

want a third. John had told me that his marriage to Karla Hennings, the daughter of former United States Senator Thomas Hennings, of Missouri, had failed. He also told me that they had a three-year-old son, Johnny. I knew John wanted to be very cautious too.

Our second evening together was as wonderful as the first. John was going back to Washington the next day, and that night our good-bys were loving and warm and full of assurances that we'd see each other again in just a few weeks.

Right after John left Los Angeles, I began to think about him a lot. When he took me into his arms I felt so secure—the way I felt when my father held me. Maybe I should not be the way I am, but there's no helping it—I *need* someone. A father. A husband. Someone to depend on. I have no wish to be independent. To me, being independent is being lonely.

Two days later John called me and asked me to spend Thanksgiving with him. Perhaps I should have said something demure, but I did not feel demure. I simply said: "Yes!"

John made reservations for us to fly from Washington to the Virgin Islands, and we spent several absolutely heavenly days there.



*Mo sitting in her office at the Wilkinson Insurance Agency, in Sherman Oaks, California. 1970.*

Days that I cherish as I do those days in late November of 1970 just can't have anything really wrong about them. Yes, we made love, and it was beautiful. There was nothing cheap about it. We knew we cared for each other in a very special way.

All the way back to Washington we talked of nothing except when we could be together again. We decided that John would come to Los Angeles for the Christmas holidays.

Not at that time nor at any other time did I think that it would be thrilling to

be with a man who was close to the President of the United States. All I wanted was to be with John Dean, whether he was Counsel to the President or a lifeguard on the beach at Santa Monica.

I decided that when John returned to Washington after his Christmas visit, I would go back with him. Heidi was living in Washington, so I could move in with her and find a job.

On January 4, 1971, my new life began. John and I flew to Washington and I "moved in" with Heidi. My mail went to Heidi's apartment and most of my clothes were deposited there. But I spent most of my time at John's two-bedroom town house on Prince Street in Alexandria, Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington.

Then—as now—what John and I enjoy most is being together, just the two of us, and so we did very little socializing. Most nights we would have cocktails and dinner, and then we'd talk or listen to music. We called these our "two-person parties," and it went on like this for months.

I always assumed John was going to marry me; it was just understood. At least I understood it.

I spent the first five or six weeks decorating John's town house and then decided it was time to find a job. A government job. I had absolutely no qualifications for a job in Washington—though I think I acquired some rather quickly. But the point is that often, in Washington, it isn't what you know but *whom* you know that determines to what level you rise, and how swiftly.

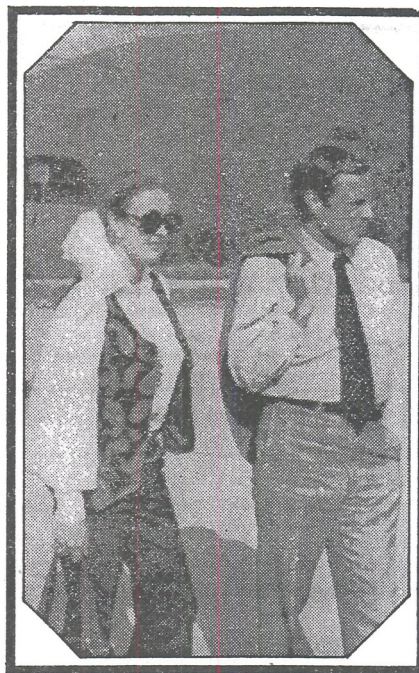
I called Mike Sonnenreich, a friend of John's, who was then deputy chief counsel for the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. The chances of Mike's helping me were not at all impaired by the fact that I was highly recommended by the Counsel to the President of the United States; and John also had named Mike to his job. Without those "qualifications" my chances would have been zip; with them, it was unbelievably easy.

I was hired to organize the new National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse. My title was Executive Assistant to the Executive Director. I was paid \$10,000 a year.

