

EXCLUSIVE—FROM THE NEW BOOK BY MAUREEN “MO” DEAN

THE SECRET DIARY OF JOHN DEAN'S WIFE



June 1973: John Dean, former counsel to President Nixon, prepares to testify before the Senate Watergate Committee. Maureen Dean turns at photographer's request.

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRED WARD/BLACK STAR

When John Dean testified before the Senate Watergate Committee, behind him sat his wife Maureen, whose beauty and poise fascinated television viewers. She has now written a book about this painful period in their lives. Here, written especially for Redbook, is John Dean's introduction to his wife's frank and intimate story of their life together. "Without Mo's loyalty and love," says Dean, "I couldn't have made it through Watergate." Her book begins on page 55.

AN INTRODUCTION

by John Dean

I had braced my wife for the fact that I would be going to jail for at least one year for my participation in the Watergate cover-up. But neither of us was prepared for the "one-to-four-year" term that I received. I was distraught, needless to say, but the sentence shattered Mo.

After the initial shock, however, Mo became convinced that I would be released on parole after serving 12 months. I realized that her determined optimism made the prospect of my imprisonment easier for her to bear, so I did nothing to discourage her. Yet I knew I could be in jail for one, two or even three years, and during the month Judge Sirica had given me to get our affairs in order I tried to plan our lives realistically.

My greatest concern was how to ease Mo's loneliness and assure her financial well-being while I was away. And I found an answer in the last place I would have thought to look—Mo's diary.

For years Mo had had the practice of jotting down on her calendar what had occurred on a given day or what was scheduled to occur. And when I was preparing my testimony for the Senate Watergate hearings I sometimes referred to her notes. They often helped me recall a particular event or circumstance.

My own use of Mo's calendar prompted me to suggest that she keep a more extensive diary of the bleak-looking days that lay ahead. Someday, I told her, she might want to tell our children what it was like to have lived in the Watergate abyss.

I first mentioned this to her in April of 1973. We were at Bethany Beach, in Maryland, hiding from the press so that I could work without being interrupted. Mo liked the idea of keeping a diary. She eyed one of the extra notebooks I had brought along and informed me she wanted to start immediately. It still makes me smile to recall what she did with the notebook I gave her.

Mo had been helping me sort and catalogue some of the White House documents and papers.

"What does this 'Eyes Only' mean on these memos to Haldeman, Ehrlichman and the President?" she asked.

"It means," I told her, "that only the person the memo is addressed to is supposed to read it."

The day I gave Mo the notebook for her diary she immediately wrote, in big letters, "Mo Dean's Eyes Only!!"

"What does that mean?" I asked her. "It means this diary is for my eyes only and not yours! Understand?" she exclaimed, and she wrapped her arms around her diary and hugged it.

I broke up in laughter at a time when it was difficult to laugh about anything.

Week after week, month after month, as I worked on one facet or another of the Watergate investigation, Mo was busy making entries in her diary. Occasionally I would ask, half teasingly, half seriously, "When are you going to declassify your diary so I can read it?" The answer was always the same: "Never. This is for my daughter." Then we would pretend to hassle over it, and would always end up laughing over her secret Watergate notes.

There was no laughter, however, the night Mo asked me if I wanted to read what she had just written about my jail sentence. In fact, reading it gave me one of those terrible lumps in the throat that you get when you're about to cry but don't.

Some days later I thought again about what Mo had written in her diary. She had a perspective on Watergate that was totally different from mine. And when she let me scan other pages of it I realized how much she had to say about Watergate that she had said only to her diary. The idea struck me instantly: Mo should write a book.

The notion grew even more appealing as I thought it over. It would take eight months to a year or more to do a book, so it would keep Mo busy and ease her loneliness while I was away. And if she could get an advance from a publisher, it would help our financial state.

Mo agreed to undertake the project, but only if others felt that the story of her experiences might somehow be helpful and meaningful to people. The resounding answer from the publishers and agents we talked to was: "Yes, if

you tell it the way it was, the way it's recorded in your diary—honestly."

I have read Mo's book. Reading it was a difficult and somewhat unpleasant experience for me. I got the same lump in my throat I'd had when first reading her diary. The book is filled with memories that are unhappy for both of us.

It is not the same as reading something a stranger has written, because Mo knows me—and herself.

