

# A Long Way From the Cloth Coat

By Art Buchwald

"Dick, where are my matched set of emerald and diamond necklace and earrings? The last time I saw them they were here in the safe."

"Uh, uh, uh, I think they are over in the Chief of Protocol's office, Pat."

"What is my jewelry doing over there?"

"Well, I don't know how to tell you this, but they've not your jewels."

"You didn't sell them to pay our back taxes did you?"

"No, Pat. You see those jewels were given to us by Saudi Arabian royal family."

"But you told me that you gave me the necklace and earrings for my birthday."

"I did not. I distinctly remember saying that I could give them to you for your birthday—but it would be wrong."

"That isn't what you said at all, Dick, and you know it. You said that someone had offered to sell you the set for \$52,000 and you could raise the money without any trouble at all. The question was not whether you should pay it, but would the jeweler keep demanding more money later on. You said if it cost you more than \$52,000 it would be wrong."

"Why didn't you tell me that in the first place?"

"National Security. I couldn't let anyone know the Saudis had given us jewels. If I did, the Swedish would start giving us jewels and there would be no end to it."

"You know, Dick, that's the only jewelry you ever gave me."

"Now, Pat, stop crying. I remember the days when you were happy to wear a cloth coat."

"It isn't the jewels, Dick—it's the fact that you mis-spoke. How can I believe in your credibility if you won't even tell me the truth about my birthday present?"

"It wasn't my fault, Pat. If Maxine Cheshire hadn't stuck her (expletive deleted) nose into the White House, no one would have known about the Saudi gift. Don't you see what they're doing? They're out to destroy me."

"I understand that, Dick. At the same time it was wrong not to tell me who really gave us the jewels. It's almost immoral."

"Immoral you say? Here comes Father McLaughlin, my Jesuit priest. Let's ask him. Father do you think I did anything wrong in not telling Pat the jewels I gave her came from Saudi Arabia?"

"Bless you, Mr. President. You did the right thing. It would have been immoral to tell her the truth."

"The good book says, 'He that deceiveth his wife is innocent of all deception, amen.'"

"You see, Pat, even the church supports me."

"Oh well, it's not important. But what do I tell Tricia? She thinks the diamond and emerald pin is hers."

"Tell her we lost it."

"Why don't we just tell her the truth."

"I'm sure Father McLaughlin has a good answer to that one, Pat. Father?"

"It says in the good book: When an Arab king gives a gift of jewels, the price of oil goes up \$10 a barrel. Tell Tricia you lost it."