It was up to me to have everything in perfect order for meetings, luncheons and dinners involving the director and the commissioners. And when they traveled, I would "advance" the trips, much in the manner that a political-campaign advance team does. I would travel to the designated city ahead of the commissioners, select the hotels for them to stay in, the hotel dining rooms for the luncheons and banquets, decide on the menus, organize schedules, make all the arrangements.

In the next 14 months I made several trips throughout the United States. I also traveled to London, Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid and Geneva.

Sometimes when I was sent on trips, I suspected that John was not all that lonely. Occasionally I would return to Washington to find my possessions neatly hidden away.



*John Dean and Mo in Malibu, California, in November, 1970, shortly after they met.*

Once when I returned from a trip to London, my plane landed in New York, and I immediately called John in Washington to tell him I was back. He said it would be better if I didn't come to his place, and told me, as gently as he could, that he was going to try to make a go of it with Karla. In a daze, I flew back to Washington and arranged to stay with a close friend.

I telephoned our friend Maria Fielding, who spoke to John and insisted that he see me—it was the very least he could do, she said.

He telephoned and then came over. For a long time we just stood and looked at each other. Then we stopped staring and began hugging and kissing. Of course John loved me. I knew. And I also knew that he was not thinking at all about returning to Karla. It was something else. And I knew what that something else was. John was only recently separated from Karla, and he simply did not want to give up the freedom he was now enjoying. That was fine with me. I had time for the "waiting game." So we went back to living together, but I made it very clear to him that this was not the life I wanted.

After months of anguished discussion, I realized that John was not ready to marry me, and I quit my job and returned to Los Angeles. I told him that if he ever decided to come looking for me, it should be with marriage license in hand.

It was the summer of 1972, and to my great surprise, I was able to enjoy myself in Los Angeles, away from John. Clearly it wasn't such a carefree time for him. First he sent a number of love notes—brief ones. Then came one that said, "I love ya—more than anything in the world—my wonderful Mo!" A day or two later he telephoned.

"I can't be without you any longer," he said. "Will you please hurry back? Will you marry me?"

I told him I'd have to think about it. I couldn't believe my own words! The next day I called him back. Very early. As soon as he came on the line—with no preliminaries I said, "Yes, yes, yes!"

We made plans to be married in two weeks.

#### A WATERGATE WEDDING

October 5, 1972

VERY SENSITIVE/  
PERSONAL ATTENTION

MEMORANDUM FOR: H. R. HALDEMAN

THROUGH: THE SOCIETY OF SINGLE WHITE  
HOUSE SECRETARIES

FROM: JOHN DEAN

SUBJECT: *Missing in Action*

*There comes a time in a bachelor's life when he inevitably gives serious thought to the institution of marriage. . . . Well, after having reviewed and re-reviewed innumerable mental option papers with all the care and caution that my legal training and Libra instincts could muster, I have concluded that this bachelor is ready, able and extremely anxious to marry. . . .*

*. . . I plan to marry Maureen on October 13th . . . and would like to take a few days out of the city by way of a quick honeymoon. . . . Thus when Higby [Haldeman's assistant] makes his daily morning call to determine if I have survived the preceding night and discovers my absence—I want you to know that I am "missing in action" and not a POW (i.e., prisoner of (a) woman.)*

*I hope the foregoing meets with your approval.*

Bob Haldeman sent this memo back to John with one word written across it in very large letters: "Reconsider."

At the time, the White House was about as happy a place as it ever had been during the Nixon years. President Nixon was assured of re-election by an overwhelming margin, and everyone was making plans for a historic second term.

I knew about the Watergate break-in. I knew that the *Washington Post* and some other publications were suggesting that there was involvement of high-ranking people. I knew that the President had said that an investigation by John Dean had showed that no one on the White House staff, "presently employed," had had any involvement in Watergate.

