

In November, 1972—just five months after the Watergate break-in—Richard Nixon was elected President of the United States by the greatest landslide in American political history.

Shortly before Nixon's inauguration, in January, 1973, John said, "Mo . . . about the second administration. There are going to be some rough stretches, some pretty big bumps. You should know that." Oh, John, I thought, what a worrier! What a foolish worrier!

I was certain that once President Nixon was re-elected, Watergate would cease to be an issue. But it soon became clear that John's worries were well-founded. At the beginning of February, Watergate certainly had not vanished. At the beginning of February, in fact, the Senate voted unanimously to begin an investigation of the Watergate matter, to be conducted by Senator Sam Ervin, of North Carolina. John told me that he and others in the White House might be called upon to testify.

Obviously this possibility caused great concern in the White House. And so John Ehrlichman, the President's domestic adviser, asked John to come with Dick Moore, a friend and adviser of President Nixon's, to a meeting at San Clemente, the California White House. He and White House Chief of Staff Bob Haldeman and the President wanted to decide what the official position toward the committee would be. Should White House staff members be allowed to testify? Or should executive privilege be claimed? If staff members were permitted to testify, who should be exempted? Would John be exempted, for instance, because he was the President's counsel? And what about Ehrlichman and Haldeman, whose relationship to the President was so close?

John and I flew to California with Dick Moore. Rooms for all of us had been reserved at the luxurious La Costa Resort Hotel, near San Clemente. ("John Ehrlichman likes the facilities here," John told me.)

The Monday after the meetings were over, John and I flew to Key Biscayne, Florida, where we hoped to have a short vacation. John desperately needed to relax. He was burdened and troubled and fully aware that if he could not escape the pressure for a few days, at least, he might suffer a breakdown.

We stayed in one of the White House villas at Key Biscayne and had nearly two glorious days together. Then Wednesday evening John told me that Paul O'Brien, a lawyer for the Committee for the Re-election of the President, would be joining us for, as he put it, "some talks that just won't wait."

By now the men of Richard Nixon's Administration were so paranoid that they did not even trust one another. I learned later that after the San Clemente meetings, Ehrlichman told Dick Moore to go to New York to persuade former Attorney General, John Mitchell, who had been the head of the Re-election Committee, to raise more money for the seven Watergate defendants.

JOHN DEAN'S WIFE: "THE PRICE WE PAID FOR TELLING THE TRUTH"

by Maureen Dean, with Hays Gorey



FROM THE BOOK "MO": A WOMAN'S VIEW OF WATERGATE, TO BE PUBLISHED IN NOVEMBER BY SIMON & SCHUSTER, INC. COPYRIGHT © 1975, BY MAUREEN DEAN AND HAYS GOREY

PHOTOGRAPH BY J. FREDERICK SMITH

John Mitchell could not be certain that what he was hearing from Dick Moore was true. He wanted John Dean's version—independently—and had sent Paul O'Brien to get it. Mitchell had begun to sense that if there had to be a Watergate scapegoat, he was Haldeman's and Ehrlichman's nominee.

After Paul O'Brien left, the phone rang; when John put the receiver down, his eyes were blazing.

"That was Larry Higby [Haldeman's White House aide]," he snapped. "He thinks we'd better get the hell out of here. Ehrlichman is coming in tomorrow with his family. He wants to use both villas because he's got some of the kids along. He says Ehrlichman will raise hell if he finds us in this villa."

Oh, that John Ehrlichman! That arrogant, thoughtless creature! I never could stand him, and now this. He and his family could easily have stayed in one villa. John was only "madder than hell"; I was outraged. I was all for staying put.

It's funny to look back on the situation now. John and I were both denouncing and daring Ehrlichman, our words coming fast, voices agitated. Then our voices became slower and slower. Reality was setting in. There was the fact of rank, which was very real indeed. Even more important was the realization that if we stayed on, we'd have the Ehrlichmans right next door. I could see John Ehrlichman, who was then very fat and very imperious, lumbering around, saying something like: "This is all very well, Dean, but it's something I won't forget."

Finally John and I stopped talking and started packing.

The last ten days of February telescope in my mind. John was alternately excited and nervous and then quiet and reflective. He never wanted to go out. He usually stayed at the office until nine or ten at night; when he finally did come home, the telephone rang endlessly. He was drinking heavily. When I asked him if he thought it was wise to have four or five Scotches each night, he would say: "Mo—I have to. If I don't, I can't sleep." I was sure we were heading pell-mell toward a crisis.

