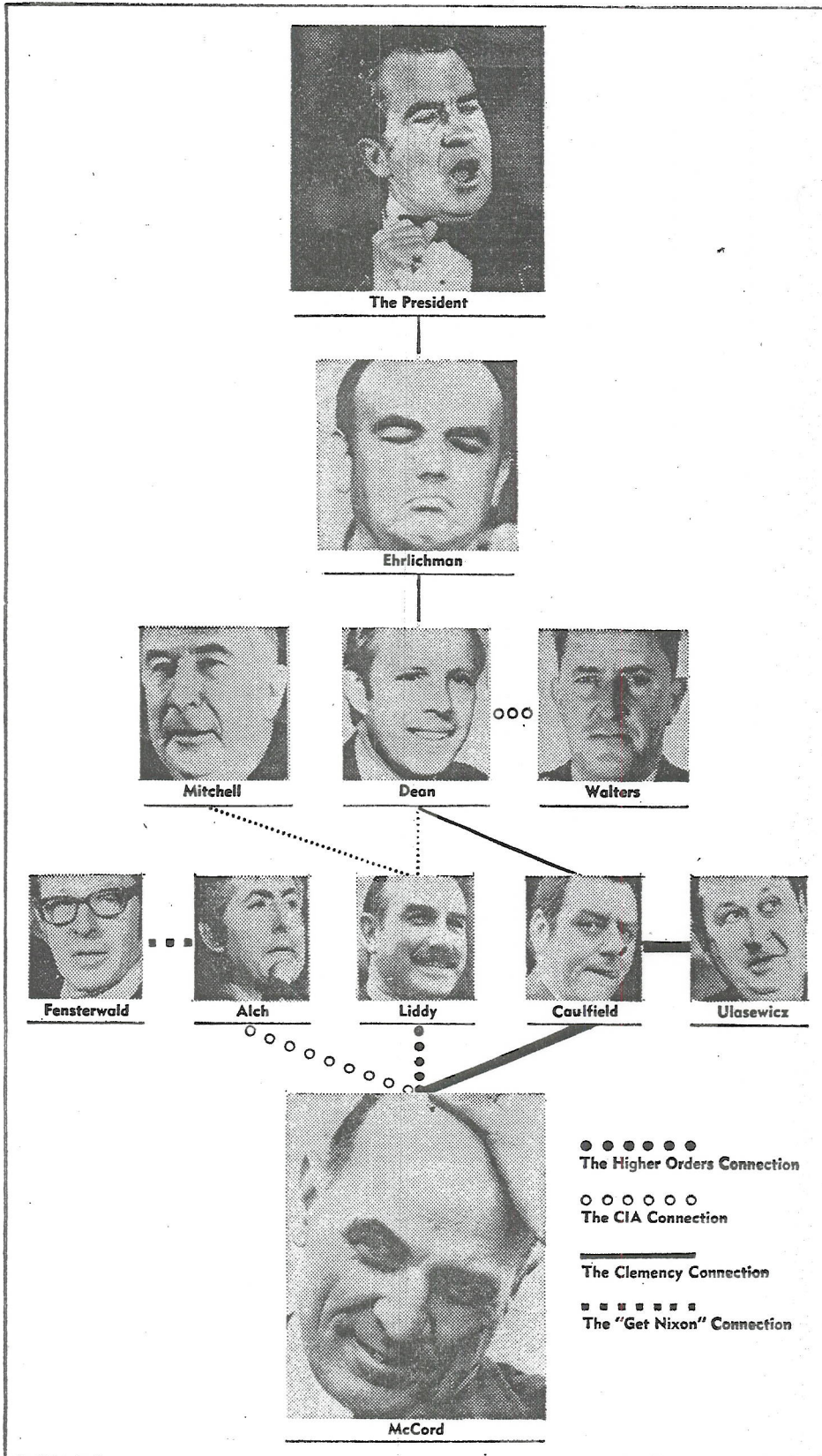
And all are confusing. Thus, the McCord Connections:

The Higher Up Connection

Who ordered McCord and four others to break into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee and tap some of its telephones?

Ultimately, McCord said, President Nixon did.

