

# 'Sam Dash Looks Like Our Man,' Said Sam Ervin

By Judy Bachrach

"Sam Dash," says a former student of his at Georgetown Law School, "Sam Dash is the best Jewish mother I've ever met."

Sam Dash blushes at the collegiate tribute. "Well I don't know quite how to take that. Actually, the real Jewish mother in this family is my wife."

He smiles at Sara Dash, a no-nonsense woman with clipped black hair who is busying herself with the egg-salad hors d'oeuvres. It is along and complicated ritual involving Wheat Thins, repeated servings and the sober observation from the chief counsel to the Watergate Committee that, had Sara Dash really wanted to, she could have "bottled and marketed" her egg salad.

"Actually," says Dash as he journeys to the egg salad, "I have a saying about my wife. My wife can't afford to die because the drawers aren't cleaned out and she doesn't want strangers to see them messy."

It is entirely possible that the two Dash daughters, Rachel, 17, and Judi, 21, have heard that remark before, but they giggle anyway. For a while Sara Dash plunges into retaliatory anecdotes about her husband's student days at Harvard Law School. Suddenly, however, she stops in midsentence and critically eyes her husband's odyssey from the egg salad. Lying on the carpeted floor is a moist yellow tribute to Sara's cuisine. Sara Dash bristles:

"You can tell your readers in any article you care to write that Sam Dash has yet to help himself to my egg salad without dropping half of it on the floor."

Friday nights exert a special mood on the Dashes' home in Chevy Chase Village. Silver goblets (from which no one drinks) stand like sentries before each plate. Transparent glasses become receptacles for Manischewitz Red. Shielding her eyes from the candlelight, Sara Dash performs the customary ritual of the Sabbath. Sam Dash tosses a yellow yarmulka to Judi's boyfriend, Peter, and selects a black one for himself. After the prayer,

everyone kisses everyone else, except for Peter who only wants to kiss Judi.

Then everybody settles down to Sara's home-cooked chicken wings except for Rachel who has been a vegetarian for the past two years.

The conversation shifts: Has Sam Dash, the hairless star of daytime television, received any propositions since his TV debut?

"Oh yeah, I've received propositions. As a matter of fact, some of them are so good, I suspect they're setups."

"Why, Daddy?" asks Judi who is enjoying this enormously.

"Well, because they're so tempting."

In unison the entire table turns toward Mrs. Dash who glowers at her husband. Her husband retreats.

"Well, Honey," he begins apologetically, "Well, Honey, if you were a normal healthy male, you'd find them tempting, too."

But at this moment Sara Dash has other things on her mind.

Frowning down at the leftover chicken wings, the bleak remnants of noodle pudding and the half-filled bottle of Manischewitz, she glares at the satiated and announces, "That's it. I'm never going to invite any of you over here again."

