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Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. 73-750700
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WATERGATE THE BREAK IN

James McCord Testifies

President Nixon's
Watergate Speech,
April 30, 1973

COMPILED BY DON MOLNER

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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WATERGATE / THE BREAK IN

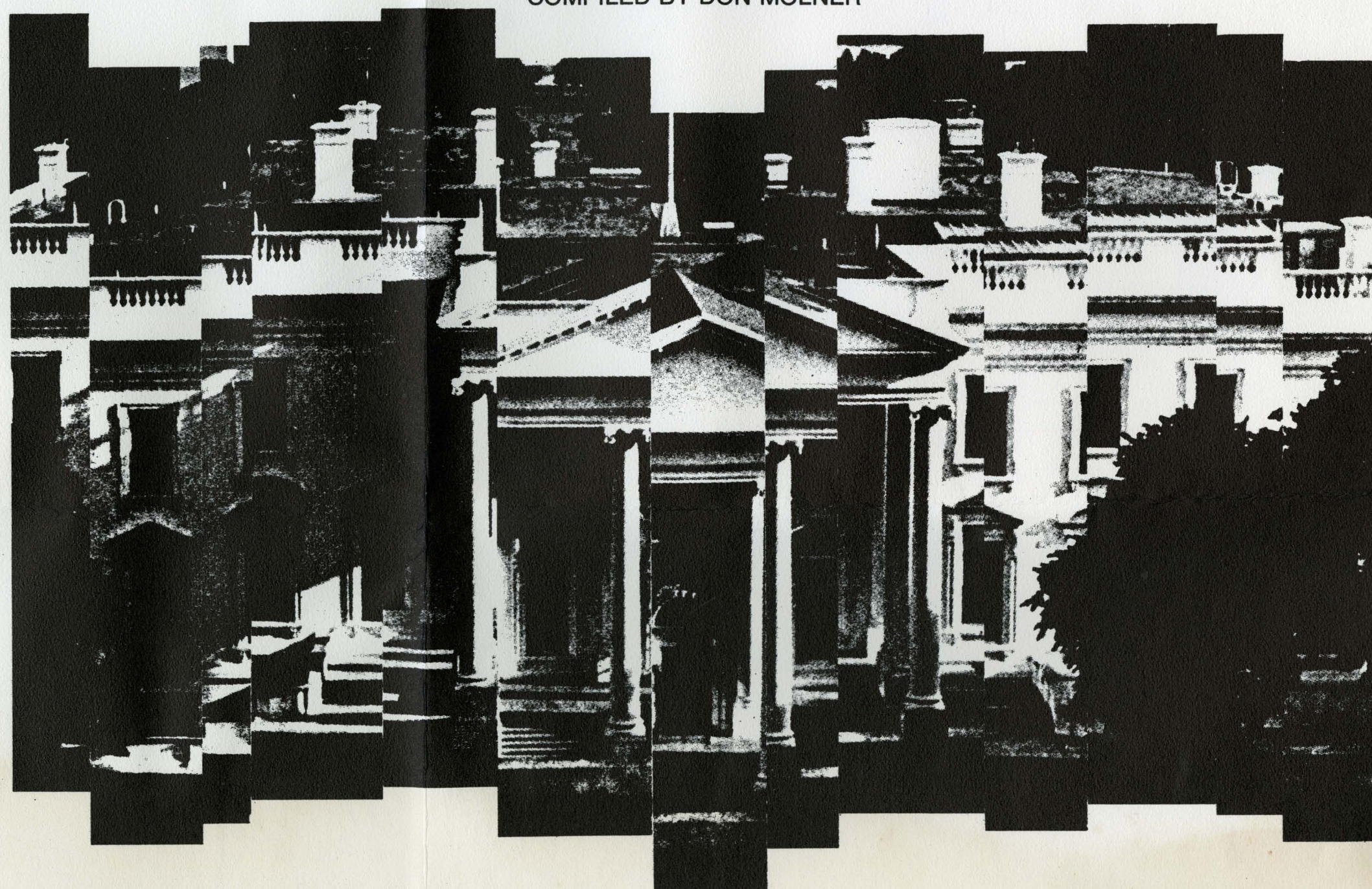
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"If the allegations which have been made in the news media concerning what transpired are true, then we would have to conclude that that was an assault upon the integrity of the process by which Presidents in the United States are chosen."