He said that G. Gordon Liddy, a former White House aide who at the time was an official of the Committee for the Re-election of the President, told him the operation was planned at



—Examiner Chart by Norman Nisbet

Murky Watergate Affairs

Conspiratorial Intrigue in TV Hearings

meetings attended by, among others, the then attorney general and the counsel to the president.

Thus, McCord concluded: "John Mitchell, by virtue of his position as attorney general of the United States, and John Dean, by virtue of his position as a counsel to the President, by their consideration and approval of the Watergate operation, in my opinion, gave sanction to the Watergate operation by both the White House and the attorney general's office . . . It carried the full force and effect of presidential sanction."

The President and Mitchell have denied it, and Dean won't talk about it.

The CIA Connection

Was McCord pressured into claiming the Watergate wiretapping was a CIA operation?

Yes, said McCord, by Gerald Alch, his former lawyer.

No, said Alch, a partner in the high-powered Boston law firm headed by F. Lee Bailey.

McCord: "Alch . . . stated that he had a suggestion . . . that I use as my defense that the Watergate operation was a CIA operation . . . He said . . . 'We could use as our defense (that) you could ostensibly have been recalled to the CIA to undertake the Watergate operation, could you not?' And I said it is technically possible

or words to that effect. He said, if so, then my personnel records at CIA could be doctored to reflect such a recall . . . He said that (James R.) Schlesinger, the new director of CIA, whose appointment had just been announced, could be subpoenaed and would go along."

Alch: "At no time did I suggest to Mr. McCord that the so-called CIA defense be utilized . . . Mr. McCord's allegation that I announced my ability to forge his CIA personnel records with the cooperation of then acting CIA Director Schlesinger is absurd and completely untrue."

Except for Alch, who concedes it could get him in trouble with the Massachusetts Bar Association, the CIA connection is the least significant of the four, except as a test of McCord's veracity.

There is another CIA connection, as yet untouched by the Watergate committee.

It involves Dean and Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters, the deputy director of the CIA and a friend of Nixon for 20 years.

Dean, Walters is said to have told the Senate Armed Services Committee May 14, asked if the CIA could either provide bail for or pay the salaries of the five men arrested inside the Democratic offices, McCord among them.

The trap, as Walters said he quickly realized, was that the payments couldn't have been kept secret. They

would have had to have been reported to the House and Senate committees charged with overseeing the CIA's activities.

Walters said he turned Dean down, threatening to quit if he was ordered to do it.

The Clemency Connection

Was McCord offered executive clemency if he would go to jail quietly?

Yes, said not only McCord, but also John J. Caulfield, a former White House aide, and Anthony Ulasewicz, a New York City cop.

Did the offer come from President Nixon, the only person who can grant executive clemency?

Yes, said McCord. Not exactly, said Caulfield.

McCord: "Caulfield stated that he was carrying the message of executive clemency to me 'from the very highest levels of the White House.' He stated that the President of the United States . . . had been told . . . He further stated that 'I may have a message to you at our next meeting from the President himself.'"

Caulfield: "At no time in our first meeting do I recall saying anything about the President. . . John Dean . . . told me . . . 'Jack, I

want you to . . . tell McCord . . . executive clemency is a sincere offer which comes from the very highest levels of the White House.' . . . I believed that he was talking about the President."

In addition, Caulfield said that he also thought that Dean was talking about Ehrlichman.

President Nixon, of course, has denied being involved in any clemency offer.

In his April 30 speech, he said: "At no time did I authorize any offer of executive clemency for the Watergate defendants, nor did I know of any such offer."

The 'Get-Nixon' Connection

Did Bernard Fensterwald, who replaced Alch as McCord's attorney, tell Alch he was out to "get the President"?

Yes, Alch said.

No, Fensterwald said.

Alch: "In one telephone conversation, he (Fensterwald) said to me, 'What do you think of all that is going on?' I replied, 'Whatever is right with me.' Mr. Fensterwald replied, 'We're going after the President of the United States.' I replied that I was not interested in any vendettas against the President but only in the best interest of my client. To which Mr. Fensterwald replied: 'Well, you'll see that's who we're going after, the President.'"

Fensterwald denied making the remarks.