

Guess Who Isn't Coming to Dinner, or, Keeping

By Maxine Cheshire

While one of President Nixon's sons-in-law has been defending him forcefully in public at every opportunity, the other has been keeping a low profile.

Edward Finch Cox has not been seen much around the White House since early last summer.

He and his wife, Tricia, haven't had a private dinner alone with her parents since June 3. They haven't attended a state dinner since the one for Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev on June 19.

VIP

Mrs. Cox has been here frequently during the past two weeks of crisis. But a White House spokesman says that her husband's conspicuous absence has been necessitated by reserve duty and the workload of his job at the prestigious firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York City.

This lack of contact has led to speculation that a chill may have developed between the 27-year-old Cox and his father-in-law. One White House staffer remarked privately several months ago that tension between the two was such that President Nixon took his meals "elsewhere" when Cox was visiting. No explanation was given by the aide.

Politically, Cox has always been more liberal than the President, but the two had "always argued politics at the dinner table" without rancor, another White House aide said.

David Eisenhower and his wife, Julie, have been visible and visible in support of the President. He appeared on the "Today" show last week to defend the firing of Archibald Cox and Julie followed him on the same program this week with similar views.

The Eisenhowers dine frequently with her parents at the White House. They all went out to Trader Vic's together recently and sometimes the Nixons take food from the White House kitchen and drive out for supper with the couple at their Bethesda home.

When Julie Eisenhower is out of town, commuting to Indianapolis, her husband eats regularly with his in-laws.

Cox, while refusing to comment on the frequency or infrequency with which he sees the Nixons, denies that he has been keeping himself aloof from his father-in-law or remote from Watergate.

He indicates that the family is harmoniously united behind the President.

"I watched him on television during his press conference the other night and called him afterwards and we had a talk," he said. "I congratulated him. It was very strong, very good."

That was on Friday. Later that night, after midnight Cox flew down to join the rest of the family at Camp David for the weekend.

That was the weekend Newsweek magazine was checking a story on Tricia and Ed Cox's 1973 income tax returns, but Cox says that his father-in-law did not mention the subject.

According to the magazine, Tricia Cox had \$20,000 of her own money invested in a Florida real estate deal of her father's which earned a capital gains profit of \$112,400 last year.

The magazine accused President Nixon of arranging his own IRS return and that of the Coxes to avoid paying taxes on the money in question.

a Low Profile

"The first thing I heard about it," Cox said, "was on Monday when someone called one of the partners here in the law firm and asked him if they would be defending me if I were sued for a false return."

He added: "I'm shocked. In my joint return with Tricia, we paid all sums owed, including a capital gains on her portion of that transaction."

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