It's a book I plan to reread, though not for a while. But should my memory grow fuzzy about what I put my wife through for several years of our marriage, I owe it to her to pull the book off the shelf. I owe it to her because one thing is clear to me: Without Mo's loyalty and love, I don't think I could have made it through the ordeal of Watergate. We made it through.

We are still making it through Watergate, but it's different now. We're reflecting on it—what it meant to us and the country. Yesterday I relied on Mo's judgment about things to include—or exclude—from my testimony. Today I'm relying on her judgment in writing my account of the Nixon years and Watergate. For example, I've asked her questions such as, "Should I include material that would correct the false image of the puritanical ways and the supposed sexlessness of the Nixon White House?" Her answer: "Yes, if it's done in a way that doesn't hurt the wives who were innocent and have been hurt enough." Or: "Would you be surprised to learn that Richard Nixon was asking if the White House had a capacity to wiretap enemies and opponents' over a year before the Watergate incident?" Her reaction: "Now it's no surprise at all, but it's interesting and helpful in understanding Watergate."

For questions like these, Mo has become my sounding board. I value her thoughts as I sort through the murk of the past with the hope of shedding some light on dark corners of history. This Watergate author won't ignore Mo—her view of Watergate—the second time around.

Maureen Dean's story begins on page 55

**“HOW I LIVED
THROUGH
WATERGATE”
THE SECRET
DIARY OF
JOHN DEAN’S WIFE**

BY MAUREEN DEAN, WITH HAYS GOREY



June, 1973: A tense time, a tense place. Maureen Dean listens while her husband reads his prepared statement for the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities.

In June of 1973 when John Dean, former Counsel to President Nixon, testified before the Senate Watergate Committee, TV viewers listened with fascination to Dean's story, and watched with equal fascination the stunning young woman who sat behind him—his wife Maureen.

Here, with remarkable candor, Mo Dean tells of her complicated past, her love affair with John Dean—and her impressions of the powerful political figures who surrounded her and her ambitious young husband

It's our last day at home before John goes away, and the atmosphere is charged. I know what he's going through, and I wonder how he can stand it. He's the one who's going to prison. He's the one who spent 12 years studying law and utilizing his knowledge of it. Now he will never be allowed to practice law again.

Today is August 27, 1974. We are in our home in Los Angeles and we will be leaving tomorrow for Washington, D.C. On September 3rd John goes to prison, and we will be apart for at least a year, probably more. But we promised each other not to think in those terms.

I still can't accept the fact that John is going to jail.

This is not the kind of last day we should have at home. John is grumpy, preoccupied, fussing about all sorts of things that don't need fussing over. I think he's avoiding me.

And I have to pretend I can play that game too, but I'm not very good at it. I hang a picture and then another, and



Irene Kelly Kane holding her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter Maureen.

every five minutes I sit down in the kitchen and imagine he has already gone. There will be hours and months like this when I'll be sitting right here and wondering how he is, wondering if prison life will break his spirit even though nothing else has, wondering what life for us will be like when he finally returns.

One thing we both know: Whatever is in store, we're in it together. We've both known failed marriages, which may be why we feel so strongly that our marriage will not fail. Our love, some people say, was strengthened by John's troubles, and we'll have to be careful when the usual strains and stresses return to our marriage. Return? They've never left.

Even on his last day, we're piqued with each other. John is trying to get every detail of our financial affairs in order so that everything will be as easy as possible for me.

The doorbell rings late in the afternoon, and standing there is a short, slender figure that could easily be mistaken for that of a Boy Scout. But this

is no Boy Scout. This is Donald Segretti, another of the lawyers ruined by Watergate, another who did wrong and who will pay and pay for as long as he lives.

Segretti is shy, polite, a trifle embarrassed to be who he is. I know his name will always be linked to political "dirty tricks," but he has gone to jail to pay for his mistakes and that should be enough.

John engaged Segretti to draw up wills for both of us, and Segretti seems very grateful for even this little bit of legal business while he still has the right to practice law.

When he goes, John and I sit and sip our cocktails. I want to tell him that there has been something so wrong about this last day. But he is so intently businesslike that I realize he is determined to be "normal."

"Let's pack and get up early," he says matter-of-factly, "because we'll be leaving the house tomorrow morning at eight o'clock."

