

Gordon Liddy Has a Friend In the PTA

Oxon Hill, Md.

James A. Gavin had no trouble enlisting a neighbor to be editor of the Indian Queen Elementary School PTA newsletter. Only one thing might get in the way, the neighbor said. "I might have to go back to prison."

That was one and a half years ago.

The neighbor, G. Gordon Liddy, did go back to prison to serve the longest term of any of the 58 men convicted of a Watergate or Watergate-related crime.

Gavin said Monday he thinks Liddy has been a prisoner far too long and his five children are suffering because of it.

Gavin is heading a petition drive to get him out.

Liddy was the architect and field marshal of the Watergate break-in. U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica sentenced him to six to 20 years for his role and another 18 months for his obstinate silence before the grand jury. He has now served three years and is not eligible for a parole hearing until May, 1981.

Gavin was elected president of the PTA. One day, while Liddy was out on appeal, Gavin saw him in his back yard. Later, he telephoned Liddy, asked him to serve on the PTA executive committee and got his agreement to edit the newsletter.

"We were supposed to meet on Wednesday," Gavin said, recalling the incident of a year and a half ago. "But he was returned to prison on Monday."

Gavin said he got Mrs. Liddy's enthusiastic okay for the petition drive and talked it over with Liddy in the Danbury, Conn., prison. His petition asks President Ford to commute the sentence.

Liddy and his lieutenant, E. Howard Hunt, are the only Watergate convicts still in prison. Hunt becomes eligible for parole January 10.

David C. Stephenson, a pardon attorney in the Justice Department, says procedures require a formal petition filed by the prisoner himself and no amount of outside signatures will change that.

And nothing is done until a



AP Wirephoto

JAMES A. GAVIN
'A prisoner too long'

prisoner has exhausted all legal remedies. So, until the Supreme Court takes some action on Liddy's appeal of the sentence, a petition appears futile in Liddy's case.

Gavin says he knows that. But, he says, Mr. Ford is a compassionate man.

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