

Gemstone

The road to Watergate was traveled in such small, incremental steps that by the time the situation arose, the break-in would seem a natural thing to do. Aren't all vices the same? The alcoholic, be it a wino sprawled in the gutter or a power broker scoffing down martinis, has to have his first sip at some time; the drug user, be it a soccer mom gulping tranquilizers or a junky sharing needles, has her first taste of bliss; every overeater starts her progressive snacking without realizing; every criminal commits his first, usually small, crime.

The Fielding case was our first step down the low road—its necessity of enormous importance to us in getting to the bottom of what we could only conceive as a key threat to national security. None of us—not our Cuban friends doing the work out of patriotism for their adopted country; not the action-oriented, gun-toting Liddy; not me, having worked hard for my country my entire adult life—felt as if this was the beginning of a newfound employment, that this was a warm-up operation because illegal break-ins were now part of our arsenal of dirty tricks. But like the alcoholic who thinks he can stop at any time, every day there seemed reason enough to press on.

Like common drinkers, Liddy and I became covert action co-dependents. My wife and daughter Kevan thought we acted like schoolkids together, one feeding off the other.