

Donald Segretti Biography

Donald Segretti

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Contents

Donald Segretti Biography.....	1
Contents.....	2
Biography.....	3

Biography

Donald Segretti is a California attorney who became known for his political "dirty tricks" on behalf of President Richard M. Nixon during the 1972 presidential campaign. Segretti's tactics, which included planting false accusations against Democratic presidential candidates, was convicted of violating campaign laws and sentenced to jail. Although he was not linked to the Watergate break-in, the fact that Nixon administration officials coordinated Segretti's activities enmeshed Segretti in the national scandal that led to Nixon's resignation in 1974.

Segretti was born in 1941. He graduated from the University of Southern California and then attended law school at the University of California at Berkeley. Following graduation he entered the U.S. Army, where he served as a captain and a legal officer in the Judge Advocate General corps. After his discharge he started a private law practice in Los Angeles, California. However, political intrigue soon beckoned him.

White House appointments secretary Dwight Chapin arranged for Segretti to conduct political sabotage against the leading Democratic presidential candidates in 1972: Senators Edward Muskie, Hubert Humphrey, and Henry "Scoop" Jackson. In the fall of 1972 the press reported on some of Segretti's activities. However, it was not until the 1973 Senate Watergate Hearings that his role became clearer. He was charged with three misdemeanor counts of distributing illegal campaign literature, including a letter falsely claiming that Senator Jackson had fathered an illegitimate child with a 17-year-old girl. Segretti pleaded guilty and served almost five months in jail. Later, Segretti practiced business law in Costa Mesa, California.