

John Dean: The Man with the Scarlet W

At 33, he sat in the highest councils of Government; at 34, he rocked the Nixon Administration to its foundations; at 35, he faces probable imprisonment, has been disbarred, and hopes for a new career as a writer.

In the 13 months since former White House Counsel John Wesley Dean III testified before the Senate Watergate committee, there have been drastic changes in his life-style, philosophy and future ambitions. Last week at his new hillside home in Los Angeles in a remarkably candid interview—the first he has granted in more than a year—Dean discussed the turbulence of his past and the hoped-for serenity of his future with TIME Correspondent Hays Gorey.

Q. Was there ever a major conflict between the Administration and the courts while you were in the White House?

A. Yes—now that you mention it. The President was prepared to defy the Supreme Court if it ruled against the Amchitka [atomic] blast in 1971. He was going to say: "Pull the trigger" and then explain that he had taken the action because it was vital to the military position of the U.S. vis-à-vis Russia. It was a Saturday—the day of the blast—when the court ruled that the test could be conducted. Everyone was in readiness to act if the ruling had gone the other way.

Q. You've now been questioned by James St. Clair. What was it like?

A. He's a very able lawyer, a decisive man, experienced. But he seemed unaware of many details of Watergate. And he seems caught up in the White House philosophy that everything can be handled in a p.r. context. I've been surprised at the number of his public statements.

Q. Why didn't you "jump ship" sooner than you did?

A. Well—I guess I would have to say now I didn't have the guts. I went to the President on March 21 in part because I felt sure someone would break—McCord or Hunt or someone—at the sentencing of the Watergate burglars on March 23. I wanted the President to get out ahead. When they sent me to Camp David to write a "report," I made my final decision that I just couldn't live this way any longer. Anything would be better.

Q. So you went to the prosecutors and asked for immunity?

A. No. I had no intention of seeking immunity. I just knew I couldn't go on. My lawyer told me: "You don't have to run into machine guns to get this done." He also told me he was worried that I might find myself in the river with cement blocks tied to my feet.

Q. You didn't go to the prosecutors sooner because . . .

A. Because I feared the effect on the country and the world. And I wondered

if anyone would take my word—a young lawyer—against the President of the United States. I thought, in fact, I could do it in a way that would not involve the President. But I found within a month I could not.

Q. Did anyone ever say no at the White House?

A. They didn't work there very long if they did. Oh, [Clark] Mollenhoff said no, and Pete Peterson did. Neither one could get near the Oval Office. Len Garmet said no, in a mild way. Dick Kleindienst said no once. Arthur Burns. And John Connally had to leave because of his recommendations on how to handle Watergate. He just didn't have enough information.

Q. How do you feel about Nixon?



JOHN DEAN WITH WIFE MAUREEN & DOG GUCCI IN LOS ANGELES

"I don't like being a tattletale, but I have no choice."

A. Anything I would say could be so easily misconstrued that I'd better say nothing. But I personally feel no ill will toward any man. I don't feel I'm a partisan.

Q. What's it like to testify so much?

A. Unpleasant, for several reasons. I don't like being a tattletale or being thought of as a tattletale, but I have no choice when I'm explaining the truth of what happened. And both on and off the witness stand, there are constant efforts to belittle me. It's unpleasant being under attack. And then the facts are so complex. I feel I must read all the documents because I'm going to be asked about it. And it's also unpleasant because I'd like to forget about it and get on with other activities.

Q. You haven't worked for more than a year. How do you live?

A. Watergate was for me a painful and devastating financial setback. I've exhausted all my savings. I withdrew \$12,000 I had contributed to the Federal Government retirement program. I sold my \$3,000 half interest in a sailboat. My Porsche—which I dearly loved

—I sold for \$6,300. We're now driving a 1971 Datsun that belonged to Mo's [his wife Maureen's] mother. We sold our house in Alexandria for \$135,000 and moved into this less expensive, unfinished [\$110,000] home here in Los Angeles and did a lot of the work, including sandblasting and painting, ourselves. I'm in debt—for legal fees, among other things. My fees as a witness are \$20 a day, plus \$10 or \$12 more on days when I actually testify. It doesn't even cover expenses.

There have been several job offers from people who know I can't practice law. Some really wanted to help, some wanted me for publicity. But being a nearly full-time witness, there was no way I could promise to give any man two good days' work in a row.

I had a \$250,000 contract to write a book about Watergate. The Special

Prosecutor at first had no objection but then thought it might cause problems when I testified. So I called it off. Later, we were about at the point where neighbors were bringing over steaks when I wrote up a treatment for a movie about the nomination process. But Senator Lowell Weicker told me: "You're a political figure. They'll take potshots at you from all over." So I dropped that too. I started writing essays, which Bantam will publish as a book. They've given me an advance—not as much as I earned per year in the White House [\$37,000].

Q. And when will you do your Watergate book?

A. Not for about ten years. Let the dust settle.

Q. Are the marshals with you regularly?

A. Twenty-four hours a day. They're thoughtful men who try their best not to interfere with our privacy. But we have undergone a total loss of privacy. Once, for instance, Mo and I were visiting some friends who had a motorcycle. We got on together, rode up an iso-

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lated road and, sure enough, there was this little yellow Pinto following. They've been with us full time since January. After I pleaded (in late October) there were lots of threatening letters.

Q. How do you view the prospect of going to prison?

A. I'm not looking forward to it. I'll make the most of that time—thinking, reading and writing. What worries me most is Mo. It's a very unsettled life for her—even now she never knows when I'll be called back to testify. She wants to find a job so she'll have something to occupy her mind if and when I go away. We can use the money too.

