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Personality in the News:

Richard Helms 320

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WASHINGTON AP - Richard M. Helms, who has been asked by President-elect Nixon to stay on as head of the Central Intelligence Agency, has spent nearly half his life in the nation's espionage services.

Now, 55, Helms has been in the shadowy world of the undercover agent for 26 years, including four years with the Office of Strategic Services during World War II.

He joined the CIA in 1947 and became one of the few career men to head the nation's top intelligence-gathering agency when President Johnson picked him for the top spot in 1965.

Nixon's announcement that the tall, slim professional spy would remain as director of the CIA came as a sort of wedding present for Helms, who was married Saturday to Mrs. Cynthia McKelvie of Washington, D.C.

Helms' previous marriage ended in divorce a year ago. He and his former wife have a married son, Dennis, 27. His bride, who was also divorced last year, has four children by her previous marriage.

If the success of a CIA man can be measured by the degree to which his activities remain a secret from the public, Helms is undoubtedly a top cloak-and-dagger operative. Newspaper files disclose little beyond the announcements of his various promotions and his biography in Who's Who contains a minimum of information.

At the outset of his career, however, Helms was on the other side of the issue of informing the public. His first job after graduating from Williams College in 1935 was as a reporter for United Press in Germany. He also served as the advertising manager for the Indianapolis Times before the war.

Helms, who was born in St. Davids, Pa., picked up overseas experience early. His father, an aluminum company executive, sent him to Europe for two years of high school, which he spent in Switzerland and Germany.

At the CIA, Helms is known as a quick and efficient administrator who, nevertheless, still finds it hard to fit in time for his favorite nonspying activity-tennis.

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AP, this date, filed Hoover, says Helms has agreed to stay in post, and that he and Hoover "apparently will stay on their jobs indefinitely."