

## Women's side of Watergate

By E.J. STEARNS

(NEA) — After the dozens and dozens of books on Watergate, mostly by and about men, now the women are having their say.

And what they have to say ranges from the shallow to the subtle, and from gossip to some thoughtful prose about government in crisis.

Two of the books should satisfy any lingering curiosity about the wives of the men we saw so long on television. For example, if you've been wondering what lies behind the beautiful, almost mask-like face that Mrs. John Dean displayed during her husband's testimony before the Senate Watergate hearings, a book called "Mo" will give you the answer: Not much.

Written with reporter Hays Gorey, it's an incredibly vapid tale about a self-styled shy, naive little girl from a modest California home.

Legalities didn't interest her during the Watergate period, and the ethics of hopping from coast to coast at the taxpayers' expense didn't strike her as questionable at the time. Morality in retrospect always tends to sound a bit hollow, and "Mo" is full of the empty ring of phrases such as "It never occurred to me" and "little did I realize."

About John Dean's reaction to the Watergate cover-up, we learn very little, unless you consider the recurrent description of his mood as "uptight," "anguished," "worried" and "tense" as particularly revealing.

We do get some good inside views (of Air Force One, a presidential party, the inaugural events) and a sharp sense of the hotly competitive White House atmosphere that turned Nixon's aides into a band of hungry cubs vying for "perks" or special favors.

But mostly Mo gives us a record of how many vacations they had interrupted in 1972 and 1973, how many phone calls John received (lots), how she picked her wardrobe for the Watergate hearings (carefully), and how much she and John enjoyed "two-person parties."

We could have used "The Women of Watergate" by Madeleine Edmondson and Alden Duer Cohen over a year ago. Nineteen portraits of the wives of the Watergate defendants and women involved in one way or another with the prosecution are included.

When the authors get cooperation from their subject, they get a good story. If Jeanne Ehrlichman and Joanne Haldeman are still shadows, Patricia Marx Ellsberg is a fully fleshed portrait that may surprise you.

The only one of the group who turned from establishment Republican to anti-Vietnam War demonstrator, Pat Ellsberg always had her moral beliefs in

## revealed in new books

mind, and held off Daniel until he measured up.

In all the portraits, we learn as much about the man involved as the woman. John Dean's brush with ethics in a law firm before he joined the government is covered, and so is his first marriage. Similarly, we learn a good deal about Daniel Ellsberg from his CIA psychiatric profile, which the authors summarize.

Edmondson and Cohen write briskly, put their portraits together well, and don't hesitate to repeat unflattering comments they think are relevant. They are leery of official versions. We are told the Nixons were deliberately posed together for the familiar arm-in-arm portraits. "Once out of public view, however . . . they separated . . . neither touching nor speaking, wrapped in their own concerns, each walked on alone."

"Watergate Diary" by Elizabeth Drew is a beautifully orchestrated account of

the final days of the Nixon administration, from the House Judiciary hearings in the fall of 1973 to Mr. Nixon's final take-off for San Clemente in the summer of 1974.

Originally commissioned by New Yorker magazine editor William Shawn, "Diary" allows us to walk side by side with one of Washington's top journalists as she visits courtrooms and hearings, talks with senators and congressmen, and ponders the developing events.

What takes "Watergate Diary" out of the ordinary is not only the quality of the prose but the juxtaposition of events. We read about the world the way it seemed to Mrs. Drew each day, the ups and downs of the stock market, the Washington weather, and how the reporters are reacting to events on the Hill.

Generous quotes from the Federalist papers not only provide helpful background on what the framers of our

Constitution had in mind on impeachment but lend added historical dimension.

"Watergate Diary" is a book worth savoring for its sharp personal perspective, for its lucid overview of events, and for its musing, melancholy tone that suggests it's well we continue to ponder how all this could have happened to us.

**"MO": A WOMAN'S VIEW OF WATERGATE.** BY Maureen Dean with Hays Gorey (Simon & Schuster, 286 pages, \$8.95.)

**THE WOMEN OF WATERGATE,** by Madeleine Edmondson and Alden Duer Cohen (Stein & Day, 228 pages, \$8.95.)

**WASHINGTON JOURNAL: THE EVENTS OF 1973-1974,** BY Elizabeth Drew (Random House, 428 pages, \$12.95.)