

Watergate: How David Eisenhower Sees It



David Eisenhower was a summer sports writer

By Marlete Cimon
and Paul Houston
Los Angeles Times

Washington

David Eisenhower, comparing the Senate Watergate hearings to those conducted by the late Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, predicts that ten years from now the America people would remember them — and the whole "A nightmare."

"I think it is disgraceful that Senator (Sam) Ervin is willing to waive constitutional guarantees (of due process for the accused) for what he sees as a higher good," the President's son-in-law said last week in an impromptu interview over cheeseburgers in the park.

"It's the same with the Agnew business," he said, referring to published leaks of the alleged wrongdoing on the part of the vice president. "I think people will look back at it ten years from now as a nightmare, like the McCarthy travesty. I hope the American people will take stock of it and regret it."

His comments came during a casual lunch under a tree in Lafayette Park, across the street from the White House, shortly after he had registered for law school at George Washington University, three blocks away.

CHEESEBURGERS

Eisenhower, a first semester book list under one arm, went unnoticed by the regular noontime crowd at Kay's, a local carryout, as he waited — unaccompanied by the Secret Service — for his two cheeseburgers.

"I don't get any Secret Service agents," he said, smiling. "Blood relatives of the President are the only ones covered by law. It's nice. At this stage of the game, Julie and I are really looking forward to the time when we can get away from the hassle."

He seemed unconcerned, although somewhat amused, that no one in the carryout or on the street recognized him.

"It's the glasses," he said, gesturing towards his black horn rims. "I never had glasses before. The Navy

All in the Family

Washington

David Eisenhower addresses his father-in-law as Mr. Nixon, he recently told a reporter.

"Mrs. Nixon heard me call him that once and said:

"Now, David, you shouldn't be so formal."

"I said, 'You're right, Mrs. Nixon.'"

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ruined my eyes. I worked in a dark pit for three years."

He didn't say what the dark pit was.

WATERGATE

Eisenhower, wearing an open-collar blue shirt, plaid sportcoat, dark blue pants and what appeared to be black Navy shoes, answered all questions, comfortably, and in an affable, easygoing manner — even when the conversation inevitably turned to Watergate.

"I only saw the last part of Mr. Nixon's press conference, but I thought it was impressive," he said. "He had an unusual style. He was combative. Aggressive. I thought it accurately represented his mood. He is anxious to be done with the situation."

MOOD

He said he and Julie had talked to the President several hours after the press conference in San Clemente. "It was the best I've heard him in weeks," he said. "He

felt he handled it well. Something as intricate as this case is very hard to comment on.

Eisenhower said the President's spirits have improved considerably, and that his recent public display of temper at his press secretary, Ronald Zeigler, in New Orleans, is not indicative of his present mood.

"He has been known in the past to make a slip in public; a momentary burst in public, like when he referred to student protestors as 'bums,'" Eisenhower said. "But it did not represent his true feelings. Every President reveals himself to be human."

"If you had asked me two months ago if his mood was tense, I'd have said yes. But now, I have to say no."

CLIFF

Eisenhower, who was present at the family discussion regarding the question of Mr. Nixon's resignation, said the question was posed in an "off-hand, sarcastic"

way.

"It was like, 'Should I resign? Should I jump off a cliff?'"

"Jump off a cliff?" he was asked.

He laughed. "No, no," he said. "He never said that. I only meant that it was done in a way that none of us took seriously. It was the kind of thing where he was upset. Everyone was upset. He was just anxious to get everything off his chest. There was no way he could have seriously considered resigning."

Eisenhower, son of John S. Eisenhower, former ambassador to Belgium, and grandson of the late President Dwight D. Eisenhower, said he was looking forward to law school. Classes begin next week.

"My father was ready and willing to finance law school for three years," he said. "In fact, he was almost bribing me. The Eisenhowers are not lawyers. There's never been a lawyer in the family and my father wants one."

He was about to file his final sports column for the Philadelphia Bulletin, but said he wasn't sure he would be giving up journalism forever. "I might like to be a political columnist," he said.