Did Watergate Start at UCLA?
Did Watergate Coverup Mind Set Start With a Dead Dog at a UCLA Fraternity?

By James Thomas Snyder

This is the story of Watergate principals John Ehrlichman, H. R. Haldeman and Frank Mankiewicz during their years at the University of California, Los Angeles, after World War II. It is told from the perspective of their idealistic mentor Adaline Guenther, head of the University Religious Conference, who nurtured them and others of the school's brightest students. But the time came when she despaired as she saw her stars fall during Watergate in the aftermath of the election that had set Haldeman and Ehrlichman against classmate Mankiewicz who ran Democrat George McGovern's campaign against Richard Nixon in 1972.

Ehrlichman was a member of the URC and her pride and protege. To see him now facing prison posed questions she could not answer. She pondered, "Does the man who does not appreciate the ordinary get into what Johnnie E. did because he does not suffer fools gladly?"

In 1973 Guenther had written to another of her former students, Steven Muller, a Rhodes Scholar, who was president of the Johns Hopkins University, about Ehrlichman. Muller, who knew Ehrlichman from the URC and visited him often from Baltimore during the Washington years, wrote back saying he could not offer any advice. Appearing to want some distance between himself and his college friend, Muller wrote back on September 11, 1974, addressing his mentor the way all her former students did:

Adaline Caroline Guenther had just turned 77 in 1974 when she began a diary relating experiences of her distinguished past and active present. She wrote of bridge games with friends, book reviews for other seniors, and how she had named her sister Esther Bertha, after a Biblical tale and a cleaning woman, "...something for which she never forgave me."

She also wrote about the political scandal of the day, Watergate, and the two former students she had known so well who faced prosecution for the coverup, John D. Ehrlichman and H.R. Haldeman. Gloomy with age and sickness and the endless reporting pillorying the White House, she noted in an October 22, 1974 entry: "I guess there is something lacking in my mental makeup—something that comes from the fact that I neverread fairy stories. But nobody can say of me as Dan Rather is saying in his book The Palace Guard that nobody ever saw Haldeman laugh."

More than 30 years earlier, Guenther headed up UCLA's University Religious Conference, a loose ecumenical alliance that became a recruiting ground for the smartest and most ambitious students on campus. Through the URC, she helped organize cutting edge programs for students. She coordinated UniCamp (for underprivileged children and staffed by UCLA students) as well as a student exchange program called Project India. She supervised the Panel of Americans, a unique triologue of students of color who traveled the country talking about their experience in segregated America.

Adaline “Granma” Guenther in 1975. (Photo courtesy UCLA Oral History Program.)
“Dear Granma... I wish I could give you good advice with respect to John but I cannot... The short note I sent months ago...simply said that our friendship would last through whatever was coming and that I wished him well...but even that was easier to say than it is now.”

Months later, still grieving for the man who had invited her to Richard Nixon’s 1973 inaugural, Guenther sat down at an old typewriter in her room at Mount San Antonio Retirement Home in Pomona, California.

Ehrlichman had visited her often during trips to the Western White House at San Clemente and had solicited advice from her on subjects from busing to welfare.

The Watergate jury had convicted him of obstructing justice, perjury and conspiracy on January 9, 1975. Guenther was clearly writing to influence the sentencing decision by Judge John Sirica.

She typed the date in the upper right hand corner: “January 22, 1975... Judge John Sirica:”...then she wrote of her relationship with Ehrlichman 25 years earlier on the UCLA campus and how she kept in constant contact through letters while he worked in the White House. Her letter was part witness for the defense, part tongue-wagging grandmother and part plea for mercy.

“I refer to the Watergate ‘caper’ as a childish thing, not even fit for a college political campaign... My next personal communication was the day after the tapes were first made public. I said ‘John, for heaven’s sake, you’re a gentleman, you never talked like that—and if you did, why did you let it be taped...’ His reply... ‘Granma, I never knew it was going on...’”

She continued... “It seems to me in this world that every decision one has to make is the lesser of two evils. I know that his family and his religion will help him endure whatever must be endured...but I hope that in his case, justice will be tempered with understanding mercy, because to him the worst that could happen will be the burden of his children and his beloved Jeannie must carry.”

The letter, heartfelt as it was, did no good. A year and a half later in 1977, Ehrlichman joined his classmate H.R. Haldeman in prison.

Going back three decades...

