

Buzhardt, Nixon Lawyer,

By Stuart Auerbach
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White House counsel J. Fred Buzhardt, one of President Nixon's chief legal defenders against impeachment and Watergate allegations, suffered an apparent heart attack early yesterday and will be off the job for at least a month.

Buzhardt, 50, was listed in serious condition in the coronary care unit at Fairfax Hospital, less than a mile from his home. He was admitted at 12:30 a.m. yesterday complaining of chest pains after being rushed to the hospital by car.

Hospital employees who saw him come in said Buzhardt appeared "white as a ghost."

His illness complicates President Nixon's fight to keep tapes of White House conversations from the Watergate special prosecutor and from the House Judiciary Committee investigations into whether the President should be impeached.

Buzhardt was known as the keeper of the tapes. He had listened to all of them and gone over all the presidential transcripts that have been released to the Committee, the courts and the public.

"We've made arrangements to regroup, as it were," said James D. St. Clair, the President's chief defense lawyer. "But we will be able to carry out our responsibilities to any court."

These responsibilities include filing an appeal by the end of business today on an order by federal District Court Judge John Sirica to release the final 17½ minutes of a tape of a White House conversation on Sept. 15, 1972. Watergate Prosecutor Leon Jaworski argued that the discussion—between Mr. Nixon, former White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman and for-

mer White House counsel John W. Dean II—involved an illegal White House attempt to

get the Internal Revenue Service to investigate Larry O'Brien, who was then the chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

Buzhardt has also been deeply involved in the legal fight over allowing former top Nixon adviser John D. Ehrlichman see his White House papers as a part of his defense in the Ellsberg break-in trial.

While St. Clair argued most of the cases in court, Buzhardt worked in the White House to determine what tapes and papers the President would allow to be released.

Stressing that Buzhardt had been working "horrendous hours" lately, one White House spokesman said the attorney had been up practically all Tuesday night going through Ehrlichman's files to determine which papers the former White House aide would be allowed to see.

White House communications chief Ken. W. Clawson estimated that Buzhardt has been putting in 16 to 18 hour days, seven days a week all year.

His long hours and the stresses of his job will be key factors in the decision by doctors on when Buzhardt should be allowed to return to work.

If his doctors determine that he has suffered a heart attack—and they should know that today when the last of a series of three blood tests is completed—his release from the hospital and return to work will depend on the seriousness of the attack and the stresses of his job.

While the doctors are not yet sure how serious a heart attack he suffered, there is no question about the high stress of Buzhardt's work.

Ordinarily, a heart attack patient spends from three to five days in the coronary care unit, being continuously monitored for heart rhythms, heart beat, blood pressure and other vital signs.

Then, if he improves, the patient is moved to a progressive coronary care unit for five to seven days. His vital signs are monitored there by telemetry, as the astronauts' are when they are in space. This allows the patient to move around the unit.

Finally, the patient stays in a regular hospital unit for another week to 10 days before going through a period of recuperation at home.

In a brief medical report yesterday, Buzhardt's doctors—who refused to allow the hospital to release their names—described his condition as "serious but stable" and said he was "resting comfortably." Later, the hospital reported that Buzhardt was "alert and oriented."

Stricken

Anyone admitted to Fairfax Hospital's coronary care unit is considered at best to be in serious condition. It does, however, mean that there is a good chance his condition will improve.

Most likely, Buzhardt suffered what doctors call a myocardial infarction—a heart attack caused when part of the heart muscle is deprived of oxygen-carrying blood. The site of the attack and how much of the heart muscle is affected will determine how serious the heart attack is.

A frequent cause of the

blood deprivation is a small clot in a blood vessel leading to the heart—known as coronary thrombosis.

The White House said that President Nixon, touring Egypt, was notified yesterday of Buzhardt's illness. A White House physician still in Washington, Dr. Chester Ward, was detailed to keep the President informed of Buzhardt's condition.

Presidential Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, in Alexandria, Egypt, said, "Of course we are concerned about Fred. We understand he is receiving the best of care. He is receiving our prayers and he is in our thoughts."

Two other White House lawyers, Jack Chester and James Staudt, took Buzhardt's place in court yesterday, where he was to have met with Judge Gerhard A. Gesell and attorneys for Ehrlichman.

Buzhardt moved to the White House from the Pentagon on May 10, 1973, first as a special counsel to the President for Watergate and then as counsel to the President.

A soft-spoken, mild mannered southerner who was known for the long hours he put into any job he was doing, Buzhardt was the President's chief defender until St. Clair was hired.

For a time Buzhardt's role

in the defense picture appeared uncertain. But then he emerged as a key man in any discussions about the release of White House tapes.

He came to the White House after serving for three years as general counsel in the Department of Defense.

A West Point graduate and aviator with the Army Air Force, Buzhardt was born in Greenwood, S.C., and received a law degree from the University of South Carolina. He formerly worked on the staff of South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond.

former Imogene Sanders.

Buzhardt is married to the They have four children.