Q. Tell me about your associates in Watergate.

A. I feel concern for every man involved in this whole tragic situation. And their families. I'm not bitter toward any. I've seen virtually no one since leaving the White House. Several weeks ago, I saw Bud Krogh at the Special Prosecutor's office. We are old and close friends. We said 10,000 things to each other in our looks. I always knew Bud would stand up and account for himself. Earlier, I saw Jeb Magruder at the same place. He was trying to seem chipper—but he wasn't. I also saw Donald Segretti who is now very bitter toward me. I'd like to talk it out. And then I saw David Young, beaming and happy, as if he had no concerns in the world. Legally, he doesn't. Chuck Colson I've seen on television and I happen to believe his religious conversion is sincere. The whole tone of his personality has changed considerably. John Mitchell I have seen only at the Vesco trial. Maury Stans nodded hello; Mitchell just looked down. I looked at Mitchell hundreds of times, but he never looked up.

Q. Do you think that your testimony has held up?

A. According to the Watergate committee's final report, it has. I'd rather leave that question to the committee and other forums where I have testified. And to history.

Q. Will the Watergate situation ever be resolved?

A. I think that resolution of the Watergate matter is going to determine the type of U.S. Government we'll have for decades to come. It's going to test every branch of Government, but even more important, the people of the United States. People want to be led. Yet the leaders are waiting to hear from the people. It's really a test of the governed that is under way now.

Q. Was there not a fatal flaw in the cover-up?

A. Yes, I like to think it was the fact that John Dean couldn't lie.

Q. Elaborate.

A. Don't misunderstand. I've done wrong. I've never sought to hide my wrongdoings, and I've had to pay dearly for this mistake I have made in my life. I fully understand that I'll have to wear the Scarlet Letter of Watergate for a lifetime.



CONGRESSWOMAN ELLA GRASSO

POLITICAL NOTES

Defeat in South Carolina

In his first—and perhaps last—brush with politics, former Army Chief of Staff and retired Viet Nam Commander General William C. Westmoreland, 60, last week discovered that a political campaign cannot be run like a military one. In the state's first Republican primary (the G.O.P. previously picked its candidates in convention), a mere 34,000 voters went to the polls.

Unable to attract the independent "antipolitician" voters he sought, "Westy" lost by more than 5,000 votes to Archconservative State Senator James B. Edwards, 47, a Charleston dentist with a hard-core right-wing following. Admitting that he had been "an inept candidate," undone by his blunt speech and stiff bearing, Westmoreland went back to editing his memoirs, due for publication by year's end. Edwards is given almost no chance of survival in the November election against the winner of a Democratic runoff next week. That race pits Congressman William Jennings Bryan Dorn, 58, against a promising newcomer in South Carolina politics, former Harvard Star Quarterback Charles ("Pug") Ravenel, 36, a Charleston investment banker.

Audits in New York

Abraham D. Beame was elected mayor of New York City last November largely on the strength of his reputation as a solid, superefficient city controller, a post he held off and on for eight years. Last week the city's new controller, Harrison J. Goldin, charged that under Beame's stewardship the controller's office had been inexcusably sloppy

in its record keeping and decidedly lax in accounting for city funds. Announcing the results of two separate audits that he had ordered after assuming office, Goldin first alleged that \$5.4 million in bonds supposedly locked up securely in the controller's vaults was missing and unaccounted for. Then he released figures compiled by a pool of New York banks showing that the city had at least \$45 million more in assets than Beame's records as controller had indicated.

More than somewhat embarrassed, Mayor Beame issued a statement admitting that he indeed knew of serious discrepancies in the city's books as early as 1972, and that he had unsuccessfully tried throughout 1973 to reconcile the figures. But he had no comment on further charges by the new controller. Goldin's auditors found inadequate security measures in effect, poor understanding by employees of the office's standard record-keeping procedures, and a generally "antiquated method for recording and reporting" the city's financial affairs. Beame may well have more explanations to make: Goldin's office will shortly release an audit of city employees' \$7 billion pension funds.

Toehold in Connecticut

In two centuries of American politics, there have been only three women Governors, and all three—Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming, Miriam ("Ma") Ferguson of Texas and Lurleen Wallace of Alabama—followed in their husbands' footsteps. Congresswoman Ella Grasso, 55, of Windsor Locks, Conn., is not accustomed to following in anyone's footsteps; her husband of 32 years is a retired school principal, and the toehold she won in the statehouse in Hartford was strictly her own achievement.

Last week the 1,207 delegates at the Democratic state convention in Hartford nominated Grasso as the party's candidate for governor. She has been the leading contender in a relatively issueless race since well before she announced her candidacy last January. Two weeks ago her major rival, State Attorney General Robert Killian, gave up what looked like an increasingly hopeless fight against her. He agreed to join the ticket as nominee for lieutenant governor.

The only child of an immigrant baker, Ella Tambussi Grasso is a *magna cum laude* graduate of Mount Holyoke who blends Italian warmth with Yankee efficiency. An early advocate of consumerism, she worked her way up the political ladder, starting as a state legislator in 1953; she was Connecticut's secretary of state for twelve years before being elected to Congress in 1970. Grasso will face either Congressman Robert Steele or Bridgeport Mayor Nicholas Panuzio in November. The latest poll taken by Republicans shows her to be so far ahead of either candidate that the party is keeping the results secret.