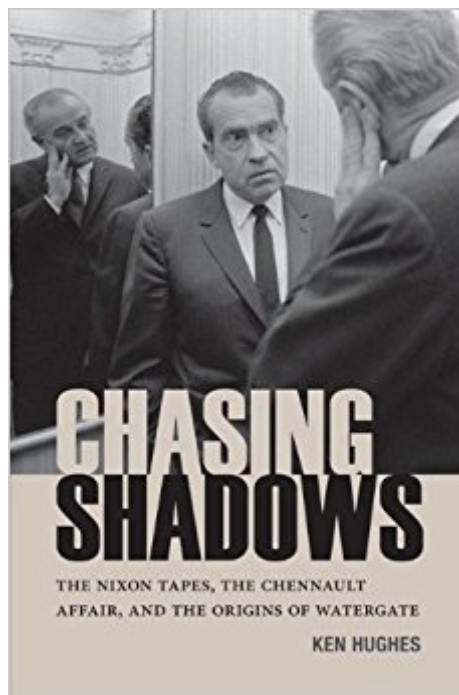




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# Chasing Shadows: The Nixon Tapes, The Chennault Affair, And The Origins Of Watergate



## Synopsis

The break-in at Watergate and the cover-up that followed brought about the resignation of Richard Nixon, creating a political shockwave that reverberates to this day. But as Ken Hughes reveals in his powerful new book, in all the thousands of hours of declassified White House tapes, the president orders a single break-in--and it is not at the Watergate complex. Hughes's examination of this earlier break-in, plans for which the White House ultimately scrapped, provides a shocking new perspective on a long history of illegal activity that prolonged the Vietnam War and was only partly exposed by the Watergate scandal. As a key player in the University of Virginia's Miller Center Presidential Recordings Program, Hughes has spent more than a decade developing and mining the largest extant collection of transcribed tapes from the Johnson and Nixon White Houses. Hughes's unparalleled investigation has allowed him to unearth a pattern of actions by Nixon going back long before 1972, to the final months of the Johnson administration. Hughes identified a clear narrative line that begins during the 1968 campaign, when Nixon, concerned about the impact on his presidential bid of the Paris peace talks with the Vietnamese, secretly undermined the negotiations through a Republican fundraiser named Anna Chennault. Three years after the election, in an atmosphere of paranoia brought on by the explosive appearance of the Pentagon Papers, Nixon feared that his treasonous--and politically damaging--manipulation of the Vietnam talks would be exposed. Hughes shows how this fear led to the creation of the Secret Investigations Unit, the "White House Plumbers," and Nixon's initiation of illegal covert operations guided by the Oval Office. Hughes's unrivaled command of the White House tapes has allowed him to build an argument about Nixon that goes far beyond what we think we know about Watergate. Chasing Shadows is also available as a special e-book that links to the massive collection of White House tapes published by the Miller Center through Rotunda, the electronic imprint of the University of Virginia Press. This unique edition allows the reader to move seamlessly from the book to the recordings's expertly rendered transcripts and to listen to audio files of the remarkable--and occasionally shocking--conversations on which this dark chapter in American history would ultimately turn.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ken Hughes is one of America's foremost experts on secret presidential recordings, especially those of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. In this book he has expertly identified and explained one of the many drivers that put Nixon on the road to Watergate. (Bob Woodward) Chasing Shadows tells a fascinating story of intrigue, lies, and deception, almost as if out of a soap opera. It is the most detailed study of the 1968 election as told through the White House tapes that I have seen. This book is now the most complete and comprehensive look at this episode. (Thomas A. Schwartz, Vanderbilt University, author of Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam)[I]mpeccably sourced, with extensive use of White House tapes and documents, memoirs by the various protagonists and other citations. The Chennault saga has dribbled out in bits and pieces over the years. Here it is told—*or at least what we know is told*, as Nixon's personal involvement is still a mystery—in one concise, thorough volume. (Politico)Tricky Dick: The nickname that keeps proving itself does so once more here. It's no surprise to have confirmation, in a general way, that Richard Nixon was a master of the abuse of power, for which even Republicans haven't quite forgiven him. It's no surprise that Lyndon Johnson played a particularly vehement kind of hardball politics, as well. Nonetheless, Hughes, a researcher at the University of Virginia's Miller Center Presidential Recordings Program, turns up plenty of surprises in this careful analysis of tape recordings from both administrations.... [An] utterly newsworthy book. (Kirkus) Chasing Shadows, the best account yet of Nixon's devious interference with Lyndon Johnson's 1968 Vietnam War negotiations, shows just how early Nixon's dirty tricks began and just how deeply he was involved. (Washington Post)Ken Hughes, the author of a new book about Nixon, Chasing Shadows, joined Kunhardt for an interview with "Top Line" and said that one of the most shocking recent revelations about Nixon is that he intentionally prolonged