To hear Clancy Sigal, UCLA’s most famous Communist expatriate literatus, tell it, the Watergate coverup mind set did not begin in the dark reign of the Nixon White House. Rather, it began in 1948 with a dead dog at UCLA’s Beta House. H.R. “Bob” Haldeman was pledge master that year when a freshman broke ranks and went to the papers with a disturbing tale of hazing: for initiation, blindfolded pledges beat to death a cocker spaniel puppy tied up in a bag. Stories ran in the Daily Bruin, the Los Angeles Times and the Herald-Examiner, exposing the Beta house and UCLA’s powerful Greek community to unwanted negative publicity. Haldeman, playing damage control, hired a lawyer to keep the District Attorney from filing animal abuse charges against the house.

The Beta Dog Case, as it became known, seemed to haunt Haldeman as his first encounter with a voracious press. It didn’t help that the student reporters at the Daily Bruin were under the hand-picked successors of Frank Mankiewicz, who was to become the high Democratic operative when Haldeman was in Nixon’s White House.

“What fascinated me,” Sigal wrote of the post-Watergate interviews he conducted with his former classmates, “was that Bob remained convinced that Mankiewicz—carrying a 30-year grudge—had masternoded the “liberal line” that torpedoed the Nixon presidency. That is, the Watergate coup d’etat had been caused by a dead dog.” This reasoning had to be a compensation of sorts for Sigal, the aging radical.

Thirty years earlier, UCLA’s Royce Hall was not yet two decades old when Harry Robbins Haldeman, then a young Navy sailor, enrolled in 1946. He transferred from the University of the Redlands and the University of Southern California, where the Navy had covered his education. Haldeman grew up a Boy Scout in a Los Angeles family of Christian Scientists. He graduated from Harvard High School in 1944, and eventually matriculated at UCLA where he had thrown himself into campus activities.

That same year, soldier John Daniel Ehrlichman returned to UCLA. He had enrolled at UCLA in 1942, but a year later he was drafted into the Army Air Corps. He flew 26 sorties over Europe— “You will never find anybody who tells you they can’t remember that,” he said—as a navigator in the Eighth Air Force. Like Haldeman, he was a Christian Scientist and a Boy Scout. Fealty, piety and loyalty were imprinted in their youth, a kind of discipline commentators on the Nixon administration determined led to the downfall of the President and his men.

The two servicemen joined fraternities on Greek row—Haldeman at the Beta Theta Pi fraternity and Ehrlichman at Kappa Sigma. Haldeman, contrary to his later portrayal as a humorless drone, in many ways fit the mold of an active, fun-loving, apolitical college student, complete with a buzz cut and saddle shoes. Later in his life he said he went out of his way to have fun in college, since he found the military regimentation that made up half of his college career devoid of joy.

Ehrlichman, on the other hand, became deeply involved in the seriousness of campus politics. “When I came back (from the war) I got a job working for the dean of students, and I was assigned the job of fraternity advisor,” recalled Ehrlichman in a later interview. As executive secretary of the Interfraternity Council in 1948, he was the face of the
campus Establishment as the university representative to politically dominant Greek row. As a result of his activities, Ehrlichman worked behind the scenes to elect fellow Greeks to student government.

Two other soldiers returned from Europe at this time. They found themselves on the other side of the fraternity power structure constituting campus politics in the 1940s. Frank Mankiewicz returned as a conquering hero and entered UCLA in 1944, epitomizing the glory and the glamour of the G.I. Bill soldier-student. Clancy Sigal, who enrolled in 1946, had served in occupied Germany and returned a budding Communist. Both began working for the student newspaper, the California Daily Bruin. Both were Jewish.

The four young men met each other in the hive of campus politics and activity, Kerckhoff Hall, where the Bruin newspaper and student government were located as they are today. Students like Mankiewicz and Sigal were known at the time as “non-orgs.” They were either averse to or excluded outright from fraternity affiliation as Jews, classified outside the “organization” of fraternity row in the days of racial covenants that kept Westwood “lily-white and Protestant,” recalled Sigal.

At the time, the fraternity-sorority constituency was the vote that controlled campus elections. Since the non-orgs were not involved in the Greek social scene, they participated mostly in student government and the student press. Because the Greek vote was so crucial in controlling student government, non-orgs often recruited Greeks to run their campaigns.

