

Ehrlichman Begins Prison Term — His Decision

Safford, Ariz.

John D. Ehrlichman entered a federal prison camp yesterday after his sudden request to begin his Watergate coverup sentence was granted by two federal judges.

Ehrlichman, once one of Richard Nixon's closest aides, entered Swift Trail Federal Prison Camp a few hours after the judges in Washington granted his request not to wait for a Supreme Court review of his convictions. He was ordered to report to the camp by November 1 to begin serving a minimum sentence of 30 months.

Ehrlichman declined press interviews yesterday, and his attorneys declined to say why he had suddenly decided to go to prison.

The Washington Post quoted "persons familiar with the case" who said that "Ehrlichman apparently felt he has little chance of winning in the Supreme Court . . ."

Ehrlichman is the first of the three men closest to Mr. Nixon — and the highest ranking member of the Nixon administration to date — to be imprisoned.

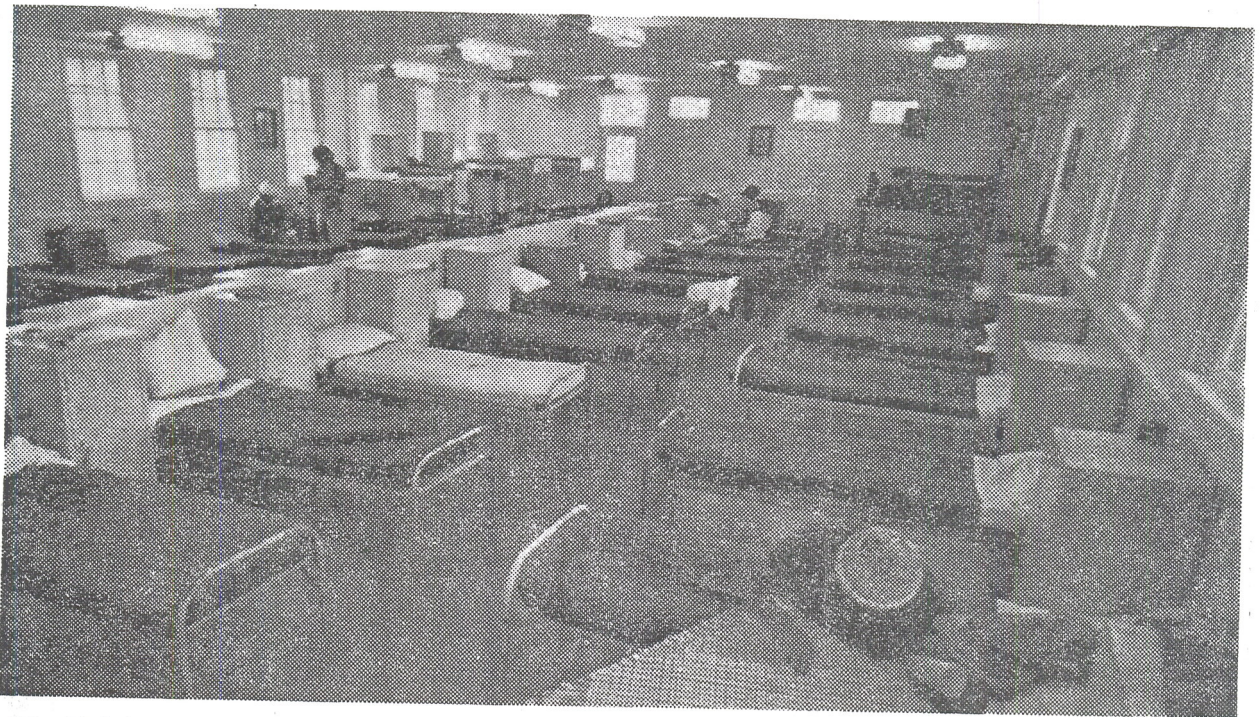
Ehrlichman will not drop his

appeals to the Supreme Court, his lawyers said.

Ehrlichman, Mr. Nixon's domestic counselor and his No. 2 aide, was convicted and sentenced in both the White House "plumbers" case and in the Watergate coverup. His appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals was rejected in each case.