I also knew that John Dean was very surprised when the President told a press conference about the Dean investigation—because there had been no Dean investigation. But I assumed there were national-security reasons that would explain everything. And I must confess, our wedding plans occupied virtually all my thoughts.

The date we chose was October 13, 1972. The wedding took place in the new town house John had bought in Alexandria, and we were married by a justice

of the peace. We invited 70 guests. I bought all the food for the reception and cooked it myself. We had roast beef, turkey, corned beef, breads, salads and hors d'oeuvres, which I also made. We hired only a bartender.

Throughout the day Bob Haldeman, John Ehrlichman and Ron Ziegler kept telephoning John, telling him there was a new "crisis" and that he must hurry to the White House at once. They were kidding—this time.

Before the wedding John did something needless, foolish and later, when he disclosed it, terribly embarrassing: He got \$4,850 in cash from a White House fund for him to take on our honeymoon.

It was needless because he had enough money to pay for the wedding and the honeymoon, and foolish because taking cash out of a fund and leaving your check in its place doesn't make any sense. Of course he was going to pay it back—otherwise, why leave his check? I don't know why John borrowed the money, except that he had had no time to transfer his own money from the brokerage account he held in New York. The point is, he did take it.

On our first day as Mr. and Mrs. John Wesley Dean III, however, we weren't thinking of anything but our own happi-

ness. We received hundreds of telegrams and messages wishing us well. But here is the message we prized above all:

"Mrs. Nixon and I send you our heartfelt good wishes on your wedding. We hope that the joy you now share may grow with every passing year and that your life together may be as happy and rewarding as our own. Richard Nixon."

There was one other message, addressed only to me, and left on my mirror in the motel room the morning after our wedding night:

*Good morning Love*

I hope you had a good sleep—I know how tired you were—  
Smile—an owl loves ya—loves ya—yes loves ya—P.S. I love you.

The "signature" was a sketch of a man wearing owlsh glasses. I had no difficulty recognizing him.

That day we flew south to Key Biscayne, Florida. No sooner had we arrived at our villa than three men from the White House Communications Agency came to install a special White House telephone. That extra phone bothered me. But the villa was lovely, and John and I felt perfectly content, so we put on swimsuits and sat in the sun. Soon both telephones started to ring. John got up and dashed in to answer them. At times he had a receiver pressed



John, as counsel to former President Nixon, in his White House office in May of 1972.



October 13, 1972. John and Mo toast each other with champagne on their wedding day.

against each ear. It was really quite comical.

The next day, Sunday, was even worse. Soon it made no sense for John even to go outside. The minute he hung up, the telephone would begin to ring again. In the late afternoon John told me we had to leave Key Biscayne—he was needed back in Washington. And that was that for our honeymoon.

"We'll come back," he promised, "just as soon as I take care of a hot problem." He explained that the *Washington Post* had uncovered a Nixon campaign operation directed by a man named Donald Segretti—a young lawyer I had never heard of. The Segretti operation involved "dirty tricks," the *Post* was saying. Of course, the *Post* had never been enthusiastic about Richard Nixon; John and the other people in the White House felt that the stories were being wildly overplayed just because these were the final weeks before election.

But according to the *Post* stories the Segretti "dirty tricks" were more serious than the usual campaign pranks of disrupting an opponent's schedule or sending hecklers to his rallies. Segretti was said to have arranged for the distribution of pamphlets on Senator Edmund Muskie's letterhead during the

Florida Democratic primary in March, charging Senators Hubert Humphrey and Henry Jackson with engaging in various sexual escapades. And there was another especially cruel pamphlet saying that Representative Shirley Chisholm, who also was running for President in the primary, had been under treatment for mental illness. The object was to get the Democratic contenders so outraged with one another that they would never be able to unite behind one candidate.

A few days after John and I returned from Florida, the Segretti matter began to subside. The press had not learned what the White House feared it would learn—that Dwight Chapin, President Nixon's appointments secretary, had hired Segretti, and that the President's personal attorney, Herbert Kalmbach, had paid him.

