

By Vera Glaser

Washington

As the tenth anniversary of John Kennedy's assassination approaches, an odd twist of fate finds some of the same characters spotlighted in a new presidential trauma.

Five highly placed lawyers who figured in the investigation of Kennedy's death are now prominent in the Watergate crisis.

They are Vice President-designate Gerald Ford, Bernard Fensterwald Jr., special prosecutor Leon Jaworski, Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell and Federal Judge John J. Sirica.

To this day controversy persists over the findings of the Warren Commission, which probed the assassination.

Watergate, likewise, can

be expected to stir arguments for years to come, and both episodes have profoundly affected the lives of those involved.

Ford, who served on the Warren Commission, wrote a book about its findings.

Little did he dream that ten years later a Republican White House would be shattered, not by an assassin's rifle, but by scandal, propelling him to the threshold of the Oval Office.

Of the Kennedy assassination, which occurred Nov. 22, 1963, Ford said, "Seldom has a crime appeared to be more complicated and mysterious. Never has a crime been so thoroughly investigated."

Bernard Fensterwald disagrees. The Warren Commission probe could have been more thorough, he says, noting that President Lyndon

Johnson and commission member Richard Russell disagreed with the findings. He believes Oswald had accomplices.

Fensterwald is best known as Watergate burglar James W. McCord's lawyer and as an experienced congressional investigator.

He believes Watergate has set him back. "If what we suspect is true, that the murder of JFK has been covered up, the trauma would make Watergate look like a Sunday school picnic. Nobody wants to open up another trauma," he said.

Almost forgotten now are the roles played ten years ago by Leon Jaworski and Lewis Powell. They, too, worked with the Warren Commission.

Jaworski, a respected Texas lawyer, served as special counsel for the state

authorities. Powell was named by the American Bar Association to represent Oswald's interests.

On the Supreme Court, Powell and his fellow justices eventually may rule on release of the secret Kennedy evidence withheld from Fensterwald has been trying to pry from the federal archives.

Judge Sirica of Watergate fame has already ruled once, denying Fensterwald's plea to make public evidence withheld from the Warren Commission.

Judge Sirica's negative ruling was reversed on appeal, and the case may go to the Supreme Court.

"One of the puzzling things," Fensterwald said, "is the way the Kennedy family has shied away from us. I thought Bobby would have gone to the ends of the earth to track down his brother's killer, but he didn't."

About 100 people in the U.S. — pathologists, researchers and lawyers — are working with Fensterwald. At one time a poll showed two-thirds of the American people didn't believe Oswald acted alone.

But Watergate or not, the mood of the country doesn't seem encouraging for boat-rockers.