

# WATERGATE

## THE DOWNFALL OF A PRESIDENT

A political scandal that started with a “third-rate burglary” ended with the resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974

### CHARACTERS

REPORTERS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST:

**CARL BERNSTEIN**

**BOB WOODWARD**

MEMBERS OF THE SENATE WATERGATE COMMITTEE:

**SAM ERVIN**, chairman  
[Democrat, North Carolina]

**HOWARD BAKER**, vice chairman  
[Republican, Tennessee]

**LOWELL WEICKER**  
[Republican, Connecticut]

**DANIEL INOUIE** [Democrat, Hawaii]

**EDWARD GURNEY** [Republican, Florida]

**FRED THOMPSON**, a committee lawyer

WITNESSES BEFORE THE COMMITTEE:

**JOHN DEAN**, former **counsel**  
to President Richard M. Nixon

**ALEXANDER BUTTERFIELD**, a former  
White House aide

NARRATORS A-E

All characters were real people. The dialogue is based on first-person accounts but paraphrased for space and clarity.

### PROLOGUE: 1972

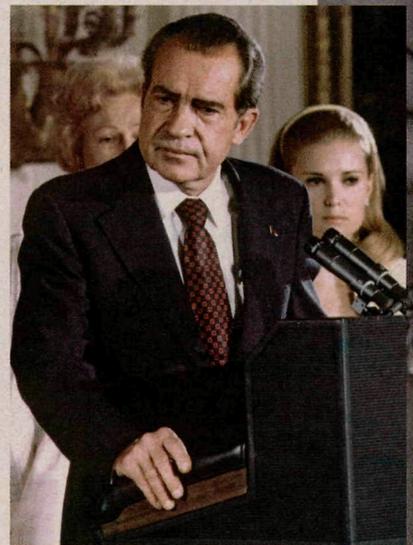
**Carl Bernstein:** The unraveling of Richard M. Nixon’s presidency starts with a tiny detail. On June 17, 1972, a security guard is making his late-night rounds at the Watergate, an elegant building in Washington, D.C. He notices that someone has taped an office door to keep it from locking.

**Bob Woodward:** The guard calls the police, who arrest the five men inside. The office where they’re caught is no ordinary workplace. It’s the Democratic Party’s national headquarters.

**Bernstein:** The five men aren’t ordinary burglars, either. They’re wearing suits and gloves. They have bags of spy equipment—cameras and microphones—and \$2,300 in hundred-dollar bills.

**Woodward:** I get a tip about the arrest, and hours later I’m at the courthouse. There, I hear one of the “burglars” whisper to the judge that he once worked for the

Below: President Nixon makes his farewell address to his staff. Behind him are his wife, Pat (left), and daughter Tricia.



C.I.A., America’s top spy agency. **Bernstein:** *The Washington Post’s* first Watergate article begins: “Five men, one of whom said he is a former employee of the Central Intelligence Agency, were arrested at 2:30 a.m. yesterday in what authorities described as an elaborate plot to bug the offices of the Democratic National Committee.” **Woodward:** Not many people pay attention. The war in Vietnam and student protests are grabbing bigger headlines. So is the presidential campaign, which results in the landslide re-election of



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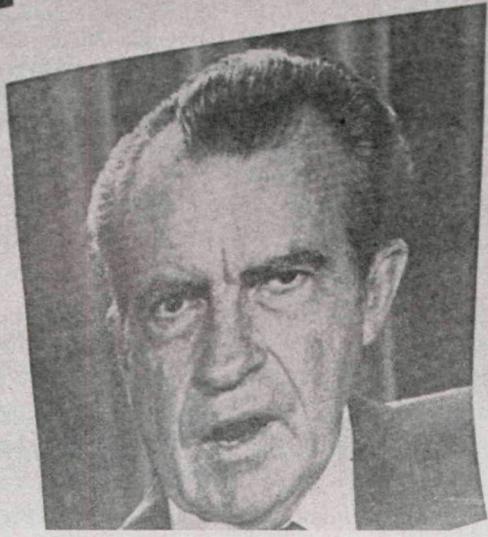
# Washington Star-News

WASHINGTON, D. C., THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 1974—54 PAGES

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ON TV AT 9 TONIGHT

# Nixon Resigning



By Norman Kempster

President Nixon has decided to resign. He will explain his decision to the public with a radio and television address tonight at 8 p.m. Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, in a cryptic statement read to reporters crowded into the White House press room, announced the plans for the speech.