By October 19th the situation seemed to be under control and everyone could relax again, at least for a while. So John and I returned to the villa at Key Biscayne to resume our honeymoon. This time we got four glorious days and part of a fifth before Bob Haldeman called to say that things were getting "a little sticky" again in Washington. I simply shrugged and started packing. Obvious-

ly our lives were going to be this way as long as John was in the White House.

#### WHITE HOUSE PARTIES: WORK, NOT PLAY

My first visit to the White House had been in late 1971, the year before John and I were married. The event was a concert by opera singer Beverly Sills.

Before the concert we were escorted upstairs, and John and I milled around with lots of people we didn't know. Everyone seemed on edge; they all were looking around to see who else was there, worried that they would be overlooked by someone important. It was work, not play; that's the way so many Washington parties are.

Soon we were ushered upstairs to the East Room by male and female military aides, who showed us to our seats. After everyone was seated, the President and the First Lady walked in. We all stood up and applauded.

Beverly Sills was splendid. In the middle of an aria she split her dress in the back. No one would have been aware had she not told us and turned around to show us. It was the evening's only bit of spice.

When the concert was over, President Nixon made a few comments about the split dress, none of them particularly memorable, and then brusquely urged the audience to hurry into the dining room for a reception. He seemed to regard the reception as another duty. Let's get it over with—that was the mood.

Quickly a short reception line formed, including President and Mrs. Nixon, Beverly Sills and the singer's mother. We were whisked through the line, and I had the uncomfortable feeling that neither the President nor Mrs. Nixon really saw me—or anyone. Both were saying over and over, "Hello, and how are you, nice to see you" in a most robot-like manner.

The "reception" lasted 15 or 20 minutes at most, and then the Nixons disappeared. We found ourselves in a room where hors d'oeuvres and drinks were being served. It was so boring that even my feeling of excitement could not sustain me. The Nixons were lucky, I thought. When they became bored at their own parties, all they had to do was go upstairs.

After our experience at the Beverly Sills concert, John and I decided in favor of "two-person parties" at home rather than any of the other White House functions to which we were invited—until one Sunday early in 1973, shortly after President Nixon's second inauguration.

The event was a Sunday-morning worship service in the East Room. John and I were probably included because our honeymoon had been twice interrupted and we had made no waves about it. Another reason was that John had been so helpful on the Segretti matter.

A staff member who loyally accompanied the President to Chicago or Memphis rather than spend his wedding anniversary with his wife would be entitled to a perquisite (or "perk," as such a reward was called). So would

one who missed his child's birthday celebration or his daughter's wedding in order to work out a sticky political situation for the President.

In return for such loyalty and devotion a staff man might find himself given a more important assignment (which would require him to spend even less time with his family). Or he would be invited to fly on Air Force One, the Presidential plane, or he would be admitted to the select group entitled to use White House cars. These were the ways the President and the men around him acknowledged devotion, and Watergate is more easily understood when this fact is taken into account.

The men on the second, third and fourth echelons were ambitious and hotly competitive, and the competition was stimulated by the men at the top. Whenever one of them did something that pleased the President, Haldeman or Ehrlichman, even if it was unethical or illegal, a "perk" followed. And everyone else knew when someone was being rewarded.

On the other hand, when a person refused or even hesitated to do something, for whatever reason—his own ethical standards, his conscience or his better judgment—he would increasingly be shunned and sidelined. The word quickly filtered down if a staff member would not play "hard ball." Association with him might taint others, so he would find himself eating alone in the White House mess. He might be moved to a smaller office, and his staff would be trimmed.

Of course, our "perk," the invitation to the Sunday Worship Service, required a new dress for me. When we arrived at the White House that morning, Chuck Colson's wife Patty complimented me on my outfit and then told me what every woman dreads: Another woman at the reception was wearing the identical dress.