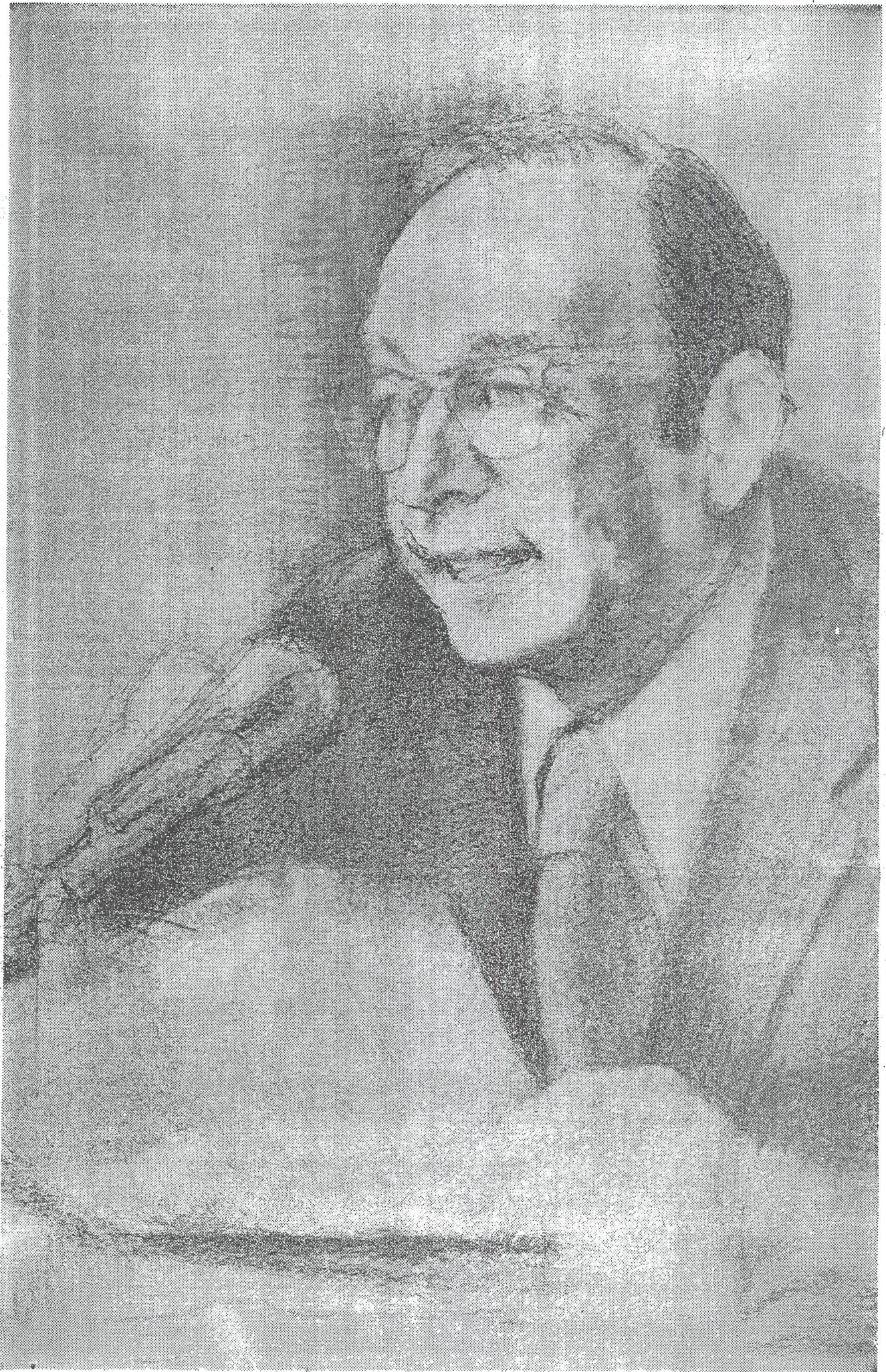
Sam Dash could have been any number of things. Early in his career when he was Philadelphia's district attorney, Erle Stanley Gardner, who was getting on in years, asked him to ghostwrite his Perry Mason books. Dash refused. Some time later after "The Eavesdroppers," his book on electronic eavesdropping, was published, Marlon Brando made him another vain offer:

"See, before Carol Chessman died, Brando got the rights to do a movie on his life. And he wanted someone to investigate the matter and write the screenplay."

"Honey," warns Mrs. Dash, "you don't tell that story right."

See DASH, K2, Col. 4





By James K. Edwards—The Washington Post





By Ken Feil—The Washington Post

Sam Dash, his wife, Sara, his daughters Judi (left) and Rachel: "I hope," said his wife, "you're not going to call him 'Balding Sam Dash.'" Every reporter in this town calls him "Balding Sam Dash."

#### DASH, From K1

"Anyway, I spent a whole day with Brando and I came up with the plot. Oh it was some deal about a law professor who decides to investigate Chessman's life. All in flashback."

"You ruined it," sighs Mrs. Dash.

"Mo-ther," Rachel hisses from across the table, "You're disgusting."

