

How It Compares With Teapot Dome

Teapot Dome and Watergate have some striking similarities and equally impressive differences, a former Stanford law professor with intimate knowledge of the earlier scandal said yesterday.

Retired Professor Lowell Turrentine, 78, who served as assistant to the special prosecutors in the 1920s investigation of the scandal that rocked the administration of President Warren G. Harding, recalled in his home near the Stanford campus:

"The utter rogues around Harding can't be compared with Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Mitchell. They (Mr. Nixon's aides) had the desire to protect the President. The people around Harding were simply greedy for money."

This is not, Turrentine emphasized, to whitewash those involved in the current investigation, but, "I wouldn't feel embarrassed if one of them came to my house for dinner."

PROSECUTORS

Turrentine, who retired as a law professor at Stanford in 1961, was an assistant to Teapot Dome prosecutor Atlee Pomerene, a former Democratic Senator from Ohio, and Republican Owen J. Roberts of Pennsylvania, later a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.



LOWELL TURRENTINE
He helped prosecute

"The difference in that case was that the special prosecutors were chosen by a joint resolution of the Congress, then approved by the President," Turrentine said.

"In the Watergate case, Archie Cox was chosen by the attorney general, which makes him look like an administration man, whether he is or not."

LEGALITIES

Turrentine served as assistant to the prosecutors in civil cases in Los Angeles and Wyoming in 1923-24.

"The civil cases laid the basis for criminal prosecutions," he said. "It's different in this case."

"Of course, you never know what's going to happen in this (Watergate) case, because the evidence isn't all in yet, but it appears to me that nobody in the Watergate case was out for a dollar, except for those figures on the lower end of the scale."

Turrentine described President Harding — who died in the Palace Hotel here in 1923 — as "a weak, fatuous, credulous man, given to utter loyalty to his cronies, the 'Ohio Gang' who met in a little green house on K street in Washington."

NIXON

Turrentine feels that President Nixon, by comparison, is "a man of more than average ability, a man who — in foreign policy, at least — may be one day considered to be one of our outstanding presidents."

But in both Teapot Dome and Watergate, he said, "neither President really knew what was going on. I sincerely believe that Harding didn't gain a single dollar in the Teapot Dome deal."

Turrentine said that there was "absolutely not" as much impact on the nation in the Teapot Dome case as there has been to date in the Watergate affair.