the war in Vietnam for political gain.... "There is I think an extra degree of openness and candor with the people who don't know they are being taped," Hughes said. "Henry Kissinger clearly did not know he was being taped and was very angry about being taped. (Yahoo News) Hughes shows that we still have much to learn by connecting the dots of Nixon's angry venting and the shadowy world of national-security spying (Atlantic) In Chasing Shadows, Hughes draws on the private recordings of Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon to connect the dots between the crime Nixon committed to help him win the 1968 presidential election (referred to as the Chennault Affair), his myriad abuses of power while in office and, ultimately, his downfall and resignation. Full of fascinating scenes and candid conversations pulled verbatim from Nixon's tapes, Hughes's book is as compelling as a novel. (Shelf Awareness) In Chasing Shadows, Ken Hughes explores Nixon's role in thwarting Vietnam peace talks before the 1968 election.... In Washington... there still seems to be an audience. When Ms. [Elizabeth] Drew and Mr. Hughes joined Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the famed investigative reporters, for a panel discussion of Nixon's resignation at the headquarters of The Washington Post last week, the line stretched out the door and down the block. (New York Times) Hughes' linking of the Huston break-in plan to Chennault's activities provides a credible new rationale to the allegation that Nixon was indeed involved in the caper that could have cost Humphrey the 1968 election--and had it come to light earlier, denied Nixon the White House. (Baltimore Sun) Nixon had a secret, a dirty one, one that you probably don't know, and one that he was determined--at any cost--to hide. Ken Hughes has written a thriller of a book that fleshes out the secret, and reveals how it squirmed inside Nixon's presidency and destroyed it through paranoia, guilt and an obsessive fear that the secret might escape and ruin Nixon's electoral hopes, presidency, and reputation. (History Book Club) Ken Hughes's gripping investigation.... contends that the Watergate affair wasn't about the cover-up of the Watergate burglary itself, but about the cover-up of other crimes which led further back. (London Review of Books) With hundreds of books on Watergate, it might seem as though there is nothing left to learn about the scandal. Ken Hughes's new book proves otherwise.... By focusing on the role that the Chennault Affair played in Watergate, Hughes dispels the myth that Nixon's role in the cover-up of the Watergate burglary was his undoing. Chasing Shadows reveals the true depth of Nixon's criminal behavior--it began even before he became president.... In the end, the picture that Hughes paints of the Nixon White House reminds me of a memorable line that Hal Holbrook's 'Deep Throat' delivers in the film All the President's Men: 'The truth is these are not very bright guys, and things got out of hand.' (Political Science Quarterly) In truth, One Man Against the World adds less to our knowledge than two other recent books: Ken

Hughes's *Chasing Shadows*, about Nixon's efforts during the 1968 election to keep the South Vietnamese from agreeing to Lyndon Johnson's peace proposals, and John W. Dean's *The Nixon Defense*. (New York Times Book Review) In his landmark 2014 book, "Chasing Shadows," Ken Hughes reconstructs Nixon's spectacularly devious role in scuttling the Paris peace talks of 1968, in the closing weeks of the campaign, after President Lyndon Johnson decided to halt the bombing of North Vietnam to help bring about a possible settlement to end the war. (Carl Bernstein Washington Post) [A] chilling and compelling look at one of the multiple origins of the Watergate scandal, which toppled a president and heightened American's cynicism about their leaders. (Richmond Times-Dispatch) Hughes's goal in *Chasing Shadows* is to document Nixon's role in Watergate and in the October 1968 events. Since 2000, he has studied the Nixon and Johnson tapes at the Presidential Recordings Program at the University of Virginia, and he is skeptical about the work of historians whom he sees as uncritically accepting received wisdom for this time period. They tend to balance Nixon's achievements in foreign and domestic policy with his role in Watergate, which they consider politics as usual (169-70). For Hughes, Nixon benefitted from Congressional and media attention on Watergate since the search for the smoking gun covered up his serious attempts to influence the outcome of the 1968 and 1972 elections. (Journal of American Culture) "With hundreds of books on Watergate, it might seem as though there is nothing left to learn about the scandal. Ken Hughes's new book proves otherwise." (APS)

Ken Hughes is a researcher at the University of Virginia's Miller Center Presidential Recordings Program. His work as a journalist has appeared in the New York Times Magazine, the Washington Post, the Boston Globe Magazine, and Salon.