"And by the end, Brando decided he didn't want to play Chessman. He wanted to play the law professor."

"Can I just say something?" Mrs. Dash interposes, "In those days I used to joke that Marlon Brando really wanted to play Sam Dash."

It may yet come to pass. In the third week of February, 1973, the 48-year-old law professor from Georgetown received a rather extraordinary phone call from a man with a drawl:

"This is Sam Ervin," he says. Well I didn't know Ervin personally. I mean I'd testified before him on wiretapping. But I didn't know him.

"And Ervin says to me, 'You know, there are hundreds of lawyers asking for this job. And they're willing to leave their firms and do it for nothing. But we don't want them because if they're that anxious we question their motivation.'"

Sam Dash got himself a \$35,000-a-year job. That was down considerably from his average combined earnings from the years preceding. His wife says he is allergic to money.

According to several reporters, the selection process leading up to the decision had been fairly arduous. But Dash's name had been prompted by at least two close associates of the Senator from North Carolina.

One of them was Rufus Edmisten. "Ervin and I were having lunch one day," says the deputy counsel to the Watergate Committee. "And Dash's name just came up. Now Sen. Ervin isn't the kind of person you sit down and argue with—so I didn't lobby him. But Ervin went back to North Carolina, which is where he does his greatest thinking. And when he came back he simply says 'Sam Dash looks like our man.'"



Sam Dash manages to sink into the comfort of the den couch without allowing his back to rest against it.

"I had only three stipulations when I accepted that job. I told Ervin I wanted to be completely independent; that I would take the facts as far as they would go; and I would hire my own staff. And Ervin said, 'I'll put that in writing, and even if I go back on my word, you can hold me to it.'"

It was put into writing.

"I guess one of the main reasons we chose Dash," says Edmisten, "is because he's not political. You know me—I'm a real political creature. But Sam—well he's not."

Sam Dash is a registered Democrat and there was a time back in his Philadelphia days, when he was a member of Americans for Democratic Action. Leon Shull, once the director of that organization's Philadelphia chapter, dates Dash's membership to around 1954 when he was assistant district attorney, but claims that he was never "terribly active." By 1958, however, Dash got elected to the chapter's board of directors. By 1962, he dropped out entirely. "I'm gonna give Sam hell about that," says Shull, who is now the ADA's national director.

Until recently, the bumper of the Dash car was plastered with a McGovern sticker, but the sticker ultimately became filthy and the family removed it regretfully. Still, Dash maintains that he is not political, despite the fact that in 1955 at the age of 30, young Sam Dash filled a vacancy in Philadelphia and became D.A.

"But I never ran for it after my term was up. Well because I wanted to be completely independent with no strings attached. Now at that time (the late Rep.) Bill Green was boss of the Democrats in Philadelphia. And Green would have accepted me as D.A. Oh sure he would have," Dash insists, "why, I could've been anything after that: mayor, governor—"

Senator?

"Even a senator," Dash says and nods gravely.

Instead he became a private attorney specializing in criminal law. As D.A., Dash admits, he "wiretapped to combat organized crime." At

that time, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court had decided that no court order was necessary to wiretap.

"But see after I left the D.A.'s office I went into a decompression chamber. See I did this study (for the Pennsylvania Bar Association) and I saw the blackmail and corruption that ensues from wiretapping. And now—well now I would say that while we never abused wiretapping for political purposes when I was D.A., we did *over* use it."

He wrote "The Eavesdroppers" in 1959, a book that attracted Marlon Brando, among others. He testified before Sen. Ervin and informed him that his own phone was probably tapped. In 1971, by the time Dash had become a Georgetown professor as well as the director of the Georgetown Institute for Criminal Law and Procedure, John Mitchell was advocating the use of wiretaps without court authorization in internal security cases. And Sam Dash rose before the assembled of the American Bar Association and attacked the methods he had once promoted:

"It was a professional, not a personal attack. I simply said that this was the position George III would have taken—that the ruler is above the law." Peering foggy through his thick glasses, Dash manages somehow to acquire a look of injured innocence.