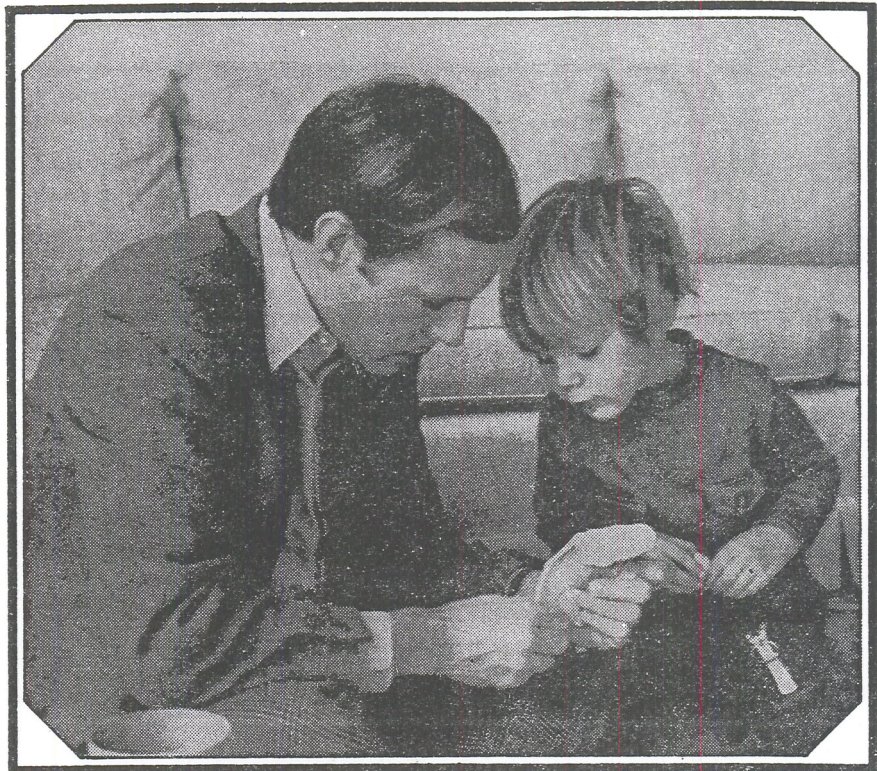
My first reaction was that I wanted to go home. John wouldn't hear of it.

"It's the silliest thing I ever heard of," he said. "You'll be sorry for the rest of your life if you rush off in a huff over something that doesn't matter at all."

Doesn't matter at all? Men!



*John and his mother-in-law find time for a quiet talk at her California home.*



*John and his three-year-old son, Johnny, by his first marriage.*

### THE STORM CLOUDS GATHER

Late in October, 1972, John sat me down for a serious discussion.

"Look, Mo, things are heating up," he told me. "It's close to the election now, and we can't let any of this Watergate business unravel at this late stage. So I may not be very good company for a couple of weeks."

Whenever John has to be away from me for any length of time, he first tries to arrange something to keep me busy. This time he had spoken to Jeb Magruder, deputy chairman of the re-election campaign, who was arranging the victory celebration to be held in the Regency Ballroom of the Shoreham Hotel. They needed volunteer help. Would I be interested?

Of course! With great enthusiasm I settled down to work while John spent his time trying to keep Watergate under control until after the election.

Before I knew it, November 7th, Election Day, had arrived. It was a happy day for John and me. And looking back, it almost seems as if it was the last happy day for most people I knew.

One of the main concerns of the people who attended the election celebration that night was the kind of button they would wear. This was crucially important. The button told security men which party at the hotel you were allowed to attend. At one party you might see a few low-ranking White House aides and perhaps a congressman; at another there would be some senators, maybe a governor. The best party of all would be visited by the President and would likely include his most powerful political allies and closest friends, like Bebe Rebozo.

"Don't fight for the best button," John had advised me. "We'll get in anyway."

