

Watergate's Forgotten Man

Lost in the

By Marlene Cimons
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Washington

THE NAME Frank Wills does not evoke instant recognition; at best, its mention usually produces only a feeling of vague familiarity. Yet, when the complicated history of Watergate is permanently recorded some day, his name will almost certainly be among the first to appear.

Wills, the security guard who discovered and reported the June 17, 1972, Watergate break-in at the Democratic National Committee, says he is not looking for immortality, or even a large piece of current glory. He does feel, however, that his role has somehow been lost within the epic proportions of the scandal and that he has been forgotten.

"When you're black and you do something wrong, everybody's always criticizing loud, but when you're black and you do something good, nobody pays any attention," Wills said quietly, his voice punctuated with the mild drawl of his native Georgia.

When he speaks, he appears shy and somewhat uneasy, not particularly comfortable talking about himself. "I don't like to," he said. "It's not good to let anybody know you completely."

He is 25, a bachelor who lives alone in a one-room apartment, and until several weeks ago, existed on a 65-dollar-a-week unemployment compensation because he couldn't find a job. He is boyish and slender, with a thin moustache and features marred only by a small scar above his left eye, a reminder of a childhood fall from the roof of his Savannah house.

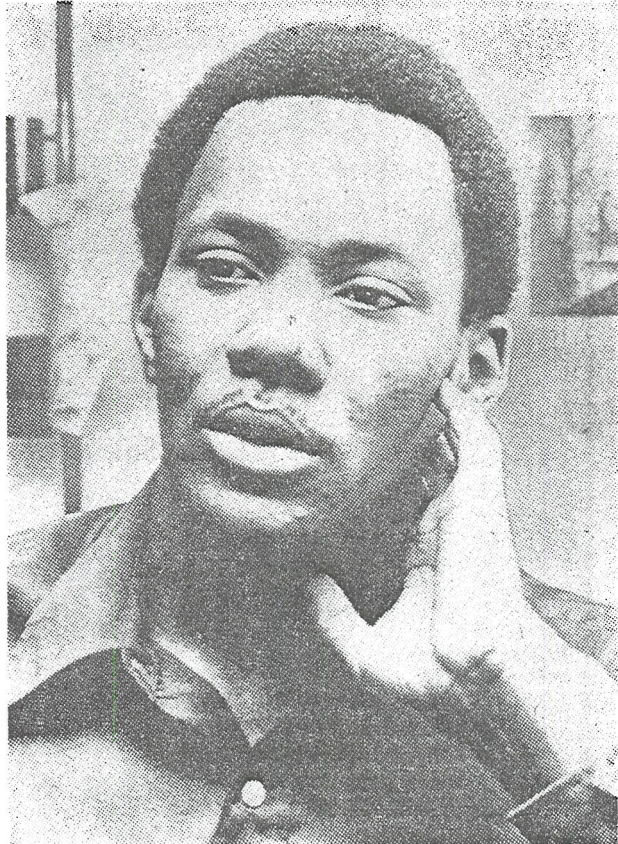
"Everybody says I started it all, that I saved the country," Wills said. "It kind of makes me angry that I couldn't even get a job after that."

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HE LEFT his Watergate post six months after the break-in, and took another one as a security guard with a real estate company. He said he was fired, however, in June because he took two days off to visit his home in the South. After that, he said, no one would employ him because, he suspects, of his connection with the Watergate affair.

"The man proved himself a good security guard, but no one would hire him for the longest time after that because he was a hot potato," said Dorsey Evans, his attorney, who seems more eager than his client to show anger over Wills' treatment.

Several places where he looked for work, Wills said, were nervous about publicity, and officials at



Security guard Frank Wills: "I'm a believer in psychic forces. Something told me that night something was wrong. I had vibes."

one school where Wills applied for a job told him they were afraid the school might lose its federal funding if he were to work there. Finally, several weeks ago, he was hired as a guard at an office building in suburban Virginia. He refused to name it, and would not discuss his salary. "Just say it's a lot more than I was getting at the Watergate (\$80-a-week)," he said.

In an effort to make sure Wills isn't forgotten, the two have put together a pamphlet called "The Watergate Hero: An Eyewitness Report by Frank Wills" which is being sold for \$2. It is published by "Wil-Van, Inc.," at the same office address as Evans' law offices, and it describes the security guard's background and the events of June 17, 1972.

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Among the last pages are photographs of Wills and Evans, and a list of Watergate-related indictments.

In the immediate months following the break-in, Wills was reportedly charging the press up to \$300 for interviews, which Evans termed "honorariums."

"We look at it as paying for Frank's time," Evans said.

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WILLS, WHO quit school after the 11th grade to join the Job Corps, came to Washington in April, 1971, just to visit. He liked the city and was placed with the General Security Service through an employment agency. He was assigned the midnight-to-7 a.m. shift at the Watergate complex.

On June 17, 1972, after reporting for work, he discovered a door lock in the building held back with masking tape. He removed the tape, and continued on his rounds. When he returned to the same door 15 minutes later, he found the lock had been retaped. Then he called the police.

"I'm a believer in psychic forces," Wills said. "Something told me that night something was wrong. I had vibes."

They were the same kind of vibes, he said, that made him look out of his apartment window several weeks ago and see a burglar climbing out of a third story window of a motel across the street. He called the police, the man was caught, and it was later revealed that he had been previously arrested for a series of burglaries, Wills said.

"Something told me to look out my window," he said. "And when that happens, you don't question it. Everyone has psychic ability, but they don't always use it."

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EXCEPT FOR a few hectic months after the break-in, during which time he was besieged by reporters for details ("they kept calling me up in the middle of the night and I couldn't get any sleep"), life has quieted down considerably for Wills.

He spends a great deal of time alone, hunting and fishing, and occasionally rides a bicycle. He used to have a girl friend, but they broke up. "It had nothing to do with Watergate" he said. "She was just kind of nutty."

He learned how to cook in the Job Corps, and said he would like to open a soul food restaurant some day. "But I don't know when that will ever be," he said. "Things like that don't happen over night."