“There was a fraternity and sorority interest in campus politics that was stronger than the average, and there was quite a lot of unity among the houses,” Ehrlichman said. “So you would get a few organization candidates rather than a whole proliferation of them. Then there were the non-org candidates, and there tended to be more of them because they weren’t as well organized. But campaign activities broke along those lines, and it became fraternity and sorority versus non-org in the finals frequently.”

The Daily Bruin was a semi-autonomous newspaper under the Student Executive Council, the supreme student governmental body on campus. While the council had no control over the day-to-day operations of the Bruin, it had ultimate authority over appointments and promotion of the entire editorial staff. Control of the student government and control of the student press were one and the same, an important distinction since California was coming into a Red Scare that foreshadowed the McCarthy Era. It was the age of the Hollywood blacklist, when alleged Communists were jailed for refusing to testify before Congress on their activities.

One of the most contentious controversies then was the debate over the “loyalty oath,” which was used to purge Communists from the University of California. UCLA's Academic Senate backed the loyalty oath, as did the Student Executive Council. The Bruin publicly opposed the loyalty oath requirement. It seemed apparent from the Bruin’s editorial tilt, tipped by Clancy Sigal’s barbed essays, that the student newspaper was being controlled by radicals and Communists - the enemy. “Control of the Daily Bruin was always a big issue,” Ehrlichman said. “The editorial staff of the Daily Bruin tended to be pretty left wing at that time, and there was a lot of resentment, a lot of concern and quite a lot of pressure from the alumni to do something about that.” That pressure squeezed Sigal in particular. “You may not realize the tremendous pressure we brought to bear on (Bruin editor Elmer) Chalberg last May to keep Clancy shut up,” Ehrlichman wrote Granma Guenther from Stanford in January 1949, “but believe me it was no cinch.

Moreover, Communists were the enemy of everybody, liberals and conservatives alike. “All the liberals focused on all the campus Communists,” Sigal said. “If they only could get rid of the Communists, they all reasoned from different premises, the persecution of the liberals would go away.” And in the 1940s, the threat of Communist infiltration appeared absolutely real. “They really thought Moscow gave orders to hold rallies,” Sigal said. “They actually believed that people were in classrooms making way for the Russian army to invade and destroy democracy.”

For Sigal, the fraternities were part of a “dense, dense conservative network,” and Ehrlichman “was the point man for the fear that was washing on campus.” Ehrlichman at that time was reporting on fraternities and the student scene to Dean of Students Milton Hahn. Sigal saw Ehrlichman as the eyes and ears for the fraternity establishment and the administration by reporting on campus radicals. Ehrlichman demurs but does not contradict Sigal. “I worked with (Hahn) day-to-day,” he said. “My principal focus was on fraternities. When something came up, he and I talked about the problems frequently. There were a lot of people tuned into the radical scene but I certainly was not a specialist in it.” Nonetheless, his connections and academic prowess helped him win a place on the commencement speaker’s list in 1948. On June 20, he spoke before fellow graduates, knocking the campus radical: “Not only are we able to impugn his motives,” he read, “we are able to take effective action on the basis of our analysis.”

Ehrlichman’s and Haldeman’s careers at UCLA foreshadowed the roles they would later play in a much larger venue. In 1948, the same year he became the Interfraternity Council executive secretary, Ehrlichman ran the campaigns of candidates for president and vice-president of the Executive Council. The candidates were Bill Keene and Jeanne Fisher.

Keene and Ehrlichman both pledged Kappa Sigma.
Fisher enjoyed the added advantage of being a homecoming queen and Ehrlichman’s girlfriend. She later became his wife. Keene’s election was the culmination of a three-year campaign to elect a Kappa Sig president, masterminded by Ehrlichman. Keene had served as sophomore class president and general representative before the presidential effort.

“Behind the scenes, John was helping call the shots,” Keene says. “We had discussed (the political campaigns) when I first got to the fraternity house. That was the thought we had in building the house up.” Keene’s campaign manager was a man named Jimmy Higson, a Beta and close friend of Haldeman in that house.

Fisher ran for vice-president against a woman named Margie Hellman, another non-org. Hellman’s boyfriend and later husband was Steve Muller, years later president of Johns Hopkins, and Mankiewicz’s roommate. Hellman defeated Fisher with the help of a Greek campaign manager and became the first Jewish woman and non-org to become vice-president. Despite her victory, Hellman says, “I always thought of (Ehrlichman) as a kingmaker, somebody who could propel almost anybody into a position where there’d be a great deal of power and authority.”