"And I was told that John Mitchell took serious offense at this."

Sam Dash is under the distinct impression that after that fateful speech a number of problems began to crop up that related directly to his career.

"Well, see, I was a part-time paid consultant to the National Association of Attorneys-General. And they were told they could get a Justice Department grant only if I was removed as consultant. Well, I decided to volunteer my services and they got a re-grant."

"And then," Dash continues, "the Justice Department decided to give no further Law Enforcement Assistance Administration grants to the Georgetown Institute. Well now that was something different. I was director of the institute."

Dash stayed on as director of the institute.

"Well you can draw any conclusion you want from that," says Herbert Miller, acting director of the Georgetown Institute. "But the last Justice Department grant we got was in 1969. And we've applied for others."

The L.E.A.A. will say only that in 1969 it funded the Georgetown Institute to the tune of \$101,083—and hasn't since.

Dash's face grows pensive as he contemplates the past. "I bet Mitchell never imagined at that time that one day he would be sitting across from me and I would be interrogating him . . ."

Neither, most likely, did any of the others who trooped before the Senate Committee from May to August. Richard Kleindienst, for instance, would have had to be cursed with a hyperactive fantasy to suppose back in his Harvard Law days that he would ever be testifying before his old classmate, Sam Dash:

"I didn't really know Kleindienst in Harvard," says Dash, "and we weren't friends. But I avoided interrogating him before the Senate Committee, anyway."

"I consider Sam Dash a personal friend of mine," says Kleindienst. "We didn't have much social life in Harvard, but I got to know him in classes, arguing oral law, and stuff like that. And I remember thinking at the time that Dash was so bright and conscientious that he would probably make a very successful lawyer."

Kleindienst claims that from a professional standpoint, "Sam did a fine job in the private interrogations. I had many hours of private sessions with Sam and the others before I testified, and they knew that when I left the Justice Department I carted 40 boxes of files home to my attic, and they asked to see them. I thought that was great preparation."

At the conclusion of his testimony, John Mitchell phoned the chief counsel to proffer his thanks:

"He thanked me for being so polite." Dash shakes his head in bemused wonder. "I said, 'Why shouldn't I have been polite?' But apparently Mitchell was afraid I was going to scream at him—he'd had a rough time at the Vesco trial. But what hon-

estly is the use of not being polite?"

It may not be utilitarian, but there have been instances in the course of the Hearings where witnesses have invoked Dashian displeasure. For instance, in his sharp exchanges with Ehrlichman, "Dash blew his cool," says Sherman Cohn decisively. Cohn, a Georgetown colleague and close friend of the Dashes who serves as a special consultant to Dash, remembers turning on the TV and saying to himself, "Sam, you shouldn't have done that. That ain't the way to go about questioning a witness."

"Yes, he did lose his cool with Ehrlichman," Rufus Edmisten agrees. "But I think by then Sam had gone the limit on patience."

Then there are those who say that Dash may be a little too polite. This school of thought, exemplified by lawyers who don't care to be identified, claims that Dash goes soft on the Watergate witnesses, that he doesn't follow through on some questions; that he is beset by the cagey and muzzled by etiquette.

"But it's not the function of this committee to get every pound of flesh," says Dash. A flame-colored flush creeps up to his forehead and hovers there. He has obviously heard these objections before. "My goal is to present these hearings in a professional, calm manner. I don't want the stigma of the McCarthy hearings, where everyone invoked the Fifth instead of answering."

The one thing everyone who knows him seems to agree upon is that when the hearings are on, Sam Dash often goes to bed at 4 a.m. and rises at 6.

Apparently, the work ethic formed a rather significant portion of Dash's youth. He was born in Camden, N.J., to Joseph and Ida Dash, Russian-born immigrants who found life hard and their wholesale dry-goods business a less than lavish means of supporting their six children. Sam's 69-year-old mother, who now lives with her husband in Atlantic City, has long since become accustomed to her son's passion for industry.

