

# Behind Watergate Grand Jury Doors



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THE AMERICAN PEOPLE are entitled to know more about the historic grand jury which named President Nixon an "unindicted co-conspirator" in the Watergate crime.

The 23 grand jurors, selected from all walks of life, watched the Watergate drama develop behind guarded doors. They heard the secret testimony; they listened to the presidential tapes.

Four were absent when they met on March 1. The remaining 19 voted for the first time in history to accuse an American President of criminal conspiracy. Were they fair to Richard Nixon? Or were they out to get him, as he has said of his accusers?

We have broken through the secrecy which has surrounded the Watergate grand jury. Inside sources have described the closed-door drama; we have had access to actual transcripts. We are perhaps in a unique position, therefore, to assess this red-letter grand jury.

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THE 23 CITIZENS were called together on June 5, 1972, to hear evidence of crimes in the District of Columbia.

Courthouse sources say one grand jury in 10 is outstanding. This one, in the opinion of Assistant U.S. Attorney John Forney Rudy II, then in charge of the grand jury section, was "exceptional."

So when chief Watergate prosecutor Earl Silbert asked for an experienced grand jury, Rudy immediately recommended this one.

The early transcripts revealed no hint of prejudice against the President. On the contrary, the grand jurors at first seemed to shy away from implicating the President in the Watergate horror.

As the evidence piled up, the feeling seemed to grow inside the grand jury room that Mr. Nixon was responsible at least for the Watergate atmosphere, that his own suspicion and hostility had infected the White House with a moral rot.

Occasionally, the growing outrage would surface. During a discussion of propriety, for example, a juror snapped: "Is 'proper' an obsolete word these days?"

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THREE JURORS, in particular, began to ask questions aimed at the President. Other jurors wanted to call witnesses not on the prosecution list, whom they thought might have knowledge of the President's involvement.

But most questions from the jurors were not at all loaded against the President. The best questions were asked by the gray-bearded foreman, Vladimir Pregelj, and a postal clerk, Harold Evans.

The 23 Watergate jurors closely followed the case as it evolved from a foolish burglary into a plethora of dirty deeds. The cover-up came apart before their eyes. White House witnesses lied and cried.

In the end, the jury concluded that the President was implicated. Seven days after they named him an "unindicted co-conspirator,"