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What Was Said in Jest? Transcripts Leave Doubt

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter
WASHINGTON—Throughout President Nixon's Watergate transcripts, brief exchanges indicate a cavalier attitude toward individuals and their legal problems.

For example, on April 15, 1973, John Ehrlichman told the President that reelection committee official Robert Mardian, a former Assistant Attorney General, was "very heavy-handed" in his coaching of those who were to be called as grand jury witnesses.

President: Well, is there anything wrong with that?

Ehrlichman: Yeah, well there's something wrong with —

President: He was not their attorney is the problem?

Ehrlichman: Well, no, the problem — the problem is he asked them to say things that weren't true.

President: Oh.

Ehrlichman: When I say coach I use the word loosely, and —