

By MARTIN ARNOLD

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LOS ANGELES, Jan. 16—Fittingly, William Matthew Byrne Jr. is a Hollywood version of a judge—young for a man in his position, ambitious, attractive and a bachelor.

To add to the real-life scenario, Judge Byrne is at perhaps the crisis in his carefully planned career, for he is presiding over the Pentagon papers case. And this could develop into the most legally tangled trial in an era of courtroom controversies.

However it turns out, no one who knows Matt Byrne, as he is called, expects that he is anything but fully prepared for either the issues in the case or the attendant publicity that will come from the trial.

Judge Byrne is considered by lawyers who appear before him in United States District Court to be fair, particularly bright, but not brilliant, and a hard-working judge who does his homework. He has, for instance, read thousands and thousands of pages—every page of the Pentagon papers and every page of the minutes of two grand juries, here and in Boston, that have investigated the case.

Still, although he is not considered greatly imaginative, he is certainly not a drudge, for he has a reputation for being seen at the best places with attractive society women and and sometimes with Hollywood personalities.

#### Women Responsive

He is 42 years old, slightly above medium height, almost stocky, but not tending toward fat. He has thinning sandy hair and long and thick sideburns. He does not dress in mod fashion, but he does not dress in pinstripes, either.

Coming out of the courtroom recently, a woman spectator said, "The only sexy figures in this trial are Matt Byrne and Ellsberg." Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony J. Russo Jr. are the defendants in the trial.

There is, however, a cautious quality about Judge Byrne. He seldom makes a quick ruling, usually preferring to study the motion in question either in chambers or at home. But once he makes a decision, that's it, and he is impatient if it is challenged.



Associated Press

*Alive to all aspects of a difficult case.*

Those who know Judge Byrne say that part of his being cautious stems from the fact that he is determined, for his future career, not to be reversed in this case; and that he had a bad fright when a higher court said it would be "foolish" not to impanel a new jury in the case—a warning that judge hastily responded to.

Judge Byrne seems to have been born and trained from childhood for the bench, and there are those who say that his parents have Kennedy-like ambitions for their son; eventually the Supreme Court, for example.

His father was a railroad engineer, a professional prizefighter, the Speaker of the California Legislature, a state court judge, and, until his retirement, the chief Federal district judge for Southern California.

The younger Judge Byrne's career, if not so dramatic, is also fairly distinctive. At the age of 36, he became widely known and highly regarded as a Federal prosecutor. On July 7, 1970, although a Democrat, he was appointed executive director of President Nixon's Commission on Campus Unrest.

Though young for such a job, he conceded at the time a great age gap between him and the generation he was investigating. He said of his own college days, "It was a placid period. People wore saddle shoes and crew cuts, and the worst disturbances then were bonfires at football rallies."

Judge Byrne was born Sept. 3, 1930, in Los Angeles. He went to a Jesuit high school here and to the University of Southern California, where he received a bachelor of science degree in 1953, and his law degree in 1956. He was on the editorial board of the University Law Review and in 1971 received his doctor of laws degree at Loyola University.

Judge Byrne is vice chairman of the Human Rights Section of the Los Angeles County Bar Association and holds many other similar posts.

On occasion, he indulges his interest in the outdoors in bizarre ways. He once spent six weeks in a primitive African village. He also has fished in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico and he goes skiing on weekends.

He works hard, but a friend once said of him, "What I don't understand is how he could keep so many good-looking girls waiting for him while he was still at the office at 8 or 9 o'clock."

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## Judge in Pentagon Papers Trial

William Matthew Byrne Jr.