We wound up in the VIP room. About eleven o'clock President Nixon and the First Lady arrived at the Shoreham, creating a mob scene. Every inch of the ballroom was taken up by cameras, lights and people. Richard Nixon looked happier than I remembered having ever seen him look before.

And small wonder. Here was a man who had tasted such bitter political defeats in the past on the night of one of the greatest electoral triumphs in history. None of us could know how soon this latest and most glittering moment for Richard Nixon would turn to ashes. And certainly I could never have guessed who would light the flames.

The day after the election John had another "Segretti matter" to attend to. Segretti had made his way to Palm Springs, California, and John had orders to get there by the fastest means possible and talk with him. I got to go too, and was looking forward to having a few days to ourselves after the business was taken care of.

We flew from Washington to Santa Monica, and a helicopter, provided by the U.S. Customs Service at John's request, took us to Palm Springs. From there we rented a car and drove to a lovely cottage at the El Dorado Country Club, where Segretti was to meet us.

I sat in the sun while John talked with him. After a couple of hours I returned to the cottage and took a pitcher of lemonade into the living room, where John and Segretti were taping their discussion.

This was my first meeting with Segretti, and I was unprepared for his appear-

ance. He looked so very young, as if he had just got out of high school. His face was covered with freckles, he had a warm smile and he was extremely courteous. If a director were casting a movie about Watergate, the last person he would choose for the role of Donald Segretti would be Donald Segretti.

For the past several weeks Segretti actually had been living out in the Mojave Desert—Palm Springs is a sort of oasis in the desert—in an effort to elude the press. He had been sleeping in a sleeping bag, eating canned food, slipping into town now and again for fresh supplies and then resuming his lonely fugitive's life. I felt very sorry for him.

After Segretti left, John made a few telephone calls. When he got off the phone he had the usual bad news. We had to cut short our trip. The next day we went to Miami. The President, Haldeman, Ehrlichman and others were nearby at Key Biscayne, John said, and they would want to listen to the Segretti tape. Later I learned that John played the Segretti tape for Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, who were so fascinated that when the President summoned Haldeman—which he did several times—Haldeman told him he would just have to wait "until we get through with John."

The night before we were to return to Washington, John told me some exciting news. We had been invited to fly back on Air Force One with the President and Mrs. Nixon!

The next morning a car and driver picked us up and off we went to Homestead Air Force Base, where the Presidential plane waited.

Attendants met the car and whisked our luggage away, and we were escorted directly into the VIP lounge, where wives of men stationed at the base had prepared hor d'oeuvres. Soon a polite young attendant came up to us and said we could board the aircraft.

Inside the aft door was an ordinary-looking galley, larger than those on commercial aircraft but not much different. Alongside and in front of the galley was the press section. The seats designated for the pool reporters were definitely not luxurious, and the reporters rarely saw the President. I was told that on one flight Theodore H. White, the author of the series "The Making of the President," was allowed to step into the forward section to pick up some "atmosphere." He was in and out within 60 seconds.

All the seats in the forward section were wide, with plenty of leg room. On the armrests separating the seats were dishes of candy, chewing gum and specially packaged cigarettes labeled "The Spirit of '76."

The captain came back to exchange greetings; he also assigned a steward to show us through the aircraft. To me the plane was just incredible. We walked through a door to the staff working area, where there were an electric typewriter, a copying machine and a long worktable with chairs on both sides. Through a passageway we saw the President's sitting room on the

right and the First Lady's sitting room to the left. Both looked comfortable. There was a bathroom with a large make-up mirror.

Just ahead was the family room. Beyond was the Presidential galley, well-stocked with food and liquor. Past that was an unbelievable communications center, with more buttons and knobs than I've ever seen in my life.

When we returned to the passenger section, a few others had boarded the aircraft. I saw Rose Mary Woods, the President's personal secretary.

Quite suddenly, it seemed, we were air-borne. John explained that the President boards last, and the minute he arrives, the plane takes off. Then the door that led to the First Family's quarters opened and Richard Nixon stood there.