In the months after the Watergate coverup trial, Ehrlichman, now 51, had seemed to change, living in a small adobe house in Santa Fe, N.M., writing a novel and, in the

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John Ehrlichman will live in a 60-man dormitory like this one during his prison term at the Swift Trail Federal Prison Camp in Safford, Ariz.

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most visible change from his White House days, growing a thick dark beard.

When he arrived at the camp yesterday, however, he was clean shaven, apparently aware that federal prison regulations prohibit beards.

Camp officials had known for weeks that Ehrlichman, if he entered prison, would be going to Safford.

Warden John T. Hadden said that no special arrangements had been made.

"We're going to make an effort to treat him no better or no worse than anyone else," Hadden said.

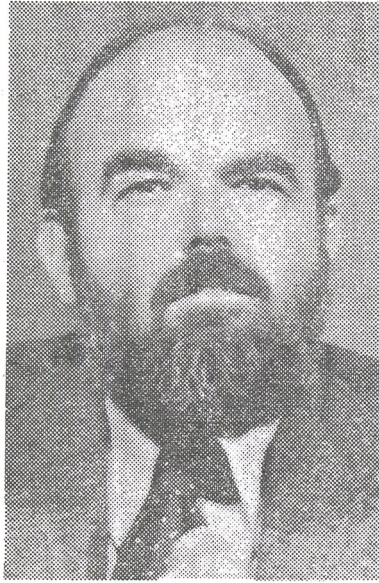
Minimum security camps are generally for short-term inmates. At Safford, Hadden said, the majority are Mexican nationals convicted of entering the country illegally or drug offenders.

A spokesman for the Bureau of Prisons was asked why Ehrlichman was entitled to the relative leniency of a prison camp rather than a prison. He said that the former Nixon official had met the necessary qualifications — he was a "first offender," had not committed "crimes of violence" and was in no way a security risk.

The camp has a glove factory in which inmates may work. It is a popular assignment — all inmates most do some type of work — and there is a waiting list of about 500.

Safford also has a few separate rooms, in addition to the 50-man dormitories, but there is a waiting list for them too. Hadden said that Ehrlichman has been assigned to a dormitory.

At his sentencing in the cover-up case, along with former Attor-



JOHN EHRLICHMAN
Before he went to prison

ney General John N. Mitchell and former White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman, Ehrlichman expressed contrition.

"It is clear to me from the jury verdicts . . . that my public life was perceived in such a way that my peers find me unworthy of their trust and belief," he said. "I have been found to be a perjurer, and no reversal on appeal alone can expunge the stigma of these verdicts."

As the boss of the so-called White House Plumbers, Ehrlichman was sentenced to 20 months to five years for violating the civil rights of a Beverly Hills psychiatrist. The jury found that White House agents, under Ehrlichman's direction, broke into the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding to rifle the files of Pentagon Papers figure Daniel Ellsberg.

Then, Ehrlichman was convicted of obstructing justice, conspir-

ing to obstruct justice and multiple counts of lying under oath in the Watergate coverup. His sentence in that case was 30 months to 8 years.

U.S. District Judge John Sirica, who presided over the coverup trial, made the Watergate and plumbers case sentences concurrent, meaning that Ehrlichman will be eligible for parole after serving 2½ years.

A provision in the law, however, allows Sirica to reduce a sentence within four months after Ehrlichman goes to prison. Sirica has done that on previous occasions, reducing to time served the sentences of such prominent Watergate figures as James W. McCord Jr., John W. Dean, and Jeb Stuart Magruder.

A similar reduction in sentence was ordered for Charles Colson by U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell, who presided over the plumbers trial.

Sirica and Gesell jointly issued yesterday's order, saying Ehrlichman's lawyer told them that he "now wishes voluntarily to surrender his personal bond and to begin service of the concurrent sentences."

Since he moved out of his home in Seattle and separated from his wife, Ehrlichman has become a virtual recluse. He grew a beard and set to work writing novels. The first, called "The Company" was published this year. Another is in the works. He says he has no intention of writing a book about Watergate as his co-defendants, Mitchell and Haldeman, are doing.

The 51-year-old Ehrlichman was in Washington recently testifying about drug enforcement in the Nixon administration. He declined at that time to talk with a reporter about his experiences in Watergate and his present life.

Associated Press