

20 Grueling Months for Watergate Grand Jurors

Washington

For the 23 members of Watergate grand jury No. 1, being a part of history for the past 20 months has been a mixed blessing.

Two have lost their jobs. At least one has missed a promotion. Wages have been lost.

While the 11 who are federal employees have continued to draw their regular salaries, the other 12 have been engaged in a running battle with the court's administrative office over their per diem pay—when an increase from \$20 to \$25-a-day should have gone into effect.

Most federal grand juries meet for only a few days of their normal 18-month lives. But Watergate grand jury No. 1, whose life was extended six months in December, has met long hours during more than 100 days stretched over the entire 20 months.

Then, after handing down the long-awaited indictments

yesterday their hopes of being dismissed so they could return once more to normal lives were dashed by Judge John J. Sirica.

The judge excused two of them but told the other 21 they must continue to serve and must not discuss their proceedings with anyone. Without hinting why, he indicated they would be recalled in about two weeks.

Since their work is entirely behind closed doors and they are barred from discussing the case, little is known of the jurors themselves. Their two brief public appearances show more blacks than whites, more women than men.

Their sense of mission is evident. Reporters' efforts to interview some of them, even when limited to non-jury matters, have been uniformly spurned.

Witnesses as well as those familiar with grand jury proceedings say the jurors have shown remarkable faithfulness in attendance

and have taken an unusually active part in the questioning.

By far the most colorful is the foreman, Vladimir N. Pregelj, a 46-year-old Yugoslavian refugee who is an international trade analyst for the Library of Congress.

Tall, fit-looking and a nativity dresser, Pregelj sports a Van Dyke goatee that has visibly grayed since the case began.

Pregelj (pronounced Pray'-gul), in particular, was an active questioner, according to jury sources.

The indictment, in fact, shows that his persistent questioning of Gordon Strachan led to a count against the former White House aide of giving false testimony.

Another colorful juror whose persistency reportedly led to an indictment and guilty plea was Elayne Edlund.

Prosecutors last year were about to drop their investigation of Donald H. Segretti, the young Los Angeles attorney recruited by former presidential aide Dwight Chapin to head the 1972 campaign's so-called dirty tricks department.

However, Ms. Edlund's questioning of Segretti opened leads that were pursued by a Florida grand jury and eventually led to his guilty plea on a charge of violating campaign laws. He was sentenced to six months in the federal prison in Lompoc, Calif.

Ms. Edlund, whose frequent changes in hair style and color indicated she owned a number of wigs, was usually seen carrying books such as Joseph Goulden's "Superlawyers" in and out of the courtroom.

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