



LESLIE SILBERT

Leslie Silbert graduated from Harvard with a bachelor's and master's degree in the History of Science and studied Renaissance literature at Oxford University, focusing on dangerous pursuits of knowledge, both state and intellectual secrets. She has worked for two private intelligence firms and is an internationally bestselling author of historical suspense fiction.

After her father Earl Silbert, ACTL Past President 2000-2001, retired from private practice in June 2019, she began collaborating with him on his memoir, *The Missing Watergate Story*.

Earl Silbert was the First Assistant in Washington D.C.'s United States Attorney's office when the Watergate burglary took place, on June 17th, 1972. Working with a team of FBI agents and two colleagues, he led the investigation into the break-in and prosecuted the first Watergate trial—of the five burglars, Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy. He then used the convictions as leverage to continue pursuing any and all higher-level officials responsible for the break-in. Silbert's team was in the midst of plea negotiations with White House Counsel John Dean when the Special Prosecutor took over in June 1973.

The Missing Watergate Story spans that extraordinarily challenging year, when it was Earl's professional obligation to walk a nonpolitical line in a monumentally political prosecution, and ultimately grapple with the question: can you indict a sitting president?

Why another Watergate book after five decades? Shortly before retiring, when Earl was watching the television news coverage of Watergate's 45th anniversary, he was dismayed that no matter how many new books and documentaries had come out on the subject over the years, there remain major misconceptions as well as complete gaps in the historical record. He realized this is the case because unlike most everyone else involved in Watergate, no one on the original FBI team or he or either of his Assistant U.S. Attorney colleagues had published a memoir. Instead, they'd let the history of Watergate be written by those with an agenda to push—whether it was those involved in the original crime and cover-up trying to burnish their reputations, or particular journalists styling themselves the heroes who'd cracked the case.

Earl had kept a diary during Watergate, and he used this to help craft a preliminary draft. Leslie's vital role involved working to make sure that all of the prose became comprehensible to non-lawyers, and to situate Earl's personal experiences from that year into enough historical context to be accessible to readers who weren't alive at the time. Throughout their collaboration, father and daughter discussed the big themes that resonate fifty years apart from Watergate to today—the question of whether or not the president is above the law, government surveillance and the privacy v national security conflict, racial injustice in law enforcement—and they wove in the results of those conversations into their book.

Leslie used her skill with the writing of page-turning suspense to “juice it up”. For example, she used clips from the Nixon Tapes to show readers what the villains were saying over in the White House during the key phases of Earl's investigation and prosecution. Agreeing with her dad on those additions was easy. However, there were countless debates during their edit sessions over precisely what *else* constituted page-turning juiciness and why it was even worth including. Feelings? Relationship drama? Why? Needless to say, there was much tooth-pulling and head-butting as they went along chapter by chapter! But Earl and Leslie kept at it, each trying to persuade the other until eventually reaching agreement, or at least an acceptable compromise.

The fruits of their efforts, *The Missing Watergate Story*, will be available for sale online, in both electronic and tangible form, in September 2023.