Then one night, with a suddenness I didn't understand at all, John took hold of himself. He came home from the office at a reasonable hour; the telephone rang only once or twice; we had only a drink before dinner; and then we had a very quiet, peaceful meal. Afterward John told me that he would be meeting privately with the President the following morning. I think that at this point—February 27, 1973—John believed he would have an opportunity to convey the real dimensions of Watergate to the President. And I think he still had enough confidence in Richard Nixon's integrity to believe that the matter could be resolved at last. But John had overrated the President—and underrated the power of the law.

The next day, after the meeting, John again seemed nervous and troubled. He did not seem pleased with the meeting. The discussions had centered on the Er-

vin Committee, he said, and the President had decided that no one from the White House staff would testify.

In some ways this was one of the worst decisions the President ever made. As soon as it became public, many people who had had full confidence in President Nixon began to wonder what he was hiding. There was also an aspect of elitism. Any citizen called before a Congressional committee would have to appear. Why not the people who worked for the President? But at the time, we all blamed the bias of the press for the public reaction to President Nixon's decision. Years before, the President and everyone who worked for him had written off the press as the enemy. No wonder the President and his staff were among the last to realize how seriously the country was taking Watergate. I honestly do not think that reality struck the President fully until he was forced to resign.

Then another development. In March the Senate Judiciary Committee had been holding hearings on the nomination of L. Patrick Gray to be permanent director of the FBI. Gray had been acting director ever since J. Edgar Hoover had died, in May of 1972, and it was under Gray that the FBI investigation of Watergate had been conducted. At the confirmation hearings Gray was asked about nothing else.

On one day Senate Majority Whip Robert Byrd read to Pat Gray an account of an FBI interview with John Dean. According to the account, an agent had asked John shortly after the Watergate arrests if Howard Hunt had an office at the White House. John's reply supposedly was that he would have to check and find out.

Then Senator Byrd read from other reports stating that John had been present when Hunt's safe was opened right after the arrests. If that account was true, then obviously John knew that Hunt had an office.

"Mr. Dean lied to the agent, didn't he?" Byrd asked.

At last Gray said: "Yes."

It was the most dramatic moment of the hearing, and John was terribly upset at being branded a liar at a Senate hearing. He called Gray and explained that the FBI agent had asked only if he could inspect Hunt's office and that John replied that he would have to check and find out. John asked Gray to explain that the following day. Gray refused.

The sensational statement had made John a "hot" item in the press, a fact that soon assured us a permanent delegation of reporters and cameramen in front of our house 24 hours a day. Now, in addition to everything else, we had lost the little bit of private life we had managed to preserve.

On the evening of March 19th John and I were at home. I went to sleep very early. And that night John came to a realization that powerful men were appropriating the country for their own uses, that he was a part of the misappropriating. He decided that he was going to make his feelings known—first to the President.

The next day John left for the White House with a look of grim determination on his face. He told me that he would request another meeting with the President. "There are some things I just have to tell him," he said.

That evening when John came home, he told me that the President would meet with him the next morning at ten. "I told him I wanted to talk about the Watergate situation because I don't think he realizes how serious the damn thing is. Wish me luck."

I learned later that at the March 21st meeting John told President Nixon there was a cancer on the Presidency; it had to be removed or it would kill the President.

But later the same day, in another meeting, Richard Nixon told John and others to raise an additional million dollars to buy the continued silence of the convicted burglars. Obviously the cover-up was continuing in spite of John's warning. The cancer was not removed, then or later. And it did "kill" the President.

The next night John came home in a nervous, irritable mood. But since the Gray statement John was almost constantly nervous and irritable. The reporters on our front lawn didn't help. John had disconnected the doorbell and we had to keep our shades drawn all the time. I didn't mind at first, because I love intrigue. But John didn't find it one bit exciting.

That particular night we had dinner and went to bed early. The next morning, March 23rd, John slept late and decided not to go to the office. In the early afternoon the President called. After the conversation John explained that the President had said that both of us were to go to Camp David, the President's country retreat in Thurmont, Maryland, to relax.

A White House limousine picked us up. During that hour's ride John hardly spoke to me at all; he seemed even more worried and upset than usual.

At Camp David a young Navy ensign greeted us with information about where everything was—the swimming pools and bowling alleys; the bicycles and the golf carts; the Laurel Lodge, with its huge dining room; the movie theater, with a projectionist available 24 hours a day; the President's quarters. It was as if the grandest of grand hotels were being operated exclusively for us. When we were in one of the lodges, all we had to do to order a cocktail or lunch or dinner or anything at all was to pick up the telephone. A steward would materialize immediately and almost anything you ordered would be there in about 30 seconds.

