

Dean Winds Up His

6-30-73

By Laurence Stern

Washington Post Staff Writer

The testimonial marathon of witness John W. Dean III was over yesterday. It ended not with a bang but banal banter over check stubs, American Express payments and country jokes in down-home drawls.

John Dean emerged from the five-day ordeal with his cool intact and the revelations of his awesome memory bank still hovering like a dark cloud over President Nixon, despite relentless battering from the senatorial bench.

"... I am prepared to stand on my oword and the truth and knowledge and the facts I have," he said toward the end. "I know the truth and knowledge and the facts I have," he said toward the end. "I know the truth is my ally in this and I think ultimately the truth is going to come out."

It would ultimately be his own word, Dean acknowledged, against that of President Nixon and his most loyal partisans.

That test is yet to come when H.R. (Bob) Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman take the witness stand with their expected rebuttals. But so far Dean, this trim young man with his color-coordinated sincerity and his wife with the cameo smile, has given far more than he has taken.

His story was least persuasive when his tone was most righteous. Dean pictured himself as a Paul Revere trying to rouse a disbelieving President to the moral and legal dangers of the Watergate cover-up. He was a Jeremiah warning Mr. Nixon of the "cancer" of Watergate.

To hear him say it, Dean was also the resident civil libertarian in the White House who recoiled from the "bugging squads and mugging squads," from "enemies" lists and hush money which had been pro-

posed by the various conspirators in the White House and re-election committee.

Dean's testimony was most damning when he spoke of his own direct involvement in the conspiracy: his meetings with the President, the documents he issued and received, his conversations with Haldeman and Ehrlichman, the fomenting and fixing of tax cases.

On the final day yesterday there were small volleys of sniper fire at Dean's credibility. Sen. Edward J. Gurney (R-Fla.) recited from Dean's American Express account to question the witness' assertion that he rarely used a credit card for personal expenses.

There was a prolonged exchange with Gurney over whether Dean fet with Herbert W. Kalmbach in the Mayflower, as Dean seemed to recall it, or the Statler Hilton, as the hotel records showed. Dean's attorney, Robert C. McCandless, finally explained the riddle of the conflict.

Dean and Kalmbach met in the Mayflower Coffee Shop of the Statler Hilton.

But the subject of their conversation remained untouched by the confusion over where it took place. The two men were talking about one of the central elements of the conspiracy—the raising of hush money for the Watergate defendants.

"I don't pretend to have a perfect memory," Dean coolly told Gurney. "I think I have a good memory, senator."

Afterward there was another spat between Gurney and Dean's attorneys over the witness' invoking of the Fifth Amendment before the grand jury. It inspired what might well have qualified as the speech of the day from Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.).

"I think it was the late Oliver Wendell Holmes," recalled Baker, "who said law-

yers spend their professional careers shovelling smoke and I have no desire to shovel smoke... I recommend that we not think of ourselves as a court or a jury or a judge, and that we try to follow the facts wherever they lead us..."

It was clear yesterday that the members of the Senate Watergate Committee were already looking beyond Dean in the direction of the White House as the inquiry moves further upward.

Chairman Sam Ervin (D-N.C.), in a pointed historical digression, noted that President Lincoln in 1862 voluntarily appeared before the House Judiciary Committee to testify on the leak of an impending presidential message.

Baker recalled that during efforts to ratify the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 the President invited a committee of Congress to meet with him at the White House rather than appear in Congress. "As we say in Tennessee," he said with an implicit nod to the White House, "there are lots of ways to skin a cat and I wouldn't presume to say how we go about it."

And Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-Conn.) delivered his own historical parable, presumably for the benefit of President Nixon. It was a citation from Carl Sandburg's "The War Years" on a sudden appearance by Lincoln before a Senate committee looking into charges that Mrs. Lincoln was a Disloyalist.

Lincoln made a sudden appearance, towering before the surprised committee. "I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States," Weicker recited, "appear of my own volition before this committee of the Senate to say that... it is untrue that any of my family held treasonable communication with the enemy."

For a few moments after

Ordeal on Hill, Amid Banal Banter



Young persons were prominent among spectators at the Senate committee Watergate hearings.

By James K. W. Altherion—The Washington Post, 8/17/74

Weicker finished the Senate Watergate Committee lapsed into unaccustomed silence, just as its predecessor committee reportedly did after the Lincoln appearance.

In an oblique way President Nixon's own version of a piece of crucial Dean testimony was heard in the

hearing room yesterday. The subject was a meeting between Dean and the President, intermittently attended by Haldeman, according to Dean's account.

It was at this meeting that, according to Dean, President Nixon leaned back in his chair and said that the

raising of \$1 million to keep the Watergate defendants quiet would be "no problem."

The committee obtained from the White House a contrary version of that event, which was relayed to minority counsel Fred Thompson by White House

Watergate counsel Fred Buzhardt.

"The President stated that blackmail would not work," according to the White House advisory. He flatly rejected the proposal.

That information could only have come from one of two men, Haldeman or the

President. Dean said that was not his recollection of the event. It could be the central conflict between John Dean and the White House in the Watergate scandal.

And it is one upon which the President may eventually have to testify.