

NYT 3/23/73

Nixon's Legal Expert

John Wesley Dean 3d



White House Photograph

"Ambitious" and "hard working"

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 18

—A friend of John Wesley Dean 3d was recently asked to explain the rapid rise of the man who was named chief legal counsel to President Nixon at the age of 31.

"John has always understood one thing very well," the friend said. "Please the boss."

Man in the News Mr. Dean pleased Mr. Nixon last week when he wrote to the Senate Judiciary Committee that "I must respectfully decline the invitation of the committee to formally appear and testify" in connection with the nomination of L. Patrick Gray 3d as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Testimony by Mr. Gray had led Senator John V. Tunney of California and other committee Democrats to talk of Mr. Dean's "omnipresence" in the Watergate case.

"I think we need to get Mr. Dean down here," Mr. Tunney said.

Mr. Nixon countered: "I am not going to have the counsel to the President of the United States testify in a formal session before the Congress."

Thus, between last Tuesday, when the committee voted to invite him as a witness, and Thursday, when the President backed his refusal to appear, Mr. Dean, now 34, had become the focus of what may prove to be a historic battle between the White House and Congress over executive privilege.

A Resident Expert

Mr. Dean is reputed to be the White House's resident expert on that unwritten doctrine, under which Presidents have declined to provide information or to make their aides and advisers available to Congressional committees.

Last year, Mr. Dean helped chart the Administration's strategy when members of the Judiciary Committee asked Peter M. Flanigan to testify in the confirmation hearings on Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst.

His expertise on Presidential impoundment of funds and the pocket veto power, two other currently hot topics, have combined to lift his star even higher.

In the little more than

seven years since he graduated from the Georgetown University Law School, Mr. Dean has left a variety of impressions on those he has worked with on the way up. But on one point they are agreed: He is "terribly ambitious" and "a very hard worker."

One who knew him in 1967 as the chief minority counsel to the House Judiciary Committee remembers him as "a very easy person to get along with and spend time with," and as a man of "genuine warmth that's not superficial."

"Some people you're with for three hours and you say, 'That's enough for a month,'" the friend said, "but not John."

But another who was associated with him at that

time recalls Mr. Dean as a "rather humorless" man who "laughs not because it's funny, but because he's a politician."

'Was Never Liked'

He continued:

"John doesn't have a circle of friends. He never has, and he was never liked. He doesn't have the bonhomie or camaraderie. Everything he does is done for a point or a purpose with his peers, and it shows. He tends to use them for an advantage."

After leaving the House Judiciary Committee staff, Mr. Dean spent two years as associate director of the National Commission on Reform of Criminal Law. Then shortly after President Nixon's

first inauguration in January, 1969, he was named an Associate Deputy Attorney General and served for a time as the Justice Department's liaison with Congress.

Frequent dealings with the White House soon brought him to the personal attention of Mr. Nixon, who appointed him the next year as counsel to the President.

Mr. Dean stayed mainly behind the scenes, coming to public attention only last summer when the President named him to head a special investigation to determine whether any White House personnel had been involved in the Watergate bugging of the Democrats.

Mr. Gray has testified that he gave Mr. Dean access to confidential F.B.I. files on the Watergate. Senator Tunney and others have asserted that indications that Mr. Dean may have turned some of the information over to the Republican party during the campaign and his reported personal relationships with two of the men indicted for the Watergate bugging require his testimony before the Judiciary Committee "under oath and in full."

John Dean was born Oct. 14, 1938, in Akron, Ohio. While a student at the Staunton Military Academy in Virginia, he roomed with Barry Goldwater Jr. He attended Colgate University from 1957 to 1959, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of Wooster, Ohio, in 1961.

Mr. Dean is of medium height, with brown hair and a handsome, almost cherubic, face. He played tennis in college and now swims and golfs when he has time. An acquaintance describes him as "a relatively natural athlete" who plays "all the right social athletics and does it all very well."

Mr. Dean lives in Alexandria, Va., with his second wife, the former Maureen Kane. One associate described the couple as "the picture-book beautiful people. It's all part of the manifestation, and he does it very well."

Mr. Dean married last fall, about three years after his divorce from his first wife, the daughter of former Senator Thomas C. Hennings Jr., Democrat of Missouri.

He drives to his White House office in a fast Porsche 911 sports car.

"I've never known him to be picked up for speeding," a friend says, "but he likes a fine car."