Other sources including senior White House officials quoted by both the Associated Press and United Press International said Nixon would submit his formal resignation to Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger.

THE ZIEGLER announcement came after Nixon met with his chosen successor, Vice President Gerald R. Ford, for an hour and ten minutes in the Oval Office.

The Associated Press said a House Democratic leader said he was told that Nixon's resignation would go to Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger Friday, and that Ford would be sworn in at 6 p.m. Friday as 36th President.

Rep. John McFall, D-Calif., the House Democratic whip, said he got that information from UPI quoted O'Neill directly as saying Ford would be sworn in Friday afternoon.

Besides meeting with Ford, the President began to clear his desk of routine matters, acting on a separate item including the appointment of a new member of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission and the signing of legislation modifying the duty exemption on ship repairs.

A WHITE HOUSE official said Nixon "very well may" veto the controversial agricultural appropriations bill later in the day.

Ziegler, who had not put in an appearance in the White House briefing room since Nixon returned from Cambodia last week, said the news was "a relief" to him.



Richard Nixon, a Republican, in November.  
**Bernstein:** But the break-in raises troubling questions. Who gave the "burglars" all that cash? Was the attempt to spy on Nixon's political opponents an isolated incident, or part of a bigger plan to help Nixon win re-election?  
**Woodward:** The *Post* lets Carl and me continue to investigate. Other reporters and the FBI do the same—and the story keeps growing.  
**Bernstein:** We begin to learn that the Watergate break-in is just the tip of the iceberg. Americans are

shocked to learn that aides to the President have been committing all sorts of "dirty tricks" against the Democratic Party—from bugging offices to spreading lies about political opponents.  
**Woodward:** The President denies knowing anything about these activities.

## SCENE 1: MAY 1973

**Narrator A:** As evidence of White House involvement mounts, people start to pay attention—and demand the truth. The U.S. Senate forms a committee to investigate.

Its televised hearings begin on May 27, 1973.  
**Narrator B:** Millions of Americans watch as several witnesses claim that the White House was involved in the Watergate scandal. Then, on June 25, John Dean testifies. He is President Nixon's former counsel.  
**Senator Howard Baker:** Mr. Dean, the central question is simply put: What did the President know, and when did he know it?  
**John Dean:** The break-in was planned and executed by members of the White House staff. The

continued on p. 18 →



Their tireless reporting on Watergate made Carl Bernstein (left) and Bob Woodward of *The Washington Post* the most famous journalists of the 20th century.

burglars had been paid to keep quiet about White House involvement. The President said that \$1 million for that would be no problem.

**Senator Lowell Weicker:** Did the President understand the magnitude of the situation?

**Dean:** I didn't think so at first. I told him that the White House's connection to that crime was like a cancer growing on the presidency. It was time for everyone to start telling the truth, I said.

**Narrator C:** This is stunning news. Dean is the first top administration official to testify that the President was involved in a cover-up.

### WORDS TO KNOW

- **counsel** (n): an attorney who gives advice on legal matters
- **subpoena** (suh-PEE-nuh) (n): a written order commanding someone to appear in court or turn over evidence

### SCENE 2: JUNE 1973

**Narrator D:** On June 28, Dean faces more questioning.

**Senator Sam Ervin:** Mr. Dean, you've testified that the President not only knew about the plan to mislead investigators but that he also ordered witnesses to lie.

**Dean:** Yes, sir.

**Ervin:** Wasn't it your duty to steer him away from illegal activity?

**Dean:** Yes, Senator. At first, I assisted in the cover-up because I thought it was important for the President to be re-elected. I soon saw how wrong I was.