When I ask him to make reservations on a later plane—we must fly to Washington, D.C.—he snaps that he will not, because two U.S. marshals are going with us and they would have to change reservations too, and he isn't about to inconvenience them. It isn't very tender of him, but John isn't being very tender about anything.

This upsets me. I tell him I probably won't even go with him, because it is stupid to leave so early; we argue, and I run into the bedroom and cry. I set the alarm for 6 A.M. anyway so that I will have time to pack if I change my mind. When six o'clock comes I'm so exhausted, emotionally and physically, that I just want to stay in bed and avoid reality.

But I cannot. I can't think of John's going alone, so I get up and pack. John and I make the bed together, and one of my long red fingernails breaks and he says something about long red fingernails—something snide—and we fight again. I suppose we both are near the breaking point—too much emotion held inside, too much feeling and sadness not expressed.

Finally it's time to go, and we climb into the car and sit there in silence. We don't speak to each other on the plane either. Our whole trip to Washington is spent in silence.

After we land I go to the apartment of my close friend Heidi Rikan. John is away all day, being interviewed by the special prosecutors. They've been interviewing him for 14 months now, and I wonder how he can have any new things to tell them.

Finally it is the morning of September 3, 1974, our last day. I awake to find a note from John on the mirror. "I wanted to tell you why I'm going to jail. Why the 'system' . . . is pulling us apart. Something we're not used to being. . . . We'll talk later, when you'll have my every thought. So escape in peaceful sleep. Because you're too good to suffer the pain of all this."

John does not have to surrender until five o'clock in the afternoon. At one

thirty he does his last-minute packing and at two o'clock the marshals arrive. "No!" I shriek, and then John says: "It's best, dear—really, it's best." The last kiss is a quick one. In 30 seconds he is back because he has forgotten his sunglasses. Another quick kiss and he is gone—really gone.

Completely alone, strangely I don't cry. I think of John's being fingerprinted and photographed and issued standard clothing. It hurts me deeply because under the law John Dean is now a common criminal, even though to me he is a man of courage who tried to save his country.

Friends drop in to comfort me. We watch the NBC news and David Brinkley says that John Dean has begun serving a "light" sentence.

A light sentence? One to four years—light?

John went away five hours ago.

Already it seems like five months.

GOOD TIMES, BAD TIMES

She was Irene Kelley Kane to friends, relatives and neighbors. To me she was once Mommy, then Mom and sometimes Oh, Mother!

Mother had been a Ziegfeld Follies girl in the 1930s. I still have some of her pictures and newspaper clippings. What a beauty she was! She dated a lot, but never got caught up in the party swirl, and when Daddy came along she fell in love and began a new career, housewife. My father—Sidney Charles Kane—worked as a diamond setter and never earned much money. But I thought he was the greatest.

My brother Ronnie was not born until after they had been married 15 years. I was born three and a half years later. Mom and I were always so close. It was clear she valued her children more than anything.



Maureen in her junior year at Notre Dame Academy Girls' High School. 1962.



Mo as an American Airlines stewardess, on a flight from her base in Dallas to New York City. September, 1966.

We lived in Mar Vista, California, near Beverly Hills, an area dominated by vast estates, where private swimming pools are commonplace, where Cadillacs, Lincolns and Mercedeses fill the parking areas. This was a world that we definitely were not a part of, and yet we could not avoid seeing it daily. My constant awareness of that inaccessible wealth gave me a deep sense of insecurity and inferiority that has plagued me throughout my life.

I was graduated (without honors) from a Catholic high school, Notre Dame Girl's Academy, and that fall I enrolled at Santa Monica City College. During my freshman year my father died, and I had to leave college and go to work. I applied for training as a stewardess with American Airlines. After receiving my wings I was based at Dallas, Texas, and there my life began to be a hopeless tangle.

I met a man named George Owen, who was then a scout for the Dallas Cowboys, the professional football team. On April Fools' Day, 1967, we were married. Six weeks later I learned that George was still married to his first wife. The matter of divorcing her before marrying me apparently had not struck him as important. I moved out immediately and flew back to Mother.

