G. Gordon Liddy: His Silence

By Paul Valentine

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G. Gordon Liddy, celebrated Watergate super sleuth; sits in his prison cell, mute and inscrutable.

But as the convicted conspirator pursues his vow of silence with the fervor of a Trappist monk, many of his former colleagues who have testified before the Senate Watergate committee have been more than loquacious in fleshing out the activities and personality of this exotic and perhaps central figure in the Watergate affair.

The cigar-chomping gun-toting ex-D.A. has been variously described as super spy, super sleuth, brilliant, inept and bizarre.

He has been depicted by people both above and beneath him in the hierarchy of the Nixon re-election apparatus as the architect of sordid covert operations to extract information from the Democrats.

Those above him said he initiated the operations—wiretapping, burglary, clandestine photography—often without specific authority. Those beneath him said they were simply following orders. All agree that the now silent Liddy was the instigator, the spark for much of the incredible array of heavy-handed political legerdemain that has come to be known generically as Watergate.

Liddy's silence amid the free-wheeling talk of others is rooted in an unflinching loyalty to his former employer and an almost fanatic commitment to the spy's professional require-ments. Few of Liddy's former associates recall him as the idiosyncratic Liddy who once boasted, according to fellow Watergate conspirator James W. McCord, that a planned break-in at the Democratic National Convention, plus a contin-uous plan to kidnap ant- 

Liddy's silence amid the free-wheeling talk of others is rooted in an unflinching loyalty to his former employer and an almost fanatic commitment to the spy's professional requirement of nonrevelation, according to many Watergate observers.

He refused to testify at his own conspiracy trial last winter as well as before the Watergate grand jury this spring. He is serving a contempt-of-court sentence in federal prison for the latter refusal.

He refused to talk with FBI investigators last summer after the Watergate break-in and has since refused to testify before a House Armed Services subcommittee investigating CIA involvement in the Watergate case.

Likewise, he has declined to depose in the Democratic National Committee's Watergate bugging civil suit against the Nixon re-election committee and has refused to cooperate with General Accounting Office auditors examining the books of the same committee.

Liddy's former associates continue to paint an elaborate image of him as an energetic, multifaceted man capable of performances ranging from writing brilliant legal briefs to shooting out the lights in an alley during a midnight inspection of the headquarters building of presidential hopeful Sen. George McGovern here last year.

Many of Liddy's more adventurous plans never came to fruition. Watergate committee witnesses have testified.

His original $1 million intelligence and security offensive against the Democrats and dissidents in the nation included, for example, a Miami-based yacht wired for sound with call girls to lure delegates from the Democratic National Convention, plus a contin-uous plan to kidnap anti-war leaders and hold them in a place like Mexico until after the Republican convention. The kidnapings were proposed as a means of short-circuiting street demon-strations in Miami Beach, site of the GOP convention.

Nixon campaign chief John N. Mitchell was "appalled" at such proposals, recalled Jeb Stuart Magruder, deputy campaign manager of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President, and Liddy went back to the drawing boards to devise a more realistic plan.

Liddy once boasted, according to fellow Watergate conspirator James W. McCord, that a planned break-in at the offices of a Las Vegas newspaper publisher would be consummated by the break-in crew fleeing to Central America on a plane furnished by no one less than billionaire Howard Hughes.

"My impression of Mr. Liddy was that he may have been a very capable general counsel, but that he also occa-sionally did some fairly bizarre things," Magruder said.

When Magruder once put his hand on Liddy's shoulder and complained that Liddy was slow in getting a job done, Liddy "indicated he would kill me," Magruder said, if Magruder did not remove his hand.

Magruder stressed that he did not consider the threat a serious gesture but only one "of Mr. Liddy's mannerisms.

Shortly thereafter, Liddy was relieved of his duties as general counsel for the committee and began concent-
Rooted in Unflinching Loyalty

he appeared in District Court, left, and July 30, 1973, when he refused to even take oath at another hearing. 

"It was a joking reference," answered Reisner.

"It turned out to be incorrect, too, didn't it?" re-typed Thompson. 

"It turned out to be incorrect," said Reisner.

The Watergate testimony is studied with descriptions of Liddy as a wild, unpredictable, off-the-wall character, bright but compulsive, eager but hard to restrain. "I had an impression of him that he was certainly not an easy employee to have around," said Reisner.

Magruder testified before the Senate committee planning to demonstrate against the various antiwar groups planning to demonstrate against the convention. If such an apparatus existed, said police, FBI and Republican National Committee security officials in interviews with The Washington Post, its operatives never established liaison with the rest of the intelligence community and produced no known reliable data.

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"Mr. Liddy reassured us," said LaRue. "That is the same concern we had about the scope of Mr. Liddy's proposal," Magruder testified.

Even his planning, when it came to the call girls on the yacht and the abduction of anti-war leaders, got out of hand, Magruder complained at another point.

"He was supposed to be the planner, not the executor of these activities," Magruder testified.

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