

'Dirty Tricks' Man

Donald Henry Segretti

By JOHN M. CREWASON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 3 —

About to be discharged from the Army and eager to begin his delayed career as a civilian, Donald Henry Segretti arrived in Washington two years ago for a reunion with two college buddies who had offered him a job.

The work they had in mind for him was novel

Man —to create such
in the confusion among
News last year's Presidential primary

candidates that it would be difficult for the Democratic party to come back together after its nominating convention.

If he had to do it over, Segretti has said, he would not have accepted the offer. But he did, and as a result he is back in Washington this week, facing a future that is far less promising than it must have seemed in the summer of 1971, that time Dwight L. Chapin and Gordon C. Strachan enlisted him in the service of the President.

On Monday, the diminutive (five feet four inches, 130 pounds) lawyer pleaded guilty to charges of political sabotage that could mean three years in prison.

Segretti faced the Senate Watergate committee and the television cameras today and told of his life as an undercover spy. But much of what he said had already been reported, and the more puzzling question, especially to those who remember his liberal political inclinations, remained largely unanswered.

Such liberalism as there was emerged relatively late in life. Until he graduated from the University of Southern California in 1963, only a more serious attitude toward his studies distinguished Segretti from Dwight Chapin, Ronald Ziegler and other future Nixon Administration officials with whom he shared a passion for campus politics and the singular way of life of a U.S.C. fraternity man in the early 1960's.

After graduation, the Chapins and Zieglers went into advertising Segretti studied at Cambridge and, later, at one of the nation's top law schools, the University of California at Berkeley.

By 1966, when he graduated from Berkeley, the Vietnam war was in full swing.

For the next four years, he served as an officer in the

Judge Advocate General's Corps.

It was during his Army service that Segretti gained a reputation as something of a liberal. In Charlottesville, Va., where he was stationed for a year, he attempted to integrate a private housing facility that was refusing black tenants. At Longbinh, in Vietnam, he made it a practice to defend soldiers who had applied for discharges as conscientious objectors.

Peace Symbol on Checks

At Ford Ord, in California, where he spent his last days in the Army, Captain Segretti helped organize a chapter of the Concerned Officers Movement, an antiwar and antimilitary group. His barracks wall sported a "Free Huey" poster, and his checks, a peace symbol.

Segretti, who was born Sept. 17, 1941, in San Marino, Calif., was on the verge of 30 at the time of his seminal meeting with Mr. Chapin, then President Nixon's appointments secretary, and Mr. Strachan, an assistant to former White House Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman—who himself ultimately approved the sabotage operation.

One former girlfriend, who turned down an offer from him to spy on the Democrats for the Republicans, says that Segretti considered his job as a political spymaster "an excellent chance for him to make the great leap forward" to political influence.

He was even more candid with another friend, a nurse. "I think he wanted to work in the White House," she said.

Had it not been for Watergate, he might have had his wish. During the 1972 primaries, Segretti displayed both the imagination and energy which had caused Mr. Chapin and Mr. Strachan to consider him for the job.

Fortified with the \$45,000 in Republican campaign funds that had been provided to him by Herbert W. Kalmback, the President Nixon's personal lawyer, the baby-faced saboteur indulged his tastes for intrigue, travel, good food and comely young women.

Smaller amounts of money went to other members of his sabotage network, in return for deeds that often resembled fraternity house pranks. But some funds were used to finance a Mercedes-Benz

roadster and a modish apartment in the "singles" community of Marina Del Rey, Calif., near Los Angeles.

A neighbor there, a young woman, recalled that Segretti appeared to be enjoying himself during those days. But shortly after the Watergate break-in on June 17, 1972, unsettling events crowded in.

Leafing through a news magazine, he discovered a

photograph of a mysterious stranger he had known as "Ed Warren." Mr. Warren had appeared one day a few months before and since then had periodically "suggested" activities that Segretti might want to pursue.

'Warren' Was Hunt

The picture appeared with a story on the week-old Watergate break-in, and the caption identified "Ed Warren" as E. Howard Hunt Jr.

A few days later, Federal agents appeared at the Marina apartment to ask why Segretti's telephone number had turned up on Hunt's long-distance toll records.

Segretti's plush bachelor apartment has a new tenant now; he himself is living in Culver City.

The former girlfriend, the nurse, remembers that a group of Segretti's friends were sitting around one night, and his name came up.

"We decided that if there was anyone we knew who would wind up as a Presidential aide or in the headlines, it would be Don," she recalled.