**Weicker:** These are serious allegations, Mr. Dean.

**Dean:** Yes, but they're all true—even though it's my word against the President's.

**Ervin:** Well, maybe it's time for us to hear from the President.

**Baker:** We could ask him to answer the charges in writing.

**Ervin:** You can't cross-examine a written statement. He should

appear before the committee.

**Narrator E:** But President Nixon refuses to testify. The White House also rejects the committee's requests to hand over any notes or records about the Watergate affair.

### SCENE 3: JULY 1973

**Narrator A:** As the hearings continue, witnesses offer conflicting testimony about the President's involvement in the cover-up. Then, on July 16, a former aide named Alexander Butterfield testifies. He tells the committee about a secret White House recording system.

**Alexander Butterfield:** I supervised the installation of listening devices in the Oval Office.

**Fred Thompson:** How do they work?

**Butterfield:** They're triggered automatically, whenever the President enters the room. There are also hidden on-off buttons that he can operate. He can tape any conversation in the room.

# Checks and Balances

Watergate was a shock to the nation. But it demonstrated that our system of checks and balances still worked—nearly 200 years after being written into the Constitution in 1787. Watergate also showed how important a free press is to our democracy.



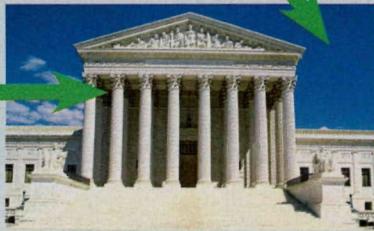
## EXECUTIVE

White House aides commit illegal acts, which the President tries to hide.



## LEGISLATIVE

The Senate investigates reports of Executive Branch misdeeds.



## JUDICIAL

The Supreme Court rules that the President must turn over key evidence to Congress. With the House likely to impeach him, the President resigns.

To learn about other Presidents on the hot seat, go to [www.scholastic.com/js](http://www.scholastic.com/js).

**Thompson:** Why was that done?

**Butterfield:** I thought it was for historical purposes—to record things for a future Nixon library.

**Thompson:** Where are those tapes?

**Butterfield:** They're stored somewhere in the White House.

**Baker:** Are there tapes of Mr. Dean's talks with the President?

**Butterfield:** I believe so. Just about every Oval Office conversation has been recorded since mid-1970.

**Narrator B:** The audience in the packed hearing room gasps. The next day, Senator Ervin writes to the President, requesting the tapes.

## SCENE 4: 1973-74

**Narrator C:** After the White House rejects the request, the committee meets privately on July 23.

**Senator Daniel Inouye:** Why won't the President cooperate? The tapes could clear his name. What does he have to hide?

**Senator Edward Gurney:** He's refusing to turn over the tapes based on "executive privilege."

**Narrator D:** Executive privilege, claimed by many Presidents, is the right to withhold information from Congress or the courts. Sometimes the other branches honor that

claim, sometimes they don't.

**Ervin:** Executive privilege is unacceptable in this case. The tapes are evidence in a criminal investigation. Not even the President is above the law. Let's issue a **subpoena** for the tapes.

**Narrator E:** The White House ignores the subpoena. But a year later, the Supreme Court rules that Nixon must release all of the Oval Office recordings to investigators.

**Narrator A:** The tapes have some suspicious gaps. Still, they reveal that Nixon ordered efforts to mislead investigators. He'd also authorized illegal tactics to spy on opponents and to sabotage his rivals' 1972 campaigns.

## EPILOGUE

**Bernstein:** Facing impeachment [a charge of misconduct in office] by the House of Representatives, Nixon resigns on August 9, 1974. He is the first—and only—U.S. President to resign.

**Woodward:** Vice President Gerald R. Ford assumes the presidency. "My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over," he says. But a month later, he pardons Nixon—to help the nation heal, he says. It's a controversial decision, and Ford loses the election in 1976.

**Narrator B:** Today, 40 years after the Watergate break-in, many Americans still find it hard to trust political leaders. Nixon's resignation may have ended the national nightmare, but memories of the Watergate scandal endure.

—Kathy Wilmore & Victor Landauro

**THINK ABOUT IT:** Since Watergate, journalists have often used words ending in *-gate* for high-profile scandals. What gave Watergate such staying power?