

Some of Colson's Watergate Secrets



Jack Anderson

FORMER White House aide Charles Colson secretly told the Senate Watergate committee a tale that meshes closely with those of his ex-colleagues John Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman.

We have one of the closely guarded summaries of Colson's closed door interview with committee staffers in preparation for his testimony next month and have verified its authenticity with Colson.

In it, the brisk, buccaneer Colson sided with Haldeman and Ehrlichman and painted a slippery picture of former presidential counsel John Dean. Nowhere did Colson deeply implicate himself or indicate that President Nixon knew of the Watergate coverup as Dean has charged.

Indeed, Colson charged Dean with his own coverup.

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COLSON asserted that he sent a memo to Dean outlining some incriminating evidence. "Dean came to (Colson) that day or the next day and told him to destroy (his copy of) it because it impeaches (Nixon campaign Deputy Jeb) Magruder," recorded the summary.

"He did not destroy it," the committee document goes on. Later, Colson told Haldeman and Ehrlichman about his talk with Dean.

The handsome Dean also ordered Watergate conspirator Howard Hunt out of the country after the Watergate break-in, according to a Hunt conversation with

Colson's secretary. In the same conversation, Colson reported, Hunt said that "the big boy" — presumably former Attorney General John Mitchell — "demanded they go through with the (Watergate) operation." Mitchell has denied similar charges by others.

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MISSING from Colson's talk with the staffers is the brash tone that was his hallmark at the White House. To the contrary, there appears to be moments of contrition in his statement.

"I approved two ads which were worked up and presented to me for approval and I possibly contributed something to the ads," he conceded. The two ads used names of persons without their permission to attack opponents of the White House Indochina policy.

Besides his activist role, Colson received "Chapman's reports," the memos sent to former Nixon aide Murray Chotiner from two of Chotiner's spies in the McGovern press party. "Colson has no knowledge of any other dirty tricks type activities," insists the summary of Colson's statements.

In fact, Colson denied vehemently a claim by Magruder that Colson pushed him to implement the Watergate bugging plan.

This column was written under the direction of Les Whitten of Jack Anderson's staff.