"Oh when Sam was little, he was always so anxious to

See DASH, K3, Col. 1



work. I remember taking him to kindergarten and dressing him up each day in his nice white linen suit—he was so cute. And every afternoon he would come home and spit up his lunch.

"And I said, 'Why, Sam, are you spitting up your lunch?' And he said, 'The teacher doesn't like me. She never asks me to do anything like cleaning the blackboard, and she asks all the other kids.'"

There's a happy ending to this story:

"So I told Sam's problem to the teacher—a nice girl and so pretty. And the next day—the very next day—the teacher gave him work. And when Sam came home his little face was beaming."

About her son's current duties, Mrs. Dash is more concerned.

"Well I have mixed feelings about that. Oh Sam's the man for the job, all right. He's so wise and smart—do I sound like a mother, dear? Well I feel that way about all my sons. But this Watergate—well it's such a sad thing. I just can't believe it. I mean can you believe a man like Mitchell—so educated—should come to this? And all of them," says Mrs. Dash with a sigh, "All of them are so educated. But underneath they're a bunch of dummies."

Ida Dash's son takes a more philosophical view of the situation. Since February he has led an existence bound by scandal and burdened by the public's obsession with that scandal. He says he's an optimist:

"Frankly, I think Watergate is a very healthy thing. Now there were scandals prior to the hearings, like ITT, when it seemed like nothing could shake this country. But now I suspect the kind of people who aspire to public office will have far greater security from moral blemishes. And high officials are becoming more concerned..."

Does Sam Dash think Nixon is more concerned?

"Well I don't think the Watergate investigation will have that kind of impact on anyone who may have been involved."

Does Sam Dash think Nixon's involved?

"No comment," says Sam Dash.

Judi Dash chuckles. "Did you really think he would comment?" she asks.

There have been those unkind enough to suggest that the people are bored with Watergate. Even Rufus Edmisten grew disturbed during his last trip to North Carolina. There are some people there (there are some people everywhere) who seem disappointed because from a dramatic standpoint the televised hearings fall far afield of—well, say—Perry Mason.

But mention of this brings yet another flush to Dash's face, the TV ratings to his lips, and an infinite variety of anecdotes to mind:

"Why only recently my family and I went to a folk festival and some guy walks up with his 10-year-old son, and he says, 'Shake hands with the Senator'—see they all think I'm a senator. Now these are the little people, really. And they come up and they say, 'God Bless you, Senator,' and they have awe in their faces. It's as if I were their savior."

Life for the Dash family has changed dramatically since the onset of 1973. Sam Dash appears beside child actors on the Dick Cavett show and kisses Gina Lollobrigida ("We didn't need that," says Sara Dash). He is flooded with requests, and not all of them come from temptresses. A young woman recently begged him to autograph her pocket-book.

"Why it's gotten so I can't buy a pair of socks without signing an autograph," says Dash with no little pride. "And it's embarrassing."

Why?

"Because he has big feet," Judi confides.

But Sara shakes her head gloomily and leans forward for emphasis: "I'll tell you what it is, this whole publicity thing. It's a nightmare."

Their closest friends insist that Mrs. Dash has one thing in common with "the little people": She finds salvation in her husband. They have known each other since their junior high school drama-club days:

"When every other boy but Sam was asking me out," complains Mrs. Dash as she brushes the crumbs off the black tablecloth. The photographer is not permit-

ted to take a picture of the table until it is clean.

"I had no time to date," Dash explains. "I'd been holding part-time jobs since I was 7."

But Ida Dash chuckles when she hears the saga of her son's working career. "Oh, he didn't work at 7. He really started when he was 12. Sara? Oh she's a very nice girl. Of course she's more religious than we were. Her family was a little extreme that way."

Sam Dash still eats bacon—outside the house.

He and Sara first considered each other romantically in the warm summer of '45 when they met on the boardwalk of Atlantic City:

"And I was in my second lieutenant's uniform with my crushed Air Force hat and my wings."