This campaign had larger political consequences. At the end of the spring term 1949, Sigal was about to be promoted to the managing editor slot at the Daily Bruin. It was then that Keene, who had been elected president, made the first attempt to remove Sigal from the Bruin, arguing that Sigal and a fellow appointee, Jim Garst, were “politically biased and held views that were too similar to permit an objective editorial board.” In other words, two Communists could not be allowed to control the student newspaper.

“Keene was pretty sure of winning,” Ehrlichman wrote Granna from law school that year, “and might be in a position to chop the Bruin when he got in.”

“There was a philosophical argument that we had at the time,” Keene said. “They were purported members of the Communist party and the feeling was that was not a suitable image that we wanted to project with the Daily Bruin and UCLA.” The Bruin’s editorial board opposed Keene, sounding a call against the student government’s attempt to squelch an autonomous newspaper. But during the debate over Sigal’s appointment, a new executive council was elected for the following fall. It was more sympathetic to the Bruin’s argument and that September Sigal won the slot. Nevertheless, this attempted ouster foreshadowed more ominous developments to come.

The politics were cutthroat, but by all accounts they were clean, despite Granna Guenther’s exclamations to the contrary. During the Watergate investigation, University of Southern California alumnus Donald Segretti admitted that he coordinated a dirty tricks campaign for Nixon. He learned the techniques from widespread campaign tampering in USC student elections. But despite later dirty dealings in national politics, Haldeman and Ehrlichman were clean at UCLA. “I think compared to USC, (we) ran absolutely clean campaigns, both on the right and the left,” Sigal said. “The (dirty tricks) would all be at USC, as one would expect.”

“I would agree with that,” Ehrlichman said.

Haldeman was not nearly as politically active at UCLA as Ehrlichman, even though his one experience with campus politics was running a non-org candidate against Jeanne Fisher in 1947. He organized events, ranging from the All-U-Sing to the 1947 Homecoming, when he added the novelty of putting the homecoming queen on an elaborate float instead of a touring car.

“Bob was a great organizer,” Keene said. “He didn’t participate in student politics... but he obviously had that...”
kind of talent. The one who was interested in student politics, because of me and what we had planned, was Ehrlichman.”

But the Beta Dog Case forced Haldeman into the political limelight, having to fend off the press as well as the D.A. Based on interviews he had with his classmate after Watergate, Sigal argues that Haldeman’s suspicion of the press and Mankiewicz personally began there. If so, Haldeman carried a decades-long grudge against the man who later opposed him as the campaign manager of Sen. George McGovern’s 1972 bid to unseat Richard Nixon.

In 1949, a year after Mankiewicz left the *Bruin*, Sigal was next in line to become editor-in-chief. But the new executive council, which had ultimate authority over his appointment, turned on him. Sigal had already been notorious for his biting editorials. One editorial provoked such a reaction that he was physically assaulted. He had merely described, for the first time, what students already knew—during lunch hour the campus segregated itself in Royce Quad, with Jews sitting on the steps of Powell Library and Gentiles sitting at Royce Hall. “This was the dirtiest secret of all, socially speaking,” Sigal said, the unspoken taboo.

He was denied the editor-in-chief slot following vigorous debate in the executive council. He was branded a Communist by organization members of the council. Keene’s initial attempt bore fruit in the second Communist harvest. In a bitter column in the next day’s *Bruin*, Sigal lambasted his inquisitors, who had presided over his purge “in solemn session assembled.”

“Clancy, are you a Communist?” he recalled being asked. “I thought to myself: Is this UCLA, an American campus, 1949 - Bill of Rights Week?” Following his ejection, Sigal was blacklisted from graduate study. He left UCLA devastated, not even bothering to pick up his diploma when he graduated. After a few years of travel, he exiled himself in England. There, he worked as a writer and eventually for the British Broadcasting Corporation. In 1975 he returned to Los Angeles for his 25th class reunion, as Haldeman and Ehrlichman faced trial for conspiracy in the Watergate affair.

Mankiewicz had graduated in 1947 and went to Columbia for a graduate degree in journalism. After working in Washington, he returned to Los Angeles as city editor of the *Independent* in Santa Monica, where he broke his first major story after he met John Wooden in a local restaurant where he was having lunch with a UCLA athletic director. Later he served as a foreign correspondent and attended law school at Berkeley. In 1950, he ran for the California Assembly as a Democrat, appearing on the same ballot as Richard Nixon, who was running for the U.S. Senate.

