

# White House's Warren:

By Marlene Cimons  
Los Angeles Times

It is nearly 7 p.m. and Jerry Warren has come home from work early, trying to fight a cold. His two youngsters, who are almost always asleep by the time he returns from the White House each evening, are exuberant at his presence.

Euphemia (Mia), his 4-year-old daughter, is being especially impish, and begs him to light a fat red candle she gave him for Christmas. He does, but extinguishes it a short time later.

"I'm saving it for the office," he tells her, and then turns to his wife. "I'm going to light it a half-hour before every briefing."

He smiles again, but there seems to be an undercurrent of truth in his banter, particularly when he talks about facing the White

House press corps every morning. "How can you describe that empty feeling in your stomach that keeps gnawing away at you?" He says, puffing his pipe.

Gerald L. Warren, deputy press secretary and former San Diego newspaperman, inherited these daily 11 a.m. exchanges with reporters last summer when Watergate exploded full force upon the nation and press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler moved more deeply into the White House as a presidential assistant.

Warren, 43, whose horn-rimmed glasses and pipe give him a serious, thoughtful air, is a contrast in personality to the boyish, public relations-oriented Ziegler, who assumed the duties of press secretary in 1969 when he was 29. Warren, a former assistant man-

aging editor of the San Diego Union, seems to relate more directly to the problems of the press.

"Ron was the spokesman when all of this broke, and he's borne the brunt of it," Warren said during an interview in his fashionable Georgian-style house in Northwest Washington.

"It's going to take some time for people to realize that he's not to blame. When all the facts are out, it will be shown that Ron was—I don't like this word, and I may try two or three others before I find the right one—victimized. He was provided information that we all believed. Based on that, he represented himself and the President and the White House to the best of his ability."

And now Warren is attempting to do the same, de-



GERALD L. WARREN  
... Nixon press aide

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## Not Just a 'Conduit'

scribing the change in his role from "conduit" to "spokesman." He admits that he has thought about the possibility that what happened to Ziegler might happen to him. "Everyone considers the possibility now," he said, "but lessons have been learned since then, and everyone now wants to see the truth out in the best way so the system isn't damaged by it."

Many White House reporters describe Warren as a likable, good guy, who wants to present the truth. Words like "decent" and "kind" come up frequently when they talk about him. Others, however, say that their once-high regard for him has been somewhat tarnished because of the Watergate atmosphere.

Robert Pierpoint, CBS White House correspondent,

says his personal feelings about Warren have changed, and their friendship has suffered as a result.

"My wife and I can't even see them socially anymore, we feel so bad about his being used and not doing anything about it," Pierpoint said. "I think he realizes it himself, and I suspect he's a very troubled man. It's a depressing thing to see someone you both like and respect destroyed like this."

Warren is unequivocal, however, when he explains his reasons for staying on as a presidential spokesman.

"If there was any question in my mind about the President's integrity, I would leave," Warren said. "But I have none. It's due to the belief and trust and knowledge that I have. As the year went on, and the facts of Watergate became

known, I became more and more determined to stay because I was performing a useful service. As long as I believe I am performing a service to the President and the press corps, I will stay."

He says he has access to the President and laughs about a story that he had complained to Ziegler about not seeing the President. The story said Ziegler drew Warren to the door of the Oval Office, opened it for a second to let him look through, and then closed it, snapping, "There—today you can say you've seen the President."

"I took that story as a joke," he said. "I have no problems seeing the President. No one is a barrier."

Warren says he and Ziegler have a healthy working relationship, although Ziegler has been witnessed

snapping his fingers at Warren for a match during a briefing, and sending him for a cup of coffee.

"If once—only once—Jerry would have said, 'Ron, I'm loyal to you but go get your own damned coffee,' there would have been a standing ovation," one White House correspondent said.

Warren shrugs. "I just don't let those kinds of things worry me."

What does worry him, however, are the errors he says he sometimes makes. For example, he was recently criticized for saying that he believed that White House speech-writers had nothing to do with Vice President Ford's speech to the American Farm Bureau Federation Jan. 15 in Atlantic City. The day after, it was revealed that the White House had indeed helped write the speech.

Warren said he had never inquired within the White House about the origin of the Ford speech. "It never occurred to me to ask the question, so when it came up I said, 'I don't believe so,'" Warren said. "I realize now I should have said, 'I don't know—but I'll ask.'"

Both Warren and his wife Euphemia (Phemie) say that it has not been an easy year for them. Since Warren's new status, their 6-year-old son Ben has been teased by some of his classmates, and the Warrens are concerned about the well-being of some of their closest friends who have been directly implicated in the scandal.

"It's awfully hard to live through a year like this one," said Mrs. Warren, a former teacher who stopped working after their son was born. "The problem is seeing good friends and associates suffer—people who have been ruined by Watergate. It's awfully hard. It's such a contrast to what the first four years were like. Before, it was so beautiful—and it's terribly hard to see it all turned upside down."

Warren came to the administration at its start, at Ziegler's request.

The two men first met in California more than a decade ago, while Ziegler was working with the state's Republican central committee and Warren was working at the San Diego Union. In 1968, during Mr. Nixon's second try at the presidency, Warren saw Ziegler again.

"When it was getting toward inauguration time, Ron was looking for a No. 2 man, and a mutual friend suggested that he give me a call," Warren said.

He had mixed feelings about leaving the newspaper, where he had developed a good rapport with the young reporters during an earlier stint as city editor. "They used to come to me with their problems and I was pleased that they did, despite the fact that I was their boss," he said. "I used to bring all the disgruntled newspapermen home with

me."

"Yes," Mrs. Warren said, smiling. "They used to keep us up all night."

After he received the offer from Ziegler, however, Warren found he could not turn it down. "It was a challenge that doesn't come along very often," Warren said. "Not too many people have an opportunity to work for a President."

The Warrens lived in a small Georgetown townhouse when they first came east, but moved to a larger house after their daughter—the ninth to be named Euphemia in Mrs. Warren's family—was born. The family also includes a huge 5-year-old St. Bernard named Goody.

Since Warren's job has become so time-consuming, they have had little opportunity for socializing.

"We try to spend some time around the fire in the evenings, chatting about the day and unwinding," Warren said. "There's rarely time anymore to chat on the telephone during the day. We used to during the first few years, but it's out of the question now."

The Warrens say they are behind in music, theater and films, because there has been so little time to pursue them.

"To show you how far behind we are, we went to see the movie 'The Anderson Tapes' a while ago, and we were shocked because there was a foul word in it," Warren said.

"Tapes?" he was asked.

He laughed. "No," he said. "It was a four-letter word beginning with 'S.' We didn't realize movies had gotten so frank."

He says he intends to stay on at the White House, representing the President, until all the answers have emerged.

"I have no regrets, other than those I have mentioned," he said. "I hate the events of the last 1½ years—I think everyone does. But as for my own personal well being and state of mind, I have no regrets—and I won't have as long as I think I am serving a purpose."