

Rise and Fall Of Fred LaRue

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Frederick Cheney LaRue, who pleaded guilty yesterday to obstruction of justice and will now help the government prosecute the Watergate coverup, is a Mississippi oil heir and, for the last five years, an intimate friend and political lieutenant of former Attorney General John N. Mitchell.

A shy man, given to mumbling, who had a White House pass through the first Nixon term but no title and no salary, he was an elusive, anonymous, secret operator at the highest levels of the Nixon power structure. He is a man of personal mystery.

His father, Ike Parsons LaRue Sr., whom Fred LaRue shot and killed in a Canadian duck-hunting accident in 1957, went to jail in Texas for banking violations in his first business career, then started again in Mississippi, looking for oil and backed by Texas money.

In 1954, the family company — including Fred, Ike Jr., and their brother-in-law — made their first big strike in y worked the field the Bolton Field, 20 miles from Jackson. They worked the field

lves until 1967, when it was solJ for a reported \$30 million.

Some Mississippi sources say the Larues never really controlled the fortune. Others believe they lost much of it in a Las Vegas casino investment. Fred LaRue himself was quoted a year ago as saying, "I'm no millionaire." But oil money that the LaRues reportedly "spread around" in Mississippi politics made Fred a power in his home state and permitted him to roam free in a wheeling-dealing world that he came to love.

A heavy and disappointed

investor in Senator Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign, LaRue introduced himself as a contributor to the Nixon forces in 1967. By the 1968 Republican convention he was a close friend and a ranking "southern strategist" in Mitchell's campaign apparatus.

At the start of the 1972 campaign, LaRue was a ranking member — with others like Robert C. Mardian and Harry S. Flemming — of the "hard-core Mitchell group" at headquarters. But he also got along well with Jeb Stuart Magruder, a representative of H. R. Halderman's White House team who became the deputy campaign manager.

The 44-year-old LaRue and the 38-year-old Magruder were often referred to by others in the organization as a single personality: "Magrue."

As it happened, on the night of the Watergate burglary, June 17, 1972, they were on a California campaign swing with Mitchell and Mardian — all staying together in the Beverly Hills Hotel.

According to Magruder's Watergate committee, the four men worked from the next day onward to draft and preserve a coverup story.

According to numerous reports, LaRue and Mardian were immediately assigned the job of cleaning out all incriminating documents from the Nixon re-election headquarters. Later, by reports that LaRue's guilty plea seems to confirm, it fell to the quiet Mississippian to distribute the first \$250,000 in "hush money" to keep the Watergate burglars from talking.

Yesterday, as for the past several months, LaRue was unavailable to the press.