

Betty Beale: Washington

Worried Faces in the White House



DEPUTY CHIEF Han Hsu of the new Peking delegation to Washington where the group is busy looking for working quarters.

WASHINGTON—Bob Haldeman could shut out the ugly rumors swarming about his head re the Watergate case by walking out into the garden of his new Washington house and enveloping himself under a canopy of breathtaking beauty.

The double cherry tree that was the deciding factor in buying the brand new red brick Georgetown house has been such a mass of blossoms it looked like a pink parasol sheltering the 200 tulips Jo Haldeman planted under it.

At the very same time news stories were speculating that Haldeman would have to go if only because as the President's boss of the White House he should have known what was going on, the carpeting for his house was being installed.

There was no hint to their close friends that their stay in the adored new abode might be a short one, and Jo completely denied the rumor that they had bought a house in California.

When they returned from an Easter weekend at Camp David—where they spent last Easter too—there was no indication to friends that there was anything new. But Bob and Jo Haldeman would keep such things to themselves anyhow. Softer and more smiling than her husband, Jo is equally reserved