The cabins at Camp David are not plush but they are comfortable. In the large main room of each one there are king- or queen-size or twin beds, a nightstand and lots and lots of telephones. There is a large bathroom and then a small, cozy room on the opposite side with sofas, a desk and bookcases. And there is a television set—color, of course.

Naturally, the telephone rang shortly after we (Continued on page 192)

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FOR TELLING THE TRUTH"**

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arrived. It was Bob Haldeman; he was always calling wherever we were. But that call was just the beginning. John was on the telephone constantly the entire time we were at Camp David.

That night we ate dinner in the lovely Laurel Lodge. There was a blazing fire in the fireplace. The stewards, who all are Filipino, wore red jackets, white shirts, black pants. I remember John's saying, "You couldn't pay for such service." It's true. The two of us dined at a table for four. There was soft stereo music playing throughout the exquisite meal of Long Island duckling and baked Alaska. There were fresh flowers and candles on every table, even though ours was the only one occupied. Everything seemed so perfect, so beautiful. But one tiny little question ran constantly through my head: Why were we here?

Clearly it was not to relax, as the President had said, because after dinner that night, and for the next three days, John worked in another cabin. Now I realize what he was trying to do. The day after he had told President Nixon that there was "a cancer on the Presidency," President Nixon called John Mitchell, Bob Haldeman, John Ehrlichman and John together for a meeting. But instead of trying to get at the truth and bring a quick end to the cover-up, they talked about writing a vague and incomplete report that would "clear" everybody of involvement in Watergate.

So that's what John's task was at Camp David: He was supposed to write a report that was impossible to write.

While he worked, I was alone and not liking it one bit. I thought I would slowly go crazy. Then I remembered the movies! John had told me that Haldeman had said, "Larry Higby has all the dirty movies there if you want to see them." I rushed to the projection room and I saw five movies in three days. I remem-

ber *Avanti* (which to Haldeman may have been a dirty movie) because it's the only one John saw with me.

Most often, though, I'd stretch out on a huge leather sofa with a pillow and a blanket and a bottle of wine in an ice bucket. I slept late in the mornings and I slept a lot during the days while John worked on the "Dean Report."

John walked in the woods a lot, most often alone, sometimes with me. I could sense his anxiety, and I just knew that he was in deep trouble. Finally he told me just how serious that trouble was. He said he was sure he had been involved in things that were illegal, things for which he was criminally liable. I could not, would not, believe it; my head was spinning and my eyes were blurred with tears. John—the kindest, gentlest, most thoughtful, dearest man I had ever known—a criminal who might go to jail? It was not possible.

The day we came home from Camp David, John went to the White House as usual. But I took home the copies of the documents he had used at Camp David.

I realized then the degree of mistrust and suspicion that existed among the President's aides. John obviously anticipated a time when his close colleagues might raid his files. At this point John also retained a lawyer, Charles Shaffer, a criminal attorney and a staunch Democrat who had served in the Department of Justice when Bobby Kennedy was attorney general.

John was looking more and more haggard; the areas around his eyes were black. He was nervous and high-strung. And no wonder. He was getting ready to tell the Federal prosecutors everything he knew. At the same time, since no one outside the White House was aware that the taping system existed, John wasn't certain that even a word he said would ever be corroborated.

During those long, lonely days and nights when John was either with his lawyer Charley Shaffer or at the White House, I hardly knew what to do with myself. I cleaned the house a lot. I read.

On April 2nd, Charley Shaffer talked with the prosecutors, telling them some of the information John was willing to impart. Charley asked for total immunity for John, which meant that in exchange for becoming an essential witness, disclosing his own and others' involvement, he wanted to be granted freedom from prosecution. By April 8th, John was involved with prosecutors directly. Soon he began working, not with prosecutors, but with the Senate Watergate Committee's legal counselors, headed by Samuel Dash.

On April 15th John told me that he had had it with the President and that he didn't know how much longer he'd be at the White House. He was "off the reservation" now—out of favor. He told me things would be tight financially. There would be huge legal fees and he did not know, once he was fired, when he would work again.

Weeks later, when I was helping to type John's statement for the Senate

Watergate Committee, I learned that on April 16th President Nixon had given John two letters of resignation to sign. One read: "Dear Mr. President: In view of my increasing involvement in the Watergate matter, my impending appearance before the Grand Jury and the probability of its action, I request an immediate and indefinite leave of absence from my position on your staff." The other: "Dear Mr. President: As a result of my involvement in the Watergate matter, which we discussed last night and today, I tender you my resignation, effective at once."

