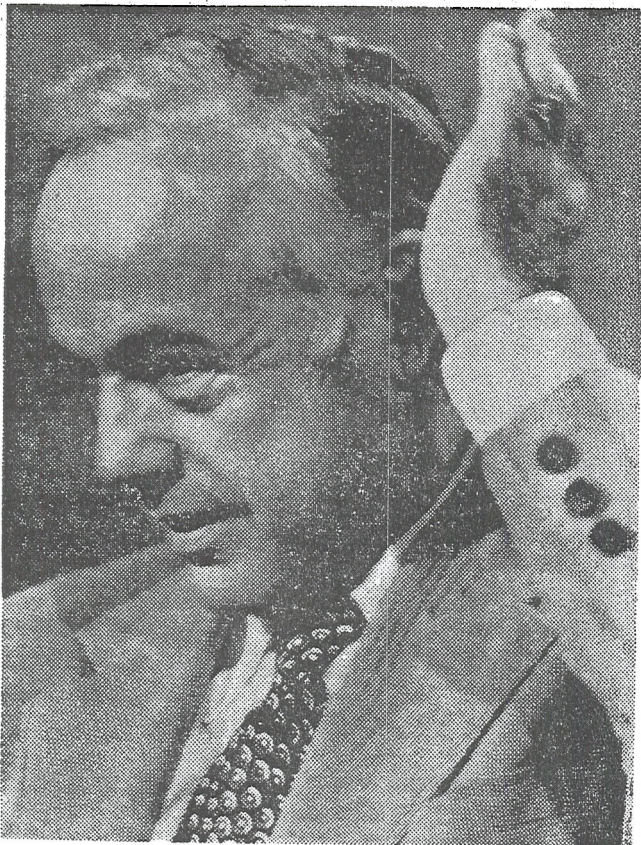


Betty Beale: Washington

The tapes may tell some more



PRESIDENT'S lawyer James St. Clair received a favor from a Nixon opponent.

WASHINGTON — Ken Cole, the handsome young man who is assistant to the President for domestic affairs (John Ehrlichman's old job) was seated on my left at a dinner party the other night and Rep. Bob McClory (R-Ill.) of the House impeachment committee was on my right. Trying not to miss anything on either side made me look like a spectator at a tennis tournament.

While Ken was offering to bet a guest an unspecified sum that the House would not vote for impeachment, Bob was talking about the committee's supersensitive equipment which has already clarified some of the "unintelligibles."

"Our transcripts will not be the same as the White House transcripts," said the Congressman who also revealed that the equipment could be adjusted to transmit one particular person's voice louder than the others. Hearing the tapes with the President's voice shouting while Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Dean are weekly whispering, or vice versa, may be the only comic relief to the whole business.

One of the surprising things in the transcripts was the apparent lack of respect shown by presidential assistants for the office of the presidency. But Ken said he always uses "Mr. President" or "Sir" in his conversations with Nixon.

This reminded McClory of an amusing incident during so-called Operation Candor when members of Congress were invited to the White House to hear the President's side of Watergate. Nixon was launched into his explanation when Sen. James Eastland of Mississippi, the veteran conservative Democrat, said something like this:

"Mr. President, you don't have to do all that explaining. We're behind you." Whereupon the junior senator from Mississippi, the respected Sen. John Stennis who, at 72, is three years older than Eastland, spoke up and said, "Eastland, let the boy talk."

A former White House staffer confided last week that the idea of taping the President's office did not originate with Nixon. It was Bob Haldeman, he said, who suggested installing the taping equipment in order to have a complete historical record. The plan was to go over all of it at a later date and remove anything that was irrelevant or meaningless. So the President's painful predicament is partially the fault of the man who was closest to him.

Major domo Haldeman, said the ex-staffer, stayed so close to the President during his 1972 visit to Russia, an angered KGB agent pushed him out of the way and



ITALY'S Order of Merit is bestowed by Italian ambassador Egidio Ortona, right, on Douglas Fairbanks Jr. with Mrs. Fairbanks looking on.

EX-TREASURY
Secretary George Shultz could give his wife no explanation for Watergate.



up against a wall and his head was gashed in the process.

Julie and David Eisenhower's press conference at the White House last weekend proved that the executive mansion and its 22 acres are not the haven of heavenly comfort you might think. Indeed, after three quarters of an hour in the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden, I can see why any occupant would be ready to climb the wall if he didn't head for Camp David or someplace every weekend.

All the time the Eisenhowers were talking — "He's reacting," said Julie, "because he's human" — off from a distance came the continuous pounding of rock music amplified to such decibels that it pierced the press conference. The music came from all all-day rock concert at the Washington Monument, a half mile away.

"I felt they (the transcripts) should be released right along," said David as a gravel voice burst into song down at the Monument grounds. Just then the bleating, imperative siren of a fire engine rounded the Ellipse and added to the volume.

As the distant concert's emcee blared forth an announcement, someone asked Julie about her mother's mental attitude. She smiled as she offered this exam-

ple: "I got a big kick out of it. She called me and said the latest in a magazine was that she and Daddy were getting a divorce, and she said I should think of an exciting third party she could name so it would be a really good story." About that time a new wild beat was borne by the breezes to the scribblers in the Jackie Garden.

Douglas Fairbanks Jr., looking as slim and dashing as ever although a little older and grayer, came to town with wife Mary Lee to be decorated by Italian Ambassador Egidio Ortona. After years away from the screen Doug said he will make a film June 1 with Peter Sellers "for the fun of it." But first he will give the commencement address at the University of Colorado.

The decoration was for his devotion to Italy and for narrating a documentary that brought aid to the sinking city of Venice. "There's no unique distinction to being a lover of Italy," said Doug. "I don't know of anyone who aspires to being civilized who isn't."

James St. Clair, President Nixon's lawyer, boarded a Delta flight to Boston last weekend and was making his way to a seat in the economy section when a stranger in first class accosted him. "I don't care much for your client but you look tired," said the man getting up and offering him his seat, then heading for the rear of the plane.

Now that George Shultz has left government and the post of Secretary of the Treasury, his wife Obie doesn't mind saying how horrified she was over the Watergate transcripts. "I got sick. I couldn't read them. I started to but it upset me so. The first four years were great, then what hapened, I don't know. It was fun the first four years, the men worked hard and achieved a great deal. I asked George why did all this happen. He has no answer either."