Senator Sam Ervin, Chairman, Select
Committee on Presidential Campaign
Activities.

On the evening of June 17, 1972, an \$80-a-week security guard made his late night rounds at Watergate, a complex of elegant offices and apartments in Washington, D.C. The guard, Frank Willis, became suspicious when he noticed that a strip of tape which he had removed from a door during an earlier inspection, had been replaced. He called Metropolitan police who discovered five men wearing surgical gloves and carrying walkie-talkies, inside the Democratic national headquarters. "Don't shoot," one of the five shouted. "You've got us."

Thus began the Watergate scandal.

The arrested intruders were later identified as James W. McCord, Virgilio R. Gonzales, Eugenio Martinez, Frank Fiorini, and Bernard Barker. To the embarrassment of the Nixon Administration, McCord was employed as security coordinator for the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

When authorities searched a hotel room occupied by four of the men they found a supply of burglary tools, disguises, and, most important, a pair of address books listing the name Everette Howard Hunt.

Hunt was a former CIA agent and the writer of at least 45 novels dealing with spies and detective work. He had recently earned \$100-a-day as a consultant for White House troubleshooter Charles W. Colson. During the summer of 1971, Colson had hired Hunt to investigate the leaks surrounding the release of the Pentagon papers.

At first, Presidential press secretary Ron Ziegler declined to comment on what he called the "third-rate burglary attempt" at Watergate. Later,

President Nixon told the press: "The White House has had no involvement whatsoever in this particular incident."

Democratic National Committee Chairman Lawrence O'Brien promptly filed a damage suit for one million dollars against the Republican Campaign Committee.

FURTHER LINKS TO THE WHITE HOUSE

A cashier's check for \$25,000, earmarked for the Committee for the Re-election of the President was found in the Miami bank account of one of the Watergate burglars, Bernard L. Barker. When the check was traced to Kenneth Dahlberg, a chief fund raiser for the Nixon Midwestern campaign, Dahlberg said he had no idea how the check got to Barker.

An investigation also revealed that approximately 15 telephone calls were made by Barker to the office of G. Gordon Liddy, financial counsel for the Nixon re-election committee. Liddy was subsequently fired for refusing to answer questions asked by the F.B.I.

A FEDERAL CASE

Thirteen weeks after they were arrested at Watergate, the five intruders, along with former White House aides Liddy and Hunt, were indicted by a federal grand jury. They were charged with a conspiracy to obtain information from the Democratic headquarters, breaking and entering, stealing and photographing documents, and with installing telephone taps.

The indictments charged that Liddy and Hunt had eavesdropped on telephone conversations made from the

Democratic headquarters. Monitoring had been carried on from a pair of rooms in the Howard Johnson Motor Lodge across the street from the Watergate complex.

In January 1973, Judge John Sirica sentenced Gordon Liddy, who absolutely refused to talk, to a long prison term (6 to 20-years) and a \$40,000 fine. Provisional maximum sentences were imposed on the other defendants with the hint that these might be reduced in exchange for further testimony.

On March 23, Judge Sirica received a letter from James W. McCord in which McCord said he was ready to talk, ready to name his superiors. He charged that the Watergate affair involved perjury, promises of executive clemency, and pay-offs for silence.

ACTING F.B.I. DIRECTOR RESIGNS

The Senate Judiciary Committee had reopened the Watergate case in the course of confirmation hearings on L. Patrick Gray. President Nixon had selected Gray to become permanent director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. At these hearings Gray testified that F.B.I. reports on Watergate had been sent to John Dean, the President's counsel. When the Senators invited Dean to testify, he declined, acting under President Nixon's policy of executive privilege. During a press conference, President Nixon reiterated that Mr. Dean would not be permitted to testify and that, if necessary, Mr. Nixon would be willing to face the Supreme Court on the matter.

Gray's biggest surprise was his admission that he had destroyed documents belonging to E. Howard Hunt, the Watergate conspirator. Gray said that Presidential aides John Ehrlichman and John Dean told him the documents should "never see the light of day." On April 27, Gray resigned as acting F.B.I. director.

