## WXPost Aug 6 18 Rebirth WXPost 1973 **Of Ethics** Is Asked Nation Tainted By Watergate, **Blackmun Says**

By John P. McKenzie Washington Post Staff Writer Supreme Court Justice

Harry A. Blackmun called yesterday for "rebuilding the ruins" of Watergate to remove the "taint and corruption in our public life."

Addressing 750 members of the American Bar Association and their families, Blackmun spoke pointedly of the politi-cal scandals, many of which involve lawyers, which form the backdrop for the 96th ABA annual convention here.

"The pall of Watergate, with all its revelations of misplaced loyalties, of strange measures of the ethical, of unusual do-ings in high places, and by lawyer after lawyer after law-yer, is upon us," Blackmun said.

Blackmun, a 1970 Nixon ap-pointee, said the Watergate at-mosphere "is something that necessarily touches us all, ir-respective of political inclina-tion. The very glue of our ship of state seems about to be-come unstuck" come unstuck."

The occasion was the bar association's prayer breakfast, for which Blackmun used as his text the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. The book, which tells of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem four centuries before Christ, con-tains a biblical reference to "Water Gate."

In describing the dedication of the wall, Nehemiah's Chap-ter 12, Verse 37 says the Water Gate was the Jerusalem gate where many of the cele-brants gathered at the dedica-tion of the wall, which had been built despite threats by heatile untriduced hostile outsiders.

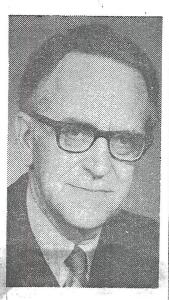
hostile outsiders. "One may say that our Jeru-salem is in ruins," said Black-mun. One may question, he added, "whether its founda-tions are eroding... There is a sadness all about us." Then, invoking "the spirit of Nehemiah," Blackmun asked whether America and its lead-

whether America and its leaders have the will for the needed rebuilding task.

"Will it be said that, despite the opposition of announced displeasure, accusation, ridi-cule, anger, confusion, infiltrablandishment, tion, blandishment, threat, temptation, and those re-peated invitations to come down to the Plain of Ono and to delay and compromise and rationalize, we held steady and built again?" the justice asked.

Blackmun recalled that the nation had experienced troubles throughout history, in-cluding the "plundering of our national resources," Teapot Dome and "in the other scan-dals, large and small, that have rocked every administra-

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HARRY A. BLACKMUN ... "pall is upon us"

## BLACKMUN, From A1

tion of recent times and today, in certain aspects of the Watergate."

And Watergate, he noted, And watergate, ne noteu, occurs at a time when present and former congressmen and a high-ranking federal judge (Otto Kerner of Illinois) have been prosecuted for crimes. "One sees conceded lawbreaking of various kinds," he said. "One senses a laxness in public life that 20 years ago, if in-dulged in, could not be politi-

After citing Biblical selec-tions read by former Justice Arthur J. Goldberg and Supe-rior Court Judge Nelson of Boston, Blackmun closed the lay sermon by asking "Which lay sermon by asking, "Which will prevail—the better angels of our nature, to use Mr. Lincoln's words, or something far, far less?'

Many in the breakfast audience were visibly moved by the justice's quietly delivered speech. ABA president Robert W. Meserve, who presided, ap-peared near tears and had dif-ficulty closing the meeting

peared near tears and had dif-ficulty closing the meeting. The willingness of Black-mun, the soft-spoken and con-servative jurist, to speak to the bar on moral issues of Watergate, came as a surprise to many. While some bar lead-ers have been pressing for eth-ical reform, others have deical reform, others have de-nied that Watergate has uncovered inadequacies in the standards of the legal profesin the sion.

The convention moves into full swing today with Chief Justice Warren E. Burger's annual "State of the Judiciary" address and the opening of the 318-member House cf Delegates to questions of professional concern and political controversy.