Of course he refused to sign. I still find it difficult to believe that the one Presidential aide who was willing to shoulder much of the blame for Watergate was being asked to shoulder it all!

On Sunday, April 29th, John went to New York. His testimony was needed for the grand jury that was investigating a \$200,000 contribution to the Nixon Presidential campaign from Robert Vesco.

On Monday the call we had been dreading came. It was from Jane Thomas, John's secretary.

"John's been fired!" she cried. "The White House has men in here sealing everything up—all the files, all the papers, everything! I don't know what to do!"

I called John in New York.

"Listen carefully," he said after I told him what had happened. "There's something you must do for me. You know that big box of papers and memos I brought home from the office? Take it to the attic right away. They may be coming after it."

"Oh, no, John!" I cried. "I can't! It's too heavy! I've never even been in the attic! I'm afraid to go up there!"

"Mo. Someone could be at the door any minute. If Federal agents come to the house and see that, it's the first thing they'll take; they'll claim it's Government property. This is a time of no options, Mo, and this is *terribly* important."

Somehow I struggled to the attic, carrying the box of Xeroxed documents, some of which might help prove that my husband was not a liar. Under normal circumstances I could not have lifted that box. And I was afraid of encountering a spider or a mouse (either would have finished me off).

The President went on the air that night to announce the resignations of Haldeman and Ehrlichman, "two of the finest public servants it has been my privilege to know," and also to disclose that the Counsel to the President, John Dean, had resigned.

Everywhere there were big black headlines: "DEAN FIRED." "DEAN SAID TO BE SEEKING IMMUNITY!" "DEAN WATERGATE ROLE EXTENSIVE!" And then the truly nasty stories: Because of his "boyish" good looks, John Dean was afraid to go to prison, where he felt certain he would be subjected to homosexual attacks. John Dean had been dismissed from a private law firm for unethical conduct. John Dean had a woman friend in Georgetown—his car was frequently parked in front of her home all night

long. John and Maureen Dean were separating.

I hated the impression of my husband that the headlines and the stories were creating. But we were helpless to do anything about them. We knew where some of the rumors were originating—in the White House itself, where a massive campaign to discredit John was under way.

The dreadful publicity and slander were only a part of it. The reporters were still camped on our doorstep. I could not go anywhere with John. I couldn't go into my own garden or couldn't walk around the neighborhood, I couldn't go into town for lunch. I felt virtually imprisoned.

And there was another overwhelming concern—my own terrible fear about the future. Would my husband go to prison? Would our friends desert us? What would Johnny, John's four-year-old son from his first marriage, think of his dad? How would we be able to live? I felt terribly insecure. My whole world had come apart.

I never thought of leaving John—not once. But John was too preoccupied to be more than vaguely aware of my existence, and our relationship was more strained during this period than at any other time before or since.

As the Watergate hearings started John began preparing his testimony. One day I heard him talking with Charley Shaffer, and I was startled to hear Charley ask: "Does the President have all his marbles?" John's response startled me even more: "I don't really know," he replied, softly and earnestly.

Finally it was Sunday, June 24, 1973, the day before John was to appear before the Ervin Committee. And I was going to be up there with him.

The night before the hearings, two deputy U.S. marshals moved in with us. They stayed in the recreation room, one of them awake at all times. I felt really safe with them there. John joked that we might have to stop making love because they would hear us.

At 8:30 the following morning we drove to the Senate Office Building with the two marshals. That first long, long day, John read his prepared statement from 10 A.M. until 6:15 P.M. After it was over we both were so weary.

Each day, the hearings became more difficult to endure, and as the week wore on I began to fear John wouldn't get through. He was exhausted. I wondered how anyone could go on answering questions like that for four full days. Senator Edward Gurney, of Florida, who had been antagonistic to begin with, was becoming more and more hostile; his attempts to discredit John were getting so wild, I became a nervous wreck every time it was his turn to do the questioning.

At last the dreadful week was over. We were so relieved and happy that it took us until four in the morning to wind down sufficiently to be able to sleep. John was marvelous the next day. He did three loads of washing and he

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vacuumed, leaving me free to pack for both of us—we were going to Florida.

After several wonderful days in Florida relaxing and getting to know each other again, John received a telephone call from Sam Dash, who insisted that John return to Washington immediately. It seemed that the Committee had just learned of the existence of the White House taping system from Alexander Butterfield, Haldeman's assistant. John was joyful. At last there was corroboration; his testimony would be believed.

In October, 1973, in the courtroom of United States District Judge John J. Sirica, John pleaded guilty to charges of "conspiring to obstruct justice" and to defraud the United States. He was now a felon.

