

Haldeman Goes to Prison A Day Early; Mitchell Waits

Lompoc

H.R. Haldeman, the second most powerful man in Richard Nixon's White House, went to prison in California yesterday surrendering nearly a day earlier than scheduled, to be punished for his Watergate crimes.

John N. Mitchell, also ordered to report to prison today, stuck to the schedule and planned to surrender at the Maxwell AFB federal prison facility in Alabama by the noon deadline.

Haldeman, 50, walked into the prison here at 1:55 p.m., donned a gray prison uniform and was placed in a dormitory with 30 other prisoners.

But first, the man who once

was gatekeeper to the Oval Office, was assigned a prison number, fingerprinted and photographed.

"He will be routinely processed through the prison camp's receiving unit during the next couple of weeks," said Gary Aldinger, a prison spokesman. "He will receive a physical examination and be classified to determine his work assignment program."

Prisoners at Lompoc, as at Maxwell, are assigned to landscaping and grounds maintenance, to a farm, or to a furniture factory.

Both Haldeman and Mitchell are under 2½-to-eight-year sentences for their parts in the cover-up of White House involvement in the Watergate affair.

Never before have men who held such great national political power gone to prison: Haldeman, the man who ran the Nixon White House, a convicted perjurer; Mitchell, the first attorney general in history to be convicted of criminal acts.

By reporting early, Haldeman apparently tried to avoid reporters, but newsmen were there.

Haldeman was the 24th man caught in the Watergate web to enter prison. Mitchell will be the 25th and probably the last.

For Haldeman, it was exactly 28 months from the day he, Mitchell and domestic aide John D. Ehrlichman were sentenced by U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica.

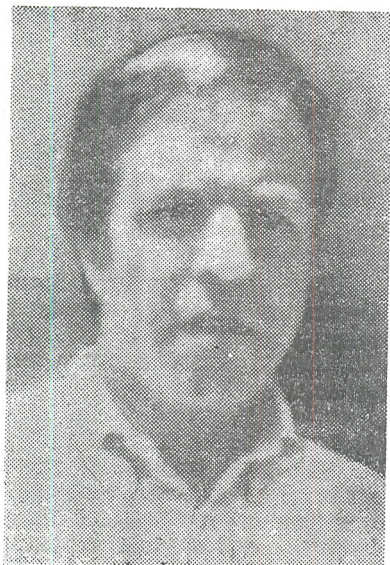
He and Mitchell carried their appeals to the Supreme Court, where they were denied a hearing.

Each man must serve at least 2½ years unless his sentence is commuted by President Carter or cut in the next three months by Sirica.

Haldeman, Mitchell and Ehrlichman were convicted of 14 felonies in the Watergate coverup. Ehrlichman chose to begin his sentence while the appeals process went to the Supreme Court.

Their crimes were conspiracy to obstruct justice, actual obstruction of justice, and lying under oath. Nixon had been named as one of the 18 co-conspirators but he was not indicted. His pardon after his resignation in August 1974 removed any threat of charges.

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AP Wirephoto

H. R. HALDEMAN
As he surrendered at Lompoc