



ON THE LINE
Bob Considine

—Forgive me for returning to a theme that has bugged — if that's quite the word — and dismayed me during the unpeeling of the rancid Watergate case. It has to do with the intervention of "friends" of some of the accused. "Friends" are supplying a considerable portion of all of the hard news that has surfaced in the newspapers and on the air.

For example, and I'm afraid this is becoming monotonous, one of the more explosive moments of the crisis-every-day story was the announcement that former attorney general and Nixon campaign manager John Mitchell had told "friends" that, sure, he had heard about the plans to deflower Larry O'Brien's domain, but that he had righteously nixed it. This information was not attributed to Mitchell himself. It came from persons characterized simply as his "friends."

Mitchell has testified earlier under oath that he had never heard of the sordid plot. Now his "friends" were making him sound like a perjurer — and perjurers have been known to go to prison, a most unhappy habitat for an esteemed man whose job it was to send convicted scoundrels there.

L. Patrick Gray, who either withdrew or was withdrawn as J. Edgar Hoover's successor, also has the misfortune to have "friends." They got him on the front pages the other day. His "friends" happily reported that Gray, like a dummy, destroyed the files seized from the office of convicted Watergate bugster E. Howard Hunt Jr. The New York Times put it this way:

"Mr. Gray, under close questioning by friends, has insisted that neither (John W.) Dean nor (John D.) Ehrlichman informed him of what was in the Hunt files and that he destroyed them without examining their contents."

That smacks of a cynicism that could dump dozens of Republicans out of office in the off-year elections of 1974 and the top banana voting of 1976. It smacks also of crime, in relation to a man who was within inches of becoming a respected successor to the fabled crime buster of them all, J. Edgar. Conceivably, Gray's alleged shredding or burning of these vital documents might have been swept under the rug forever if his friends had not rallied in his behalf and brought him under "close questioning."

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary seems already outdated, so far as the Watergate case is concerned. It defines "friend" as "one attached to another by affection or esteem; one that is not hostile; one that is of the same nation, party, or group." The Oxford Dictionary's definition is also rendered archaic by the activity in Washington. Oxford hails a "friend" as "one joined to another in intimacy and mutual benevolence, independent of sexual or family love; a person who acts for one, that is, as a second in a duel; sympathizer, helper, patron; one who is not an enemy; friendly disposition felt or shown . . ."

It occurs that in Washington these days the only friends the Watergate principals seem to have are their traditional "best friends" — their dogs. I've heard of dogs biting their masters in a fit of righteousness or hunger, but never heard of a dog turning him into a grand jury.

Some people still think of Watergate as a caper, not a calamity that may have destroyed great reputations and pulled the rug from under a president who

worked wonders in Peking and Moscow and hopes to do the same in Tokyo and the capitals of Europe. Fellow wrote to the editor of the N.Y. Daily News: "I'm sick of Watergate. Football teams have spies, industries spy on one another, and the U.S. spies on Russia. Why can't the GOP spy on the Democrats. If President Nixon personally had a hand in Watergate, it wouldn't change my regard for him."

A friend of a friend writes, "Why don't you press guys stop bellyaching about Watergate? When the Pentagon Papers were stolen, copied, and distributed surreptitiously, you guys all applauded that particular crime. What's different morally about the Watergate case that makes you look upon it as the end of the world? Wouldn't surprise me a bit if it turns out that it was the Democrats who really bugged the place, just so they could expose it and blame it on the other fellows."

Vatican Commission to Study Place of Women in Church

Vatican City [RNS] — A 25-member study commission on the role of women in church and society was formed here with the approval of Pope Paul and will be composed of priests, nuns and laity who are "experts" in a variety of fields, Vatican Radio reported.

The broadcast said that the establishment of the commission followed proposals by the 1971 World Synod of Bishops which urged that "women should share responsibility and participation in the community life of society and . . . the Church."

The new commission, described as "temporary" in nature, will report its findings directly to the Pope.

Vatican Radio said that Coadjutor Archbishop Enrico Bartoletti of Lucca, Italy, was proposed as head of the interim commission. The prelate is a member of the council of the general secretary of the Bishops' Synod.

Among those reportedly named to the commission, but not fully identified, were two Americans, Sister Theresa Avila McLeod, and Deborah Chelomen, a student. Others included Rosemary Goldie, an Australian who is vice secretary of the Pontifical Council on the Laity, a woman obstetrician from the Ivory Coast, a French woman doctor, and several bishops, priests and nuns.

Vatican Radio said the task of the commission will focus on "studying the role of women in society and the man-woman relationship on the basis of the radical equality of men and women . . ."

This analysis, the broadcast observed, will be based on the consideration of various conditions of life, of the happy and unhappy situations of women in the world, and of their aspirations and frustrations.

"It will be up to the commission to ascertain what elements in attitudes of mind, structures of different cultures and the various social milieux

need to be altered in order to guarantee the authentic development of women."

The broadcast said that any such analysis of the place of women in society must be carried out in light of the Christian concept of women and "taking into account the pastoral mission of the Church . . ."

It was noted that in carrying out this study, the commission will also be able to avail itself of studies already completed in some countries by various Catholic organizations.

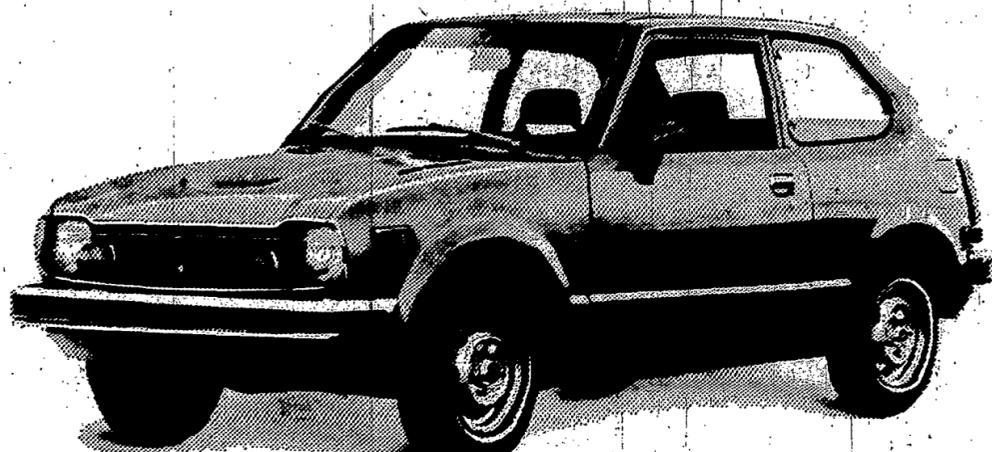
VETERANS' DAY SET

Rochester Area Colleges, Inc., has arranged a "Veterans' Day" to guide ex-servicemen into higher education. Many of the 15 private and public colleges and universities in this part of the state will be represented at the information session, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, May 12, at Rochester Institute of Technology Metropolitan Center, 50 W. Main, Rochester.

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