

Robert Charles Mardian

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 19—A bright-eyed, muscular man who looks and growls like George C. Scott, the actor, in "Patton," Robert Charles Mardian was one of the most aggressive conservatives in the first Nixon Administration.

He is greatly concerned with security and was a determined, if unsuccessful, advocate before the Supreme Court of the Government's freedom to tap and bug subversives.

But the evidence, even before he took the stand today in the Senate Watergate hearings, was that Mr. Mardian got involved in the Watergate cover-up belatedly, unhappily and by an excess of loyalty that had made him a bitter man even before the Watergate scandal broke.

Bitterness Voiced

"When things are going great they ignore me," he told a friend last year, after being passed over for two appointments he coveted—first, to be Deputy Attorney General and then to be deputy manager of the Nixon re-election campaign. "When things get screwed up, they lean on me."

The Watergate burglary, he said before the television cameras today, outraged his nuts-and-bolts tactical instincts; an intelligence raid on Democratic party headquarters, even before the Democrats had named their candidate, was "ridiculous," he said.

But it was doubly galling, he told friends, as the work of a campaign staff that had scorned his services. Mr. Mardian never concealed his contempt for Jeb Stuart Magruder, the young California marketing specialist who beat him out for the deputy campaign manager's title, the same man who testified last month that Mr. Mardian was "to some extent involved" in the cover-up.

A Mitchell Ally

"I didn't know they had this intelligence operation," Mr. Mardian said recently of the pre-Watergate period at re-election headquarters. "My role was political organization. I know a lot of people in a lot of states." But in fact, he said, "I spent most of my time arguing with a bunch of dumb kids with demographic charts. I went through that

part of my education 20 years ago."

In Nixon politics and government Mr. Mardian was conspicuously a member of the John N. Mitchell faction. In the 1968 campaign, which Mr. Mitchell managed, he coordinated the Republican effort in the Western states, where President Nixon won all but Washington. As general counsel to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1969 and 1970, he was a persistent apostle of Mr. Mitchell's "Southern strategy," trying to ease the pace of school integration.

Later, as an assistant attorney general, under Mr. Mitchell, in charge of the Internal Security Division, he pressed the Justice Department's fight against the anti-war left. Throughout, he was the sort of loyal, versatile confidant who got many special assignments, including the delicate transfer to the White House of wiretap logs that the late J. Edgar Hoover thought he had hidden in the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In addition to being a Mitchell man, Mr. Mardian qualifies as a Goldwaterite, on several scores. His brother Samuel Mardian Jr., a former mayor of Phoenix, is one of the three of four largest contractors in Arizona and a pillar of the conservative Republican establishment in Senator Barry Goldwater's home state. Robert Mardian himself managed the 1964 Goldwater-for-President campaign in the Western states. His closest friend is one of Senator Goldwater's closest friends, Richard G. Kleindienst, the former Attorney General.

In a more essential way Mr. Mardian, like Senator Goldwater, embodies the latter-day rugged individualism of immigrant stock that worked hard and struck it rich in the booming southwest.

Father a Refugee

His father, an Armenian refugee from the Turks, told his sons that reaching the freedom and opportunity of America was "like going to heaven before your time"; his political heroes were men such as Hiram Johnson, the Progressive Governor of California, and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

But the second generation of Mardians—four brothers now preside over a \$25-million-a-year construction and development empire—tended to be defensive about success.

"Don't tell me about dis-

crimination," Robert Mardian used to tell colleagues in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, in battles over school desegregation. "I know all about it." How could they call him a "right-wing nut," he protested to liberals, in the department when he had played sandlot baseball with Jackie Robinson in Pasadena—the California city where Mr. Mardian was born on Oct. 23, 1923.

At the Justice Department, Mr. Mardian enthusiastically revived an atrophied security program, quickly multiplying prosecutions against draft-evaders and starting a broad series of grand jury investigations into radical groups.

He had wanted to hire his deputy Tom Charles Huston, who initiated a short-lived White House crackdown on revolutionary violence. But even Mr. Huston, whose White House plan included official burglaries and mail interception, was unnerved by Mr. Mardian's zeal.

"Mardian didn't know the difference between a kid with a beard and a kid with a bomb," Mr. Huston once remarked.

Political Decline

A whispered reputation for extremism apparently contributed to Mr. Mardian's political decline. In addition, the selection of Mr. Kleindienst to succeed Mr. Mitchell as Attorney General in 1972 militated against the appointment of an intimate friend and fellow Arizonan as deputy.

Mr. Mitchell took Mr. Mardian with him to the re-election committee, but H. R. Haldeman, the White House chief of staff, insisted on making one of his protégés, Mr. Magruder, the campaign's second-in-command.

Friends knew that Mr. Mardian was "damned upset" with the vague title of "political coordinator"; some say he thought of quitting the campaign before Watergate. But as it happened, he was with Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Magruder, and Frederick LaRue in California on the night the Watergate burglars were arrested, and he took a major part thereafter in planning the campaign committee's response.

His defense against the charge of cover-up complicity is that his relations with G. Gordon Liddy and other conspirators he interviewed after the Watergate break-in were bound by the privacy between lawyer and client. Federal Judge John J. Sirica dismissed that claim last May when he ordered Mr. Mardian to tell all he knew to the Watergate grand jury.

Yet Mr. Mardian insists his conscience is clear and scorns the possibility of indictment.

"Bob's brothers are all very proud of him," Samuel Mardian Jr. said yesterday. "He sacrificed a lot to go to Washington, and he did it in a spirit of serving his country."