Excellent historical representation of the Vietnam era and Nixon presidency. I was totally unaware of Nixon's behind the scenes activity and its effect on the peace negotiations during Johnson's last months in office. How it related to the Watergate break in is captivating. I lived through this history totally clueless. *Chasing Shadows* enlightened me on this important period of history and though I didn't think possible gave me further insight into the paranoid behavior demonstrated by Nixon during his Presidency. A very well written book.

Every American should read this book. It records a turning point in history, where everyone trusted people with authority to no one trusted anybody, especially the politicians. Very timely even in

today's climate. This touches on administrations of Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon and how we went from believing the people in power to questioning their motive. And Nixon was the spearhead. The best quote in the book is Haldeman to Nixon, after the Pentagon Papers were released, stating in part, "it shows that people do things the President wants to do even though it's wrong. And presidents can be wrong". I grew up in the 60's and this was on the news every day for years. The book tied up a lot of loose ends of what caused people to think and act different in the 60's and 70's than previous generations because of the Vietnam War. And the Kindle version is great because you can hear the actual tapes, with the snide comments, guffaws, coughs and laughs that define the characters. And there are a whole cast of them.

OMG. A SHOCKER by the expert in Presidential tapes. the case BEFORE Watergate was far worse than Watergate - Americans died. just read the first 50 pages (you may not be able to put it down). taken from tape transcripts, hear one President (LBJ) making an honest try to wind down the war, as a politician (Nixon) actually finagles the bagel. I had no idea. I had once admired Nixon. No more.

Fascinating book. Heard the author on NPS radio show explaining his research and story. The book is even better to read and poses some very serious questions (as if we needed any more) about Nixon and his dark motivations.

Another must-have for Nixon and Watergate buffs, and a thoroughly credible presentation of events. Really, any historian should read this also. The use of primary materials (including, obviously, taped conversations) is extraordinary. In a nutshell, the author Ken Hughes contends that Nixon tried to subvert the 1968 Vietnam War-Paris peace talks, underway as that year's election approached. Failed talks would be bad news for Hubert Humphrey, the D-Party Presidential candidate. Nixon may have succeeded in tanking the talks, and he certainly tried. Even trying was illegal, and probably unethical. The failed talks would also mean more years of war, a war the USA and S. Vietnam eventually lost, when Nixon finally threw in the towel--but only after getting re-elected in 1972. It is an unfortunate reality that Nixon appears to have extended the war just long enough to avoid the ignominy of defeat before 1972. If your son died there...Nixon tried to cover his tracks, and the Watergate break-in may have stemmed from Nixonian fears the D-Party knew what he had done. It may remain a mystery if Nixon actually ordered the Watergate break-ins; but he is clearly caught on tape ordering break-ins of the Brookings Institution, as Hughes relates. In fact, Hughes contends that the famed Watergate break-ins were only part of a larger program, that he

outlines. Among the strengths of this book, and there are many, is that it places the Nixon Watergate foul play within a context of the Vietnam War, something the John Dean books more or less sidestep. In fact, Dean's latest book is a such a play-by-play examination of Watergate skullduggery and evasive maneuvers that one might forget there was even a war on. (For younger readers, the Vietnam War was a bad one, 60,000 US soldiers dead, and perhaps 3 million Vietnamese.) The Ken Hughes book also has snippets on other policy issues, such as monetary policy, well worth reading as well. Nixon pushed then-Fed Chief Arthur Burns to ease up on monetary policy--print more money, in the vernacular of the street. I hope present and future historians have access to as much primary material as Hughes, and observe the same high standards. Reading newspapers, interviewing people and making commentary fair or foul does not a history make. My only complaint is that the book was a little thin, and I suppose that is actually praise. I think Hughes could have given us another 100 pages or so of reading, and maybe we still would have wanted more. Great stuff. PS Reading or listening to the White House conversations also has the thrill of eavesdropping.

Very interesting reading. After reading this book, you will come away feeling that Nixon was paranoid and also deceiving in some of the things he did. I personally believe that if he was caught with what he did with Ms. Chennault with regard to the peace talks, he could have gone to jail. Read it, you'll be shocked at what he did in his Presidency.

Very informative and well-documented.

I admit it--I hate Richard Nixon. I've never understood the free ride the American people gave him from the "Pink Lady" campaign in California to his sabotage of the 1972 presidential election. But what can be understood is the way this criminal worked, and why Watergate happened. The Chennault Affair is a little commented-upon chapter of the Nixon story. Ken Hughes takes this story, explains it well, and clearly shows how it was the first domino which led to the mess which was Watergate. It underlies everything else that happened. A delightful extra with this electronic edition is to actually hear Nixon in action, mainly through taped telephone calls, through links within the book. My only gripe is that there aren't more of them. All students of Watergate should give this book a fair hearing.

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