

# **Elaine Crane:** **She's the** **Justice Department's** **Girl on Campus**

by Frank Sikora



*President of the University of Alabama, Dr. David Mathews, with Elaine Crane on campus.*

She's sometimes called the Justice Department's latest "secret weapon" because she looks like just another coed as she slips about the nation's campuses.

But the education Elaine Crane seeks is quite different from her scholastic sisters: to monitor the pulse of the colleges and give the White House a periodic condition report.

"It's not all that dramatic," says the 27-year-old brunette attorney from Willoughby Hills, Ohio. "I just don't pop in and sneak around. It's always by invitation from the students."

As coordinator of the Campus Visitation Program, Mrs. Crane (her husband is a recent law graduate awaiting his bar exams) either makes a visit herself or dispatches one of the 30 young attorneys in her command to lend legal advice or to hear student complaints.

It's all an outgrowth of the campus turbulence that spewed across the land during the late sixties and the spring of 1970. President Nixon and Atty. Gen. John Mitchell started the program in an attempt to open up avenues of understanding between Washington and the campuses—avenues that would, hopefully, head off replays of Berkeley, Jackson, and Kent State.

If the student gripes reflect some violation of Federal laws, Mrs. Crane's people are prepared to make necessary legal moves. "We usually try to act as referees, however, and let both sides know we're there. Then we hope the two can work out a settlement.

"We don't get involved unless there is a widespread situation or we find something that needs a test case."

### Follows Ruckelshaus

Mrs. Crane is the third director of the program and follows in deep footsteps: William Ruckelshaus was the first director until he was named to head the Environmental Protection Agency and William Rehnquist (the Supreme Court nominee) was the second.

And what are students concerned with today? "There're no pet peeves anywhere," Mrs. Crane says.

Somewhat surprisingly, she finds that civil rights complaints are more persistent in the North and East (notably, Brown University

and Western Reserve) while in the South and Southwest, environment is what's mostly on the student mind. Running a close second everywhere is the uneasiness over law and order and student rights.

### No help for coeds

"The one thing I can't do anything about," says Mrs. Crane, "is the rights of women on campuses. I hear a good deal of complaints—particularly in the South—about coeds not having the same privileges as men students.

"But there's no provision, as yet, that would allow the Justice Department to move on, say, a question of women being required to live in a dorm or sorority house. The only thing that's covered under the Civil Rights Act is the problem of employment. Right now all I can advise is for the coeds to talk it out with a college president and then, if not satisfied, get an attorney."

Mrs. Crane never experienced those problems herself. She attended Laurel School for Girls in Shaker Heights, Ohio, and Vassar. Her law degree is from George Washington.

Technically, she's special assistant to the Deputy Attorney General (Richard Kleindienst) and coordinator of the Campus Visitation Program. At the same time she's a link between the Justice Department and the White House.

"This doesn't mean talking to the President every day. It does, however, mean keeping him informed through his staff about what's happening."

The "secret weapon" description of the job conveys that Washington is concerned about heading off any future disturbances on campuses. "It's a fun job," says troubleshooter Mrs. Crane. "By visiting students, answering their letters or seeing them when they come to Washington in groups, I believe something good is happening."

Mrs. Crane is one agent that hopefully will reduce students' feelings of isolation from the White House. "If they have questions or problems," she says, "tell them to write to me. I like to get their letters." Her address: Department of Justice, Campus Visitation Program, Constitution Avenue and 10th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20530.