In the summer before president Harry Truman ran for re-election, Haldeman graduated from UCLA. He married his college sweetheart, Jo Horton, whom he had followed to UCLA two years earlier. Haldeman and his friend Ehrlichman moved to Northern California. Ehrlichman went to Stanford law school in 1949 and continued to monitor events at UCLA through friends and correspondence with his mentor, Granna Guenther. A year later he married Jeanne Fisher. Haldeman began work in San Francisco for the J. Walter Thompson Company, the national advertising firm. Ehrlichman moved his new family to Seattle where he practiced property law. The two friends stayed in contact through their early years out of college.

A UCLA fraternity connection gave Haldeman his first contact with Richard Nixon, whom he had long admired. One of Nixon’s secretaries, Loie Gaunt, had been office manager for UCLA Dean Earl Miller. Gaunt’s brother was a Beta with Haldeman. That connection, plus an interest in Nixon over the Alger Hiss case, brought Haldeman into the Nixon camp for the first time. “(Gaunt) left us during the time that I worked (in the administration office), to go to work for Richard Nixon,” Ehrlichman said. “So (Haldeman) had an introduction through his fraternity brother’s sister to the Nixon people.”

Oddly, after graduation Ehrlichman and Haldeman switched roles politically and philosophically. Ehrlichman, who had been so intimately active in campus politics, became politically inactive as a lawyer in Seattle. Haldeman, who had been almost entirely apolitical at UCLA, began major forays into state and national politics after he graduated. “(Haldeman) was always interested in national politics and volunteered his services during the Eisenhower years,” Ehrlichman said. “My practice pretty well required me being nonpartisan because I was dealing with the county courthouse and elected officials all the time. So I tried to maintain my amateur status and stay out of any sort of state or local politics.”

When not volunteering for Nixon, Haldeman advanced through the J. Walter Thompson Company. At the same time, he became more involved as a benevolent alumnus to his alma mater. He served on a three-chair committee in 1959 that pursued UCLA’s first large fund-raising campaign, which attracted $2 million to build Pauley Pavilion, site of UCLA’s greatest basketball triumphs.

His reputation as an organizer and a salesman made him perfect for politics. Haldeman did not underestimate Nixon’s ambition and stuck with him through the Kennedy era. As a reward for his loyalty, he became the campaign manager of Nixon’s 1962 California gubernatorial bid. Haldeman recruited Ehrlichman to serve as campaign coordinator for Nixon in Southern California. “(Haldeman) recruited me to be an advance man, and it came at a time when I was just a little bit bored with my practice, and it sounded like a nice diversion,” Ehrlichman said. “So I
dropped my non-partisan disguise for the purpose of going on this campaign.”

But Nixon badly lost his bid for the statehouse to Edmund G. “Pat” Brown. He swore he would retire from politics, saying in his famous news conference that the press he so despised would not have him “to kick around anymore.”

Haldeman returned for a management certificate program at UCLA’s Anderson Graduate School of Management. From 1965 to 1967, he served as president of the UCLA Alumni Association, which made him an ex officio University of California regent. The following year, Gov. Ronald Reagan appointed him to a 16-year term as a UC regent. In his first year, Haldeman initiated a review of all UC student newspapers, fueled by his rancor at the controversial Daily Bruin and sparked by a Bruin photograph that ran in 1968 of a man and a woman copulating in a cemetery. The investigation, spearheaded by Norman Isaacs of the Louisville Courier-Journal, coincided with another investigation begun by UCLA Chancellor Charles Young into the activities of the Daily Bruin specifically. Both investigations acknowledged the ’60s indulgence of college newspapers, but exonerated the Daily Bruin as one of the finest papers in the country.

Haldeman did not stay a regent for long, because in 1968 Richard Nixon was elected as the 37th president of the United States. Ehrlichman followed Haldeman to the White House, becoming chief counsel and later domestic policy adviser. “Among the staff are some UCLA people of my vintage,” he wrote Gramma on April 18, 1969, “including Bob Haldeman and Alex Butterfield.”

Mankiewicz found himself in the orbit of the Kennedy New Frontier during the early 1960s, when a friend put him in touch with Sargent Shriver who was then running the Peace Corps. Mankiewicz served with the corps and eventually became regional director in Peru. His work brought notice from Robert Kennedy, whom Mankiewicz served as press secretary until he was assassinated in June 1968. That year, Kennedy was a front-runner in the Democratic primaries, and most likely would have run against Nixon were he not killed.

