

BECAUSE OF VOLUME OF MAIL RECEIVED, PARADE REGRETS IT CANNOT ANSWER QUERIES ABOUT THIS COLUMN.



Wide World



Wide World

WATERGATE CONSPIRATOR E. H. KROGH (L) AND LEON JAWORSKI, THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR WHO SENT HIM TO PRISON

'CONFESSION AND AVOIDANCE'

Last October, a few minutes before he was scheduled to address the University of California at Berkeley student body on "morality in government," Special Watergate Prosecutor Leon Jaworski was handed a folded note. He placed it unread in his pocket.

As his host began to introduce him, Jaworski, sitting onstage, removed the note and quickly glanced at it. The message was from the first of Richard Nixon's men to have been indicted in the Watergate scandal. The individual, barred from practicing law, said he was teaching public administration at the university, was in fact sitting in the audience with his students, and would like to chat with the speaker after the lecture if he had time and was so inclined.

Jaworski pocketed the note, strode to the rostrum, began his speech. As he warmed to his subject, he strayed from the

prepared text. "One of the men involved in Watergate is sitting in this very audience tonight," he revealed. "And I must tell you that I hold him in high regard. He is a man who acknowledged his mistake and paid a price for it. . . . I admire him for the manner in which he accepted the responsibility for his actions. I cannot say the same for his former employer, the President."

During the question-and-answer period that followed, a student rose and asked Jaworski to identify the Watergate person.

"No," Jaworski said. "I will not do that. I will not violate that person's privacy. But if he would like to make his presence known, that is up to him."

Members of the audience turned and looked around. Curiosity and suspense took over. Then, slowly, a man got to his feet. He was calm and unruffled. The special prosecutor recognized him immediately. "Ladies and gentlemen," he called out,

"Mr. Egil 'Bud' Krogh."

Silence, then applause, then ever-mounting crescendos of applause. "I have never seen or heard anything quite as genuine," Leon Jaworski writes, "as the emotion that crowd gave Bud Krogh, an ex-lawyer who had just been introduced by the man who sent him to prison."

The above is one of the memorable incidents Leon Jaworski writes about in his autobiography, "Confession and Avoidance," which will be published later this year.

Jaworski, 73, who has been practicing law for almost 55 years, is a man of strong likes and dislikes—place Richard Nixon, John Connally and William Safire on his dislike list. But most important, Jaworski knows where the skeletons of Watergate, Koreagate, the Kennedy assassination and many other historic events lie buried. And in the winter of his life, he is not reluctant to turn over some of the sod so readers can get a clearer and more truthful view.

May 1979

Confession and Avoidance
Leon Jaworski
Epilogue

Having retired for the second time in four years, from what I hoped would be my last Washington challenge, I flew off to California to keep a speaking date.

Wherever I traveled in the past year—and I had not missed many campuses or law groups—I noted a curious phenomenon. Though the one scandal had ended in 1974 and the other was still in the news, nearly all the questions asked of me dealt with Watergate. It seemed to me that the people had made a judgment: the Korean story was one of low corruption and they did not like it; Watergate was a betrayal and they would never forget it.

Both cases were to be covered in my lecture that day, October 16, 1978, on the campus of Golden Gate University in San Francisco. As I walked into the auditorium, wedging my way through the students, one of my hosts handed me a note. I put the paper in my coat pocket and read it after I had taken my seat on the stage.

The message was from the first White House aide to be indicted, and sentenced to prison, as a result of the Watergate crimes. He had lost his license to practice law and now taught a class in public administration at the university. His note, scrawled in black ink on a small square of memo paper, said he was in the audience with his students. He would like to say hello after my talk. He would understand if we could not.

I was surprised, and pleased, and struck by more than a touch of irony. The topic of my speech was "Morality in Government." Even as I stood at the microphone, listening to my words echo in the quiet, my mind wandered to the note in my pocket and the man who wrote it. I was not sure what I would do, or even what I wanted to do.

As I moved deeper into my points on Watergate, I instinctively stopped and departed from the text. I said, "One of the men who was involved in this case is in our audience tonight. His experience in government goes to the heart of this issue and what we can learn from it. I must tell you that I have a high regard for him today. He is a man who acknowledged his mistake and paid a price for it. What is more, he asked for no favors or special privileges, from the prosecutor or the court. He said he found his own conduct indefensible and he was willing to take the punishment for what he had done.

"I admire him," I went on, "for the manner in which he accepted the responsibility for his actions. I cannot say the same for his former employer, his President."

As I paused, to look down at my speech and find my place, I was aware of a murmuring in the crowd. Later, in

the question and answer period, a student rose and asked, "Sir, would you mind identifying the individual to whom you made reference during your Watergate comments?"

I said, "No, I will not. That would be an invasion of his privacy for me to single him out. He is here as a member of this audience, as you are." I looked around the room. "However, if he does not object to making his presence known, I would leave it to him to do so. If he is willing to be recognized, this would be an appropriate time."

Heads turned and craned. Time seemed to freeze as I waited. I did not even know if he was still in the room, or where he was seated.

Then, off to my left, there was a stir. Not in a bouncy, proud way, but slowly, with some reluctance, he climbed to his feet and looked around uncertainly.

I nodded, made a quick gesture with my left hand and said, "This is Egil (Bud) Krogh."

The auditorium vibrated with applause, a sound that swelled and grew and slapped off the walls. The ovation must have lasted two or three minutes. I do not know how many political rallies I have attended, although the number is too many, but I have never seen or heard anything quite as genuine as the emotion that crowd gave to Bud Krogh, an ex-lawyer who had just been introduced by the man who sent him to prison.

He had been thirty-four when he was sentenced, in January of 1974, to serve two to six years in prison for his role in the burglary of the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding, Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. As the supervisor of that peculiar underground cell known as the plumbers, he had approved

that specific, illegal act. Under pressure from the White House, he perjured himself.

Tall, soft of face and voice, a bright young lawyer out of Seattle, his future must have seemed unlimited when he joined the White House staff as an assistant to John Ehrlichman. He held a number of jobs, the last of which was under secretary of transportation. And then he went to jail. His original term was reduced and he served six months.

There is no disposition here to make a hero of anyone who has broken the law. But the incident at Berkeley reminded me again of the quickness with which Americans forgive. This was no festive crowd proving its political loyalty, drawn by music and colored balloons. Most of them were students, some were lawyers, an audience skeptical by nature.

But they had applauded Bud Krogh. He had admitted his guilt and accepted his fate. No groveling. No passing the buck. He did not claim to have found God in a closet. He implicated no one else. His debt was paid.

After the program ended, and I stood chatting at the podium and even signing autographs, Bud Krogh appeared at my side. All we said was hello, but we shook hands and our eyes caught and, at that moment, I felt a flicker of hope. The enduring question of Watergate is whether we, as a people, will learn from it. Some have.