

# Finale Nears in Watergate

By George Lardner Jr.  
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The Watergate cover-up trial slowly approached its finale yesterday as the last of the five defendants, Nixon re-election committee lawyer Kenneth Wells Parkinson, took the witness stand in his own defense.

Testifying publicly for the first time, he admitted he had been told the inside story behind the Watergate bugging shortly after it occurred — but said he was just as quickly persuaded by former Attorney General John N. Mitchell not to believe it.

"He was at the pinnacle of the legal profession," Parkinson testified. "I just had confidence in him."

Describing himself as a political babe in the woods, the Washington lawyer said that Nixon campaign deputy director Jeb Stuart Magruder blurted out the truth to him in a long conversation on July 13, 1972, at the headquarters of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President.

But by then, he said, he had already been led to believe that Magruder was a liar who was covering up to save his own skin.

"I was in a state of some confusion," said Parkinson, who had been hired to defend the Nixon campaign against litigation stemming from the Watergate bugging. "I had just come from the offices of the former Attorney General of the United States who said he had no connection with the break-in."

Shortly after the meeting with Magruder, Parkinson said he was marched back into Mitchell's offices again and assured that "what Magruder told me was not a true story."

The testimony came as U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica announced plans to start hearing closing arguments in the case today or Thursday and to complete them by Monday when the prolonged trial will enter its 13th week.

Sirica said he then expects to give the jurors a two-day Christmas holiday—while keeping them sequestered—and then call them back Dec. 26 to begin deliberating over their verdict.

Moving to the witness stand yesterday afternoon, Parkinson said he was repeatedly assured by one of the other defendants, former Nixon campaign coordinator Robert C. Mardian, in late June of 1972 that the re-election campaign had nothing to do with the



**ROBERT C. MARDIAN**  
... said to offer theories

break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters here.

The bespectacled, prim-looking Washington lawyer said Mardian, who had retained him for the Nixon committee, told him that the Watergate burglars had simply been off "on a lark of their own."

According to other testimony, Mardian had just obtained a long confession from Watergate spy G. Gordon Liddy, but said nothing about it to Parkinson. Mardian insisted that he was bound by a promise to Liddy to keep the disclosures a secret from everyone but Mitchell.

Parkinson, however, said Mardian not only gave him no hint of Liddy's involvement, but went so far as to suggest all sorts of other theories for the break-in, declaring that it might have been a CIA operation or even a free-lance undertaking by a private detective agency operated by Nixon campaign security chief James W. McCord Jr.

In the days that followed, Parkinson said he and another lawyer hired by the Nixon campaign at the same time, Paul O'Brien, began to pick up nagging signs that Magruder at least had been involved. Parkinson said he was also troubled by Liddy's refusal on June 28, 1972, to talk to the FBI.

Then, on July 6, Parkinson said, Nixon campaign treasurer Hugh Sloan came to him and O'Brien with an even more distressing development.

"He was very upset, and distraught," Parkinson recalled. "He said Magruder had asked him to commit perjury" about how much campaign money had been paid out to Liddy.

Magruder had initially put the figure at \$40,000. Sloan re-

ported that Magruder had instead authorized a total of \$250,000 and that Liddy had picked up \$199,000 before the Watergate arrests on June 17, 1972.

In testimony that was heavily damaging to Mitchell, Parkinson said he began to press for a meeting with the former attorney general who remained "the ultimate responsible person in the Watergate matter and the civil litigation" even after he resigned on July 1 as director of the Nixon campaign.

Finally, on the morning of July 13, Parkinson said he and O'Brien were ushered into Mitchell's offices. Mardian and Nixon campaign strategist Frederick C. La Rue were also present.

"It was very cordial, very warm, very friendly," Parkinson recalled. He said Mitchell told them they "were on the right track" in denying any connection with the Watergate burglars and laughed off reports that he was one of those who had received logs of Democratic conversations that had been successfully bugged.

"He said it was just ridiculous," Parkinson said. "Then Mr. Mardian put his feet up on Mitchell's desk. He said, 'John, these fellas' — pointing at me and O'Brien — 'think you're involved in the Watergate break-in.'"



**JUDGE JOHN J. SIRICA**  
... holiday for jurors

"It was very embarrassing," Parkinson added, testifying rapidly now. "But he (Mitchell) laughed, puffed on his pipe and said it was ridiculous. I believed him. He was at the pinnacle of the legal profession. He had been Attorney General of the United States. ... I was impressed with the opportunity to see him. I just had confidence in him."

From there, Mardian took Parkinson to see Magruder. According to Parkinson, Mardian had already described Magruder as "a young upstart kid who really didn't know

THE WASHINGTON POST Wednesday, Dec. 18, 1974 A 3

## Cover-up Trial

anything about politics" and who was both ambitious and unreliable.

A key prosecution witness, Magruder had testified that Mardian told him to tell Parkinson "the truth... what really happened." Magruder said he hesitated at first, but then poured it all out for 90 minutes with both Mardian and Parkinson present.

By contrast, Parkinson insisted that Mardian simply introduced him to Magruder and promptly left the room.

"I told Mr. Magruder that I was there to get any information... particularly about money... that I could," the Washington lawyer testified. "I told him what I had learned from Sloan about the \$250,000 and the \$199,000 to Liddy for some unknown project..."

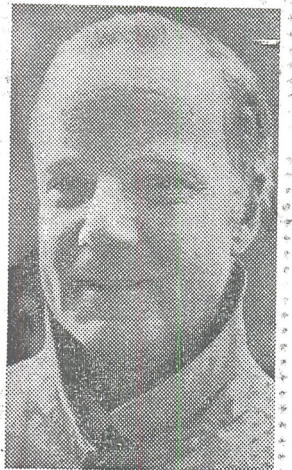
At that, Parkinson declared, Magruder told him blandly, "Well, Ken, you're the lawyer, you tell me what to say."

"I said, 'no, no, you tell me what the facts are.'"

"He said, 'well, what's the scenario?'"

"I said, 'I understand you have a PR background. Maybe you deal in scenarios. I'm a lawyer. I deal in facts.'"

Parkinson said Magruder



**KENNETH W. PARKINSON**  
... cites confusion

bowled him over by preceding to lay it all out. "He told me, 'well, we're all involved in this break-in.' I said, 'what's that?'"

Magruder repeated himself, Parkinson related. "Me said, 'we're all involved. Mr. Mitchell authorized the break-in. He knew about it in advance.

I knew about it. John Dean knew about it. (White House aide) Gordon Strachan, (White House Chief of Staff HR) Haldeman (who was Strachan's boss) must have known."