I was hurt and confused, but instead of solving my problems, I compounded them. I threw myself into the arms of Michael Biner, a young man I had dated before. Michael convinced me that my marriage to George was null and void. He begged me to marry him. I didn't want to be alone and on my own again, so I said yes. Mike and I were married in a quickie ceremony in Tijuana, Mexico. When we arrived home, he was afraid to tell his parents that we were married. I couldn't believe it. Again I went back to Mother in tears. I was be-

ginning to feel like a Yo-yo, and I certainly was behaving like one.

George, meanwhile, had been calling me frantically. He could straighten everything out, he said, and he pleaded with me to return. Believe it or not, I did. But our reconciliation lasted only a few weeks.

Then I had to get away. My friend Heidi, who was well to do, had a vacation house at Lake Tahoe, a resort on the California-Nevada border. She had lots of free time and was glad to have company, so I went and stayed with her. While I was there I had my marriage to George annulled.

Eventually Michael and I talked everything out and decided to return to Los Angeles. He told his parents about our marriage and we rented an apartment. I vowed to live a "normal" life from then on.

We lived together quite happily for about a year, and then we began to quarrel. Early in the summer of 1969 I left Mike. But I never meant it to be a permanent separation.

I spent another month with Heidi—this time in Washington, D.C. On July 4, 1969, we were driving in Heidi's Corvette and were frightened nearly to death by a close brush with an oncoming automobile. On that same day, at almost the same hour, Michael Biner was not so fortunate. Driving a 1959 Corvette just like Heidi's, he collided with another automobile on a California highway. He died instantly.

MY LUCKY FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH

What my life is now and will be forever really began on Friday, November 13, 1970, the day I met John Dean.

I was living in Los Angeles, I had a job as an insurance broker and I was working hard. I had just turned 25, and I felt that I already had been through a great deal.

I had a date that Friday night with actor Hugh O'Brian. I liked Hugh. We had dated often before. He is a likable, gentle, decent person, but I never could develop any romantic interest in him. He seemed uncomfortable with women, but he believed his image required that he have an attractive woman on his arm when he appeared in public. So I felt more like a prop than a person.

When I arrived home at about five o'clock my apartment seemed ever so much more appealing than an invitation to dinner, and I just couldn't face having to get dressed to go out. So I called Hugh and told him the truth, that I was simply too exhausted to venture out. He was very sweet and completely understanding.

After pouring myself a drink, I sank down on the sofa. The telephone rang. The voice on the other end was deep and unfamiliar—a man who said he was John Dean. He had been given my name by Bill McClaine, a California aide to Congressman Barry Goldwater, Jr., whom I'd gone out with for a while.

He asked me—ever so politely—to join him for dinner that night. I didn't want to have dinner with anyone. I had just

broken a date. Why on earth would I go out with a perfect stranger?

I said yes, and I'll never know why. I regretted it the minute I'd hung up. But my apprehensions dissolved as soon as I saw him. He was of medium height, handsome, slender, tan, wearing a Brooks Brothers glen plaid suit, a blue shirt with a button-down collar and wing-tip shoes. I made him a drink and asked him what he did.

"I work at the White House," he told me. "I'm the Counsel to the President." He said it modestly, but obviously with great pride.

John then asked me about my business; he listened to me and appeared to be interested in what I told him.

After a half hour we drove in my Thunderbird to meet another couple—friends of John's—for dinner in an Italian restaurant. At dinner John and I talked and talked. I was aware of no one but John that evening—including



Mo and Michael Biner in a restaurant in Tijuana, Mexico, on the day they were married. September 3, 1967.

Hugh O'Brian, who, I learned the next day, was dining at the same restaurant. Soon we were holding hands under the table. Then there were discreet kisses.

I was falling in love with a man I didn't even know.

The beautiful night ended at a late hour. When we stood at the door of my apartment, I couldn't let him go. Would he care for coffee? He declined. A drink? No. But he made no motion to leave either. Suddenly and helplessly, we were embracing.

It was too late for John to call a taxi, and we had already planned to spend the next day together. So I reluctantly told him he could sleep in the extra bedroom but that the limits of my generosity extended no further.

I fell asleep, wondering, worrying. Nothing I had done all evening made any sense. And yet—in a way I could not then define—everything made perfect sense.

The next day when we were together it was becoming clearer to me that my feelings for John were different from any I had experienced before. Still, I had two strikes against me, and I didn't