

Cheese, Wine and Lots of Pals

By Myra MacPherson

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A friend called to one of the "unsung victims" of the Watergate scandal, as attorney Robert McCandless moved around the room at the opening of his new 1725 I St. NW law office Wednesday.

McCandless—a Democrat and top Hubert Humphrey aide in 1968—represents Republican and former top Nixon aide John Dean, III in the Senate Watergate hearings.

McCandless and Dean, both now divorced from their first wives, became close friends as brothers-in-law when they were married to stepdaughters of the late Thomas C. Hennings, Democratic senator from Missouri.

When Dean became a crucial witness in the Watergate investigation, he wanted a lawyer, McCandless said, that Dean "could trust." McCandless agreed to represent Dean, also agreeing with his partners that if he did so, they would "have to dissolve the partnership."

"When you have corporate clients in this town, there is the question of the conflict of representing someone who at that time was a witness against the present government," McCandless said Wednesday night.

"We had clients who have been with us 20 years—just say corporate clients. I could not ask my partners to go along," McCandless explained, adding, "I don't want to say anything against my former partners." His

former partners, Clayton Burwell and Walter Hansen, were not at McCandless' party.

"Was defending Dean a sacrifice for me? You do what you think is right. John needed help in a hard situation and all I know is that had the situation been reversed he would have helped me." McCandless said he "very much" liked Dean—who also didn't make the party ("he had to fly to California").

There was a name on the door (McCandless') and what looked like a Bigelow on the floor, and wine and cheese on a Xerox machine, and a lot of pals from his Humphrey days. Edward Potts, assistant dean of George Washington University law school, joking about the lack of furniture in one

room, said "at least you've got your name on the door—but I always wanted to meet a lawyer who can operate without a phone."

In between such friendly insults, McCandless said there was "no question" that H. R. Haldeman was not telling the truth about what was on the White House tapes. Asked if Haldeman was lying in his testimony that disagreed with Dean's, McCandless said, "Oh, yes. No question. If they'll just play the tapes, we'll rest on that. Now that Haldeman's heard them, it's a harder case for the lawyers to argue that they are 'privileged' conversation. When a potential indictable's heard them, why can't the public and John Dean hear them?"

McCandless said the tapes

would be more revealing than Dean's testimony. "Dean's testimony did not recall all the damaging testimony that is on the tapes, only that part he could recall," McCandless said.

McCandless was a protege of the late Oklahoma Sen. Robert Kerr. Former Oklahoma Sen. Fred Harris was there, professing that he likes it out of the senatorial club and talking about his new book "New Populism."

Also there in spirit was a John Dean, in a photo on the wall with an inscription that a lot of people at the party took pleasure in repeating as prophetic at this point in time. It was dated 1970 and it was signed "counsel to the president" and it said, "Robert — In your heart you know we're right."



By Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

Robert McCandless and an inscribed 1970 photograph from John Dean III: "In your heart you know we're right."