

# A Lawyer in Miniskirts

Jill Wine Volner

By LINDA CHARLTON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 29 — If there is one thing that Jill Wine Volner does not like, it is questions about her miniskirts; if there is another, it is to be described as a "woman lawyer." So it was understandable that she might have been less than pleased when Judge John J.

Woman  
in the  
News

Sirica referred to her and the witness she was questioning as "two ladies" arguing.

Mrs. Volner's expression did not change as the spectators laughed, and she went on calmly with her questioning of Rose Mary Woods, President Nixon's secretary, as to how it came about that the efficient Miss Woods had inadvertently erased some 18 minutes of dialogue from a tape.

But some who saw her later in private say that she was indeed angry at the judge's interruption of her questioning with a chiding "All right, we have enough problems without two ladies getting into argument."

Mrs. Volner, 30 years old, is the latest young lawyer to emerge into celebrity from the welter of courtroom proceedings. However, the publicity—something no prosecutor with aspirations can be expected to dislike entirely—has had its unfortunate aspects.

### Home Burglarize Twice

For one thing, a substantial part of it has included references to Mrs. Volner's miniskirts. "My hemline is irrelevant," she said when asked about her style of dress. "The question is, Do I ask good questions?"

For another thing, Volner's apartment in Northwest Washington has been burglarized twice, most recently last Tuesday, when her sharp exchanges with Miss Woods were headlines, and once last summer, when she was in the news as the first woman named to the Watergate Special Prosecution Force.

As for Mrs. Volner's abilities, she is generally conceded to be professional, cool and competent. Some courtroom critics have said that she might press Miss Woods harder than she does; others maintain that her low-key style is deceptive.

Since joining the Watergate force in July, Mrs. Volner has been working 16-hour days and, generally, six-day weeks. Her husband, Ian David Volner, whom she met and was married to when they were both in law school at Columbia University described his wife as a "restless personality" who, when not working in her profession, likes to work with her hands—cooking, doing needlepoint, painting — or reading, particularly Russian novelists.

Since their legal specialties are so different—Mr. Volner

is a partner in a firm specializing in communications law—there is no real problem about shop talk dominating their private life, he said, adding that, besides, his wife is "very circumspect."

But, he added, "We have occasionally had glorious battles."

"Once she belted me with a hairbrush when I told her that a procedure she was pursuing I considered fascistic," he said.

That was during Mrs. Volner's three years with the Criminal Division of the Justice Department. She joined the division in January, 1969, and remained until joining the Watergate force last July. In June, 1968, she graduated from Columbia, where she began by doing poorly and ended on the dean's list.

Mrs. Volner, who prefers to be known by her full name and has talked about hyphenating her name to "Wine-Volner," was born in Chicago May 5, 1943, one of three children of Bert S. and Sylvia Wine. Her father is a certified public accountant.

She attended public high school in Skokie, Ill., and then went to the University of Illinois in Urbana to study journalism. She graduated in 1964. She planned to be a political writer and has said that she went to law school initially only to take courses that would aid her in this career.

Her interest in criminal law, she has said, developed only after she moved to Washington, where her husband had a job with the Federal Communications Commission.

### 'Quietly Competent'

Mr. Volner describes his wife as a "quietly competent" person with a "reasonably stable personality, extremely level-headed up to a point," and says that he is "amazed by her competence—she can do a variety of things all at once and do them fairly well."

With reference to the miniskirt issue, he said that she was "a fairly vain woman."

"She's annoyed at the attention paid to her hemlines but sees to it that she looks and is dressed well," he said.

Mr. Volner has previously described his wife in these terms: "The tougher it gets, the tougher she gets," which he said that he now regretted—not because it isn't so, but because it echoes President Nixon's description of himself.

The paradox of the working woman is illustrated in this anecdote told about this young lawyer by an admirer who also described her as a "formidable" person. On the day before Thanksgiving, when the news about the 18-minute gap in a tape was disclosed by the White House, there were frantic calls around Washington for Mrs. Volner. The calls were unsuccessful. She was in a department store, buying clothes.