PENTAGON PAPERS TRIAL DISMISSED

When Pentagon Papers trial judge Matt Byrne was told that defendant Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office had been burglarized by G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, Judge Byrne ordered an investigation into a link between the Watergate conspiracy and the Pentagon Papers case.

Judge Byrne also mentioned that Presidential advisor John Ehrlichman had contacted him during the trial and Byrne was told he was in line for a high "future assignment in government," reportedly the directorship of the F.B.I. Ellsberg's attorneys called this "possibly an attempt to offer a bribe to the court... an attempt made in the virtual presence of the President of the United States which was frustrated only because the judge refused to listen to the offer."

Judge Sirica ordered the secret grand jury testimony of convicted Watergate conspirator Hunt turned over to Judge Byrne.

The end came when Judge Byrne, after examining the evidence, stated "the only remedy available that would assure due process and a fair administration of justice is that this trial be terminated."

FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL MITCHELL INDICTED

The specter of Watergate continued to loom over the White House. On May 10, former Attorney General John Mitchell, former Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans and financier Robert L. Vesco were indicted in connection with a secret \$200,000 contribution to President Nixon's re-election campaign. The 16-count federal indictment charged "deceit, craft, trickery, and means that are dishonest."

THE SENATE INVESTIGATION

Amid increasing talk of Presidential impeachment or resignation, the Senate's long-awaited public investigation of Watergate began on May 17. Seven committee members, all lawyers, were led by Democratic Senator Sam Ervin, a 76-year old constitutional law expert. Samuel Dash, a law professor from Georgetown University, served as counsel.

The select committee, composed of four Democrats and three Republicans, served under a Senate resolution "to establish a select committee of the Senate to conduct an investigation and study of the extent, if any, to which illegal, improper, or unethical activities were engaged in by any persons, acting individually or in combination with others, in the Presidential election of 1972, or any campaign, canvas, or other activity related to it."

The committee had no power to accuse or indict. Its purpose was only to establish facts as a basis for further action.

OFFICE MANAGER ODLE TESTIFIES

Robert Odle, 29, office manager for the Committee to Re-elect the President, was the first witness to appear before the Senate committee. Odle told the Senators that former Attorney General Mitchell played a major role in campaign decisions as early as May, 1971. This was contrary to previous sworn testimony by Mitchell when he appeared before another Senate committee investigating the ITT affair. At that hearing Mitchell said that he had no party responsibilities prior to his resigning as Attorney General on March 1, 1972.

Odle recalled a number of events concerning the destruction of documents on the day of the Watergate break-in. He remembered that Gordon Liddy had asked him for directions to the office's largest paper shredder; he later saw Liddy heading for the shredder with a foot-high stack of documents.

On that same day, Jeb Magruder, deputy campaign director, telephoned Odle and instructed him to remove confidential files from his office. Odle did so, stuffing most of the documents into the briefcase of his colleague Robert Reisner, but keeping one folder, which he described as a "strategy file". Odle told the Senators that he had kept this file in a closet, without looking at the contents, until Magruder asked for its return on the following Monday.

THE STARTLING TESTIMONY OF JAMES McCORD

It was, however, the testimony of James McCord, convicted Watergate burglar and former CIA and F.B.I. agent, that electrified the hearings. McCord spoke of political pressure, clandestine meetings and conversations involving men at the pinnacle of White House power. His testimony, excerpted on the record, was instrumental in bringing forth a flood of denials from several members of the Nixon Administration.

IN THE INTERESTS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Another Watergate burglar, Bernard L. Barker, was recruited by E. Howard Hunt for the Watergate raid and for the 1971 burglary of the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. Barker, a 55-year-old real estate dealer from Miami, said that Hunt assured him that both break-ins were in the interests of national security.

Testifying before the Senate panel, Barker expressed admiration for Hunt, his former leader in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. The Watergate raid, according to Barker, was "a para-military operation." He and the other three Cuban-Americans who were arrested at the Watergate complex hoped to find documents tying the Castro regime to the Democratic party. No such documents were found.

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