We were down to our last \$500 at this point. For over a year we had had no real income other than witness fees, and we were in debt. John had been disbarred as well. My mother was dying of cancer and wanted us near her, so we sold our house on Quay Street to Senator Lowell Weicker, of Connecticut, and bought an unfinished one near Beverly Hills, California.

But not everything was so bleak. John was no longer drinking at all; we both were working on the house and it was good therapy. It kept our minds off the prison sentence that drew ever nearer.

Then so quickly, it seemed, September 3rd came and John went to jail. I spent the first few weeks of September in my friend Heidi Rikan's apartment in Chevy Chase, Maryland, reading and writing through the long, dreary week and traveling on weekends to the prison at Fort Holabird, Maryland, to visit John.

As the days went by the effects of prison on John were more and more visible. He was losing weight, crying easily and often. He felt the full force of the shame he had brought upon himself and his family. And more than anything he felt helpless and hopeless.

As the weeks dragged on the tension and insecurity weighed more heavily on me too. I felt I simply had to get back to my own home, even if only for a few days. I also wanted to see my mother, who took one look at me and saw that I was exhausted and drained. At her insistence I went to a psychiatrist. He found me on the verge of a nervous breakdown; I was admitted to St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica, California, where I stayed for several days, until I managed to pull myself together. Two weeks after that I flew back to Washington. On Thanksgiving Day, John and I sat in his tiny room (with the marshal near the open door) and had Thanksgiving dinner together.

About this time John's lawyer, Charley Shaffer, was preparing an appeal to Judge Sirica, asking him to shorten John's sentence. Sam Dash, Lowell Weicker and many others had written letters to the Judge, emphasizing John's role in uncovering the Watergate scandals, his complete co-operation. But there was something missing from all these letters. So for several days I strug-

gled to put together the most important letter I had ever written. I wrote:

"Dear Judge Sirica:

"I am writing to you with the hope and prayer that you will reduce the heavy prison sentence you have given my husband. . . .

"I have had occasion to discuss your sentencing of my husband with a number of people familiar with this case. . . . Every person I have spoken with felt that John received the harshest punishment of all those involved in Watergate, especially since he and he alone came forth and told all. . . . He did this with no ulterior motive, as only I can say, and say with the conviction of a wife who knows her husband's character. . . .

"Your honor, I still have not recovered from the shock of the sentence which you imposed on my husband. I can only ask if you have considered . . . the price which he has had to pay for telling the truth? . . .

"For the last sixteen months before he was incarcerated . . . John has been working, meeting and testifying. . . . It virtually ruined our lives and has been a tremendous financial, emotional and physical strain and burden. But John believes it was and is essential to repay to society the debt he believes he owes for his misguided loyalty during his days at the White House.

"Another point I feel I should make about his co-operation; he told me he was going to plead guilty to the offense he had committed, despite the fact that his attorney, Charles Shaffer, believed strongly that if anyone could beat the charges, John had a technical case of—I think it is called tainted evidence. . . .

"Finally and lastly, I would like to tell you of the devastating impact your sentencing of John has had on our family. While I believe that my husband is capable of accepting his punishment, I know that we cannot believe that he may be imprisoned for a full year or two years or even three. . . . I can tell that he believes that justice will prevail. That he will not be faced with a long sentence, when the man for whom he did his wrongful acts was excused. . . .

"The possibility that John may be faced with another year [of prison] . . . has been more than I am capable of handling. With my mother suffering from terminal cancer and John being the only person who has been able to keep her alive, I find myself emotionally incapable of facing life. I am currently trying to keep myself together by receiving psychiatric treatment, after being committed to a hospital following a total breakdown in early October. . . . I pray that it is God's wish and your reconsidered fair judgment that will release my husband from jail at the end of this trial in which he is presently assisting. . . .

"Sincerely,
"Mrs. John W. Dean III"

On December 23rd I flew to California again to be with Mom—we both knew it would be the last time.

One morning John called, and I told him I felt terrible—a headache, nervous tension, anxiety.

"Get some rest," he said. "Take the telephone off the hook."

I did, and later that very morning Judge Sirica terminated John's sentence. John couldn't even reach me to tell me about it!

He did get Mom, though, and when she finally reached me, we both wept for joy. A crushing weight had been lifted from all of us. John and I, again,

had all we really needed—each other. We didn't know—don't know—what the future will bring. But we do know we'll face it together and we'll be fine. My mother knew that too.

On February 5, 1975, three weeks after John came home, she knew it would be all right to leave us.

She died that day—peacefully, in her sleep.

THE END
