

# Cleared Defendant Feared 'Landslide'

Washington

"After hearing 'Guilty, Guilty, Guilty' so many times, I began to have the feeling I was going to be hit by a landslide," Kenneth Parkinson, the only defendant in the Watergate cover-up trial to be acquitted, said yesterday.

Parkinson spoke of his apprehension about the verdict and commented on other aspects of the trial in an interview at his Washington law office.

It was the first day he had spent at the office on matters unrelated to the Watergate case since the trial started three months ago.

Behind his desk was a reminder of countless days spent on his defense — an easel containing charts with such notations as "McCord letter," "Senate Committee Hearings," and arrows pointing to critical dates, such as June 21, 1972 — four days after the Watergate breakin.

Parkinson, 47, considered a peripheral figure in the

coverup case from the start, said the trial and being caught up in the Watergate scandal, which he called "the great black plague," had been "very emotional experiences."

On Wednesday, after the jury returned to the courtroom with its verdict, Parkinson stood and listened to the clerk of court proclaim 15 separate guilty verdicts:

John Mitchell, five counts; H. R. Haldeman, five counts; John Ehrlichman, four counts, and Robert Mardian, one count. Finally, the clerk read "not guilty" to both counts against Parkinson and the defendant broke into a broad smile.

In the interview, Parkinson said he thought that Mitchell, Haldeman and Ehrlichman were "braced" for the verdicts, but that Mardian was "crushed" because he thought he had a chance of being acquitted.

Defense lawyers in the case, according to Parkinson, regarded the trial jury as "the most serious and attentive jury" they had

ever encountered.

"Considering the number of lawyers and their ages," Parkinson said, "that is a lot of experience talking."

Parkinson said, "Some slips of the tongue and other things that happened caused some hilarious moments during the trial, but the jurors seldom even smiled. They were extremely serious minded."

Of James Neal, the Nashville lawyer who prosecuted the case, Parkinson said, "Neal is one of the best trial lawyers in the country. He's damn good, a real spellbinder."

Parkinson said his own acquittal "shows the system works."

Would he have thought otherwise had he been found guilty? a reporter asked.

"Well, you and I wouldn't even be talking, that's for sure," he said. "But I do think the system means going through the whole process of appeals and everything."

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