And his medals. For his reconnaissance flights over Italy, Dash had received a European Service Medal with five battle stars. For his brief tryst with the famed 376 Bomb Group

which had knocked out Ploesti Oilfield in Romania he got the Presidential Unit Citation with two Oakleaf Clusters. But Sam Dash never knocked out Ploesti Oilfield. As a matter of fact he never bombed. By the time he joined the 376, they were all being sent back to the United States for training with the new B-29s.

"But I want to stress," says Dash with a laugh, "That I really wanted to bomb. I mean as soon as I turned 18, I rushed out and enlisted. That was one war I really wanted to fight."

Sara understood. Two days after their boardwalk meeting, they had breakfast and Sam Dash asked her to wait for him.

But she didn't have long to wait. From his Albuquerque base, Sam Dash wooed her with poetry by air mail. In September he was released from the Air Force. Three days later, he delighted his mother by enrolling in Temple University in





*"And Ervin says to me, 'You know, there are hundreds of lawyers asking for this job. And they're willing to leave their firms and do it for nothing. But we don't want them because if they're that anxious we question their motivation.'"*

**By Ken Felt—The Washington Post**



order to complete an education that had been interrupted by the war. Subsequently he enchanted her still further by achieving a straight-A record in his pre-law program. By the time he had completed his second year at Temple, he married Sara ("You know how boys are," says Ida Dash) and the service was performed by a total of seven rabbis; all of them Sara's relatives.

"I'm so married I couldn't get out of it even if I wanted to," Dash chuckles.

It is doubtful he wants to. Spectators at the Watergate hearings who watch the chief counsel and his wife walking off hand in hand at lunchtime doubt that he wants to. Reporters who have incurred Sara Dash's protective wrath when they call past bedtime, doubt that he wants to. Sara Dash has been tending to her husbands' needs for the past 27 years and the age of—

"48," says Mrs. Dash defiantly. "And that's something

every woman in this town has been trying to find out for years. Tell me why that's so important." She rushes on without waiting for a reply. "It isn't important, that's all. Just as Sam's hair isn't important. I hope you're not going to call him 'Balding Sam Dash.' Every reporter in this town calls him 'Balding Sam Dash.'"

And finally people who know Sara Dash know that she dropped her career as a Philadelphia social worker in order to move to Cambridge and put her husband through law school. If you don't know, Sara Dash will be the first to tell you.

"Yes I am sorry I gave up my career," she says judiciously. "But my husband's work is so fascinating and he shares it with me."

"Yes," Dash agrees, gazing fondly at his wife, "I think it's only fair for me to say that I'm involved in a very important activity—"

"And I'm not?" snaps Sara.

"—And that without Sara I just couldn't have done it —"

"Now he's going to kiss a baby," Sara says and grins. But she is mollified and it shows.

Ida Dash insists that there was a time when everyone thought young Sam was going to be a writer, he was that good. Her child claims that although he always wanted to be a lawyer, his high school English teacher tried to dissuade him:

"Oh he wanted me to hop a tramp steamer and suffer. You know. He wanted me to be a poet. But poets are so detached from the real world, and I didn't want to be."

When he was in high school he wrote an entire play based on Plutarch's life of Alexander in iambic pentameter and rhymed couplets. His teacher went bananas over the rhymed couplets and the iambic pentameter.

Today Dash still writes poetry, only now it's intended for such special occasions as birthdays and anniversaries. But in the Dash's bedroom there is a mammoth album of verse that goes back to their courting days. One, which was written in August, 1945, is entitled simply "To Sara":

*"You asked me was it strange  
That we should think of similar things*

*Like moonlight or*

*Just for a change*

*As only our heart within us  
sings . . .*

*You wonder at our same desire*

*The same moonlight we  
watch above*

*Can an ember blaze into  
a fire?*

*Could it be that we're in  
love?"*

"And that," says Sara Dash with immense satisfaction, "That was written before I put him through Harvard Law School."