Mankiewicz moved to George McGovern and became the senator’s chief political adviser in the 1972 campaign, squaring off against Haldeman and Ehrlichman just as he had been as a “non-org” confronting Greek row politics at UCLA in the 1940s. During the campaign, Mankiewicz called Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein about dirty tricks the campaign endured. Though Mankiewicz’s calls confirmed the Post’s suspicions about Nixon and his men, they also gave credence to the Administration’s complaints that the Post sympathized with McGovern. The stories, however, were right on target. Even as McGovern lost in one of the worst defeats in electoral history, the Watergate investigation endured and plagued Nixon through 1973.

Gramma Guenther watched her prize student leader take hit after hit in front of legions of television cameras as the conspiracy rapidly unraveled. She met with Ehrlichman during the storm, and later hinted that Ehrlichman’s Boy Scout loyalty to Nixon—ingrained by his college fraternity and the University Religious Conference—somehow led to his downfall. Ehrlichman, she said, committed crimes out of loyalty to his president, and that same fidelity held him on a ship that was fast sinking in troubled waters. “He’s thrown you to the wolves and I think you ought to forget this loyalty bit,” she recalled telling Ehrlichman in a 1974 UCLA oral history. “(Ehrlichman) made mistakes in not getting out of the White House long before he did. And he’s probably made other mistakes. As near as I can figure out, it comes down to what he understands as loyalty.”

At UCLA, Sigal had seen Ehrlichman operate as a spy for the administration and the fraternities. In the 1970s, the Plumbers were the natural complement of Ehrlichman’s role as the eyes and ears—the snoops—of the political establishment. But by April 1973, their malfeasance caught up with them and Nixon forced Haldeman and Ehrlichman to resign when federal investigators determined they had a strong hand in the cover-up of the Watergate burglary. Ehrlichman was later convicted of authorizing the burglary, coordinated by G. Gordon Liddy, of an office of a psychiatrist who treated Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg achieved notoriety for releasing the Pentagon Papers, secret reports on the Vietnam War compiled by the Department of Defense.

But the crimes might have remained covered up without the opportune involvement of another UCLA alumnus. Alexander Butterfield, who pledged Sigma Nu in 1947, was a highly-decorated Air Force officer brought in by Haldeman as an aide to Nixon. Under routine questioning by the Senate committee in July 1973, Butterfield— as one of a handful of aides in the know— revealed the secret White House taping system. The revelation led to the smoking gun—a recorded conversation during which Nixon told Haldeman to use the CIA to back the FBI off the Watergate investigation—that eventually forced the president to resign.

“I was very surprised,” said Margie Hellman, who had served on the UCLA student council with Bill Keene, the candidate whose campaign Ehrlichman had managed. “It did not ever occur to me that anything either of them would do would be anything but totally acceptable and honest. I was really shocked that this Watergate thing had occurred and that they’d played such a role in it.” Her opponent in 1947, Jeanne, divorced Ehrlichman following the scandal. But Hellman’s husband, Steve Muller, remained close friends with Ehrlichman who died in 1998 of diabetes in
Atlanta. He was 73.

In 1977, two days after Haldeman saw his youngest daughter graduate from UCLA Law School, he entered prison in Lompoc, Calif, where he served 18 months. He died in late 1993 at age 67. A year later, his White House diaries were published.

“I was saddened that both of them had been involved in that,” said Keene, who pledged with Ehrlichman at the same fraternity in 1946. “I was convinced early on that Ehrlichman was not involved in (Watergate) in any way. But that proved to be erroneous.”

Grandma Guenther, for her part, never learned the final fate of her prize student. Ehrlichman eventually served 18 months in prison. Guenther died a year after her oral history interviews, in April 1975. Two students she had mentored, Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley and Atlantic Monthly editor Gil Harrison, attended her funeral. But in her last diary entry, this dedicated, selfless woman flirted with abduction. The years of retirement, scandal and doubt weighed heavily. “Some times,” she wrote on Oct. 26, 1974 as the cover-up trial was underway, “I wonder if Ayn Rand might not be right after all.”

Author’s note: The final quote is from Adaline Guenther’s last diary entry and I left it deliberately vague. She read voluminously but it is her only reference to Ayn Rand. I suspect the quote shows a growing cynicism on her part in her waning days. I myself see a stark contrast between her—a selfless Christian servant to her young charges—and Rand’s ruthless egoism. I cannot speculate much beyond that.

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