

Liddy Breaks Long Silence —Just a Bit

Washington

G. Gordon Liddy returned to the nation's capital yesterday much the same man that he was when he left four years ago — unremorseful, unbowed and scornful of those who don't understand his rigid code of conduct.

When he was asked if he would burglarize and spy for another president, the convicted mastermind of the Watergate break-in — who was freed from prison Wednesday — drew himself to attention and declared:

“When the prince approaches the lieutenant, the proper response is ‘fiat voluntas tau’ — thy will be done.

He told reporters he did not mean to imply that former President Nixon had authorized the June, 1972, Watergate break-in, but simply that “if any president asked me to work or act in the interests of the United States, I would comply.”

As for John W. Dean III, the former White House counsel whose testimony against former colleagues broke open the Watergate coverup, Liddy said tartly, “He is qualified fully to sing the title role in ‘Der Rosenkavalier.’”

When reporters looked puzzled, Liddy added:

“The title role is sung by a woman.”

Secretive as ever, Liddy had sought to hold a semi-private news conference with several reporters he knew from the “Watergate press corps.” But word leaked out, and others showed up at Room 869 of the Mayflower Hotel — including Aron Kay, a self-styled Yippie, who hit Liddy in the side of the head with an apple pie.

Kay fled as Liddy, undaunted, went to a bathroom and washed off.

Liddy was asked if he could say why he planned the Watergate break-in or what the burglars were seeking in the Democratic National Committee headquarters.

“I can but I won't. I could but I choose not to,” he replied.

Liddy's unbroken silence earned him the longest prison term in the Watergate case — 52½ months.

He said it is possible that someday the reasons for his silence will disappear and “out of an obligation to history . . . it could come about.”

As to his long prison term, he said:

“I have no bitterness toward anyone. Bitterness is a concept that's loaded with self-pity. It's a weakness and a waste.”

But Liddy, a former Treasury Department official and onetime Dutchess county, N.Y., prosecutor, was critical of U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica, who presided at Liddy's trial.

“I was given a larger sentence than the others in an attempt to con the others into submitting to Judge Sirica's prosecutorial urges, as distinguished from judicial temperament, and out of personal pique,” Liddy said.

Liddy, 30 pounds lighter than when he entered prison, was accompanied by his wife, Frances, and their five children, who vary in age from 13 to 18.

Liddy said he plans to write a novel with no connection to Watergate and is investigating job offers ranging from magazine editor to construction supervisor.

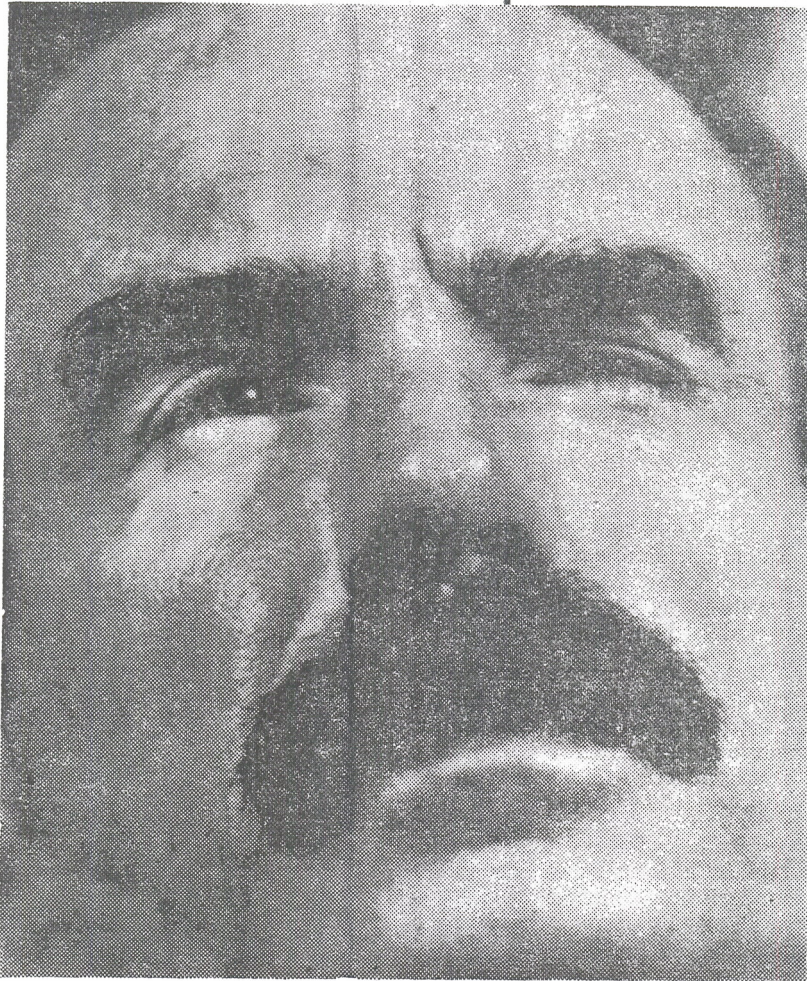
In reply to questions, Liddy said he had not heard from Nixon since Watergate. He declined to say what role, if any, the former President had played in Watergate. No one mentioned it was the third anniversary of Nixon's pardon.

Did he feel responsible for Nixon's downfall?

“I don't know that one can lay the blame on a particular link in a chain unless that link has snapped,” he said. “I submit to you that I have yet to snap.”

Was he hurt when Nixon said on a White House tape recording that Watergate was a “jackass” occurrence?

“I probably have the highest threshold of pain of anyone you



AP Wirephoto

G. GORDON LIDDY
At a news conference in Washington

have ever met, sir," Liddy replied.

Liddy praised John N. Mitchell, the former attorney general and onetime Nixon campaign manager, as "a strong man who has behaved himself all his life."

He said of John D. Ehrlichman, Nixon's former domestic affairs adviser: "I respect him. He has held together quite well." He declined comment on H.R. Haldeman, Nixon's former chief of staff.

Mitchell, Ehrlichman and Haldeman are serving prison terms of 30 months to eight years for their roles in the Watergate coverup conspiracy.

Liddy said one of the reasons he didn't talk was because he might have been required to testify at retrials of Mitchell, Haldeman and Ehrlichman had the Supreme Court not refused to hear their appeal.

"And because I don't testify against my colleagues, I would have declined — and I'd probably be doing another 18 months in jail," he added.

Liddy said the main reason he called the press conference was to

call attention to conditions at the federal prison at Danbury, Conn.

Los Angeles Times