President Nixon was wearing his "uniform": blue suit, white shirt, blue tie, black shoes, the American-flag lapel pin. I saw that his complexion was pale, almost pasty-looking, which seemed so unusual after several days in the Florida sun. I wondered if he had powder on.

I liked and admired President Nixon. If I had had any personal reservations about him, they would have been quickly dispelled for one reason: My husband was absolutely devoted to him. I know John Dean will go down in history as the man who brought about Richard Nixon's downfall. Even so, John thought then and thinks now that there was much that was great about him. He believed in him, and in his policies.

The President greeted others in the plane and after a minute or two approached John and me. I fell to pieces. What should I do—stand up? Remain seated? Genuflect? Curtsy? Oh, why hadn't I worked all this out before?

Then the President put his hand out to me. Thank goodness I had the presence of mind to shake it and not kiss it. With my latent Catholicism stirring, the thought of kissing his hand did cross my mind. I would have died of embarrassment if I had.

The President addressed me: "Are you sure you're glad you married this guy? We're going to keep him very busy."

"I hope not *too* busy," I managed to say.

"Very busy," the President replied.

I was struck by the fact that his voice in casual conversation was identical with his speech-making voice. It was almost as if he were reading from an invisible text, even when saying, "Hello, how are you?"

As he prepared to leave, President Nixon gave John a rather strong slap on the cheek. It was an entirely friendly gesture, even though he probably used a little more muscle than was needed.

I remembered this incident a year or so later when President Nixon was greeted at an airport by a large number of spectators, including an Air Force sergeant holding a small child. After greeting the sergeant and the child, the President slapped the man on the cheek, arousing questions in the press about his mental and emotional stability. I

am sure the two incidents were identical in intent and spirit.

Bob Haldeman was on the flight too, and he could not have been nicer to us. I was aware of Haldeman's fearsome reputation, but he seemed to me very personable and thoughtful.

Ron Ziegler also came back to say hello, making clear over and over that it was he who had convinced the President to pay that informal visit to the passenger section of the plane. Ron Ziegler could be amusing; he had an endless store of funny comments. But he also was insufferably egotistical and arrogant.

Then Julie Nixon Eisenhower came back to visit with us. She wore a navy-blue dress and a sweater, and she was much taller and prettier than I had expected. Even in our brief chat I could tell that she had the same all-else-is-excluded approach to politics that her father did. She talked as if she were on a campaign. She also managed to let us know that it was almost a part of her "job" to talk to us and not something she really wanted to do.

The First Lady, however, provided me with my most interesting impression of the First Family. When she stepped through the door, wearing a silky, high-necked, mint-green dress, she looked tall, slender and pretty. She struck me as being sincerely friendly, warm, genuinely fond of people and very vulnerable.

There were three White House dogs in our section of the plane—King Timahoe and two smaller ones. For most of the trip they just slept, stirring themselves only when someone fed them. But when Pat Nixon arrived, all three were up and in the aisle. Suddenly the dignified First Lady was on her knees, patting and playing with the dogs, laughing and having a marvelous time. After several minutes she stood up, straightened her dress, brushed back her hair and said a cheery hello to Rose Mary Woods. Then she turned to John and me, smiled sweetly and greeted us.

I thought she was just *great*.

When we arrived at Andrews Air Force Base, in Maryland, there were dozens of big black limousines lined up to meet us. In the car on the way home John was moody and aloof. We held hands and said nothing.

It occurred to me that we had not discussed why he had been called back to Washington. But now I knew without asking. One matter was looming larger and larger in John's official life, absorbing more and more of his time and attention, plunging him into frequent periods of worrying and brooding. I did not ask for details, but I knew why we had had to return.

The reason was Watergate.

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EDITORS' NOTE: This is the first of two excerpts from "Mo': A Woman's View of Watergate." The second installment will appear in the November issue of Redbook.

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