

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FH 5555 VOLUME FIVE

WATERGATE

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN EHRLICHMAN
& H.R. HALDEMAN

COMPILED BY DON MOLNER



FOLKWAYS RECORDS FH 5555

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1. The March 21st Meetings
2. The Ellsberg Case & the Plumbers
3. The FBI Investigation
4. Political Espionage

SIDE 2

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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WATERGATE Vol. 5

The Testimony of John Ehrlichman and H.R. Haldeman

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THE PALACE GUARDS

Prior to their abrupt departure from the White House when the Watergate scandal broke, John Ehrlichman and H.R. (Bob) Haldeman were respected and feared throughout Washington. Their enemies called them a tyrannical duo, overzealous guardians of the gateway to President Nixon. Their admirers appreciated the fact that Richard Nixon demanded solitude and his loyal top aides vigilantly protected that solitude.

On The Campaign Trail

When young Harry Robbins Haldeman took a White House tour in 1951, he had a chance to shake the hand of his hero Richard Nixon. Haldeman had long admired Nixon's onslaught against Communists when Nixon served on the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

During the 1956 Vice Presidential campaign Haldeman decided to serve Nixon: he became an advance man. Nixon's 1960 campaign against John Kennedy again brought out Bob Haldeman, now Nixon's chief advance man. Haldeman often disagreed with the way campaign manager Finch and press secretary Klein ran the '60 campaign, but he faithfully and quietly completed his assignments.

Nixon's loss in the race for governor of California failed to deter Haldeman. He left his job (as Los Angeles office manager and vice president with the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency) to join the Nixon team in the 1968 campaign.

Haldeman and John Mitchell sought to isolate the "New Nixon" from members of the press, other politicians, and even from certain members of Nixon's entourage.

A Former Classmate

At least one member of the Nixon team had won the friendship and trust of Bob Haldeman: his old UCLA classmate, John Ehrlichman. Ehrlichman pitched in for Nixon in the '68 campaign just as he had during the 1960 campaign, and in the 1962 race for governor.

The two men were alike in many ways. They were Christian Scientists, avoided liquor and tobacco, were steadfast family men, and both believed in discipline, hard work, and efficiency.

Yet it was said that Haldeman, with his unsmiling face and crew cut hair, was a step to the right of Nixon, while Ehrlichman, sometimes showing surprisingly liberal tendencies, was a step to the left of Nixon. Ehrlichman made himself available to the press and seemed to be open to new ideas; Haldeman appeared to be a man of stone with a singleness of purpose.

White House Aides

When Richard Nixon assumed the office of the President, Haldeman became his top aide: White House chief of staff. As such he alone decided who would see the President and when. The day-to-day operations were scheduled by Haldeman and he was nearly always present at meetings that involved the President. Even when a "private" interview with Nixon was granted, Haldeman would invariably be present, notebook and pencil in hand.

Attorney John Ehrlichman was assigned to the White House Counsel's office in January, 1969. Haldeman made sure his friend John did not stay out in left field too long. Under Haldeman's tutelage, Ehrlichman quickly ascended to the post of assistant for domestic affairs.

As the Watergate scandals grew, President Nixon explained that his role as world leader had kept him from his re-election campaign activities. If some of his aides had erred, the President said, it was due to the zeal with which they sought his re-election. In any case, Nixon claimed to be totally unaware of the involvement of White House staff in the break-in and related felonies.

The Tapes

The Senate hearings on Watergate took an unexpected turn during the week of July 16, 1973. During questioning by the committee's minority council, Alexander P. Butterfield, former deputy assistant to the President, reluctantly revealed that President Nixon had ordered a secret tape bugging of his Oval Office and several other White House locations. Butterfield testified that the voice-activated recorders had probably captured every conversation made at strategic White House offices since early 1971.

Other Presidents, including Kennedy and Johnson, had used covert recordings but nothing like the elaborate system developed under Nixon. These tapes contained daily documentation that could clear the President and his aides or implicate them in a sordid chronology of political espionage, sabotage, misuse of funds, obstruction of justice, and perjury.

Nixon immediately began a series of legal maneuvers in an effort to keep the tapes from Senate investigators and government prosecutors. His defense largely rested on the premise that making the tapes public "would constitute such a massive invasion into the confidentiality of Presidential conversations that the institution of the Presidency itself would be fatally compromised."

Haldeman Heard Tapes

While the matter seemed destined for a ruling by the Supreme Court, frustrated Senate Watergate committee members heard H.R. Haldeman testify that Nixon had allowed him to listen to a number of the tapes in the privacy of his home. Senator Ervin and other members of the committee bristled at the thought of private citizen Haldeman being allowed access to the elusive recordings.

Before The Ervin Committee

In his opening statement to the Ervin Committee, Ehrlichman attacked John Dean's assertion that fear and paranoia had permeated Richard Nixon's inner circle. Nothing could be further from the truth, said Mr. Ehrlichman, and he proceeded to outline the reasons for some actions taken by the Nixon men.

Why was the White House secret investigation unit (plumbers) allowed to illegally enter the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist? The answer from Ehrlichman: the FBI was restrained from seriously investigating Ellsberg's disclosure of the Pentagon Papers. FBI Director Hoover had refused to cooperate because he was a close friend of Ellsberg's father-in-law.

Why had the White House asked the Internal Revenue Service to make over 900 "tax checks" on certain individuals during 1972? A possible intrusion into the privacy of IRS returns was turned aside as Ehrlichman explained: "a tax check is to see if someone has tax problems. You don't want to appoint an assistant secretary (of a federal agency) one day if he's going to be indicted the next day."

It was obvious that John Ehrlichman could provide answers to hundreds of questions concerning White House activities...if the Senators would only listen carefully and believe.

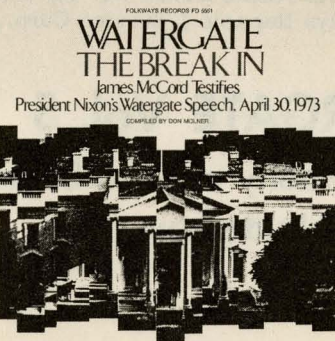
Bob Haldeman followed his friend John and stood before the Senate committee. Haldeman and Ehrlichman even shared the same attorney.

Those expecting to see a snarling, bad-tempered H.R. Haldeman were surprised to find a mild mannered, polite citizen, eager to assist the Senators. "I can't believe these are the two tough guys I've heard about," said one Senator.

Haldeman conceded that John Dean told the President about "hush money" payments to the Watergate burglars but, contrary to Dean's testimony, Nixon was surprised by the allegations and tried to press Dean for more information.

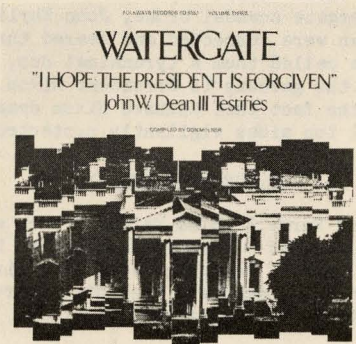
The former top White House aide wanted to be helpful, he told the Senators, but he had to make an important point. "I can categorically state," he said, "that at no time, nor in any way, did I suggest, direct or participate in any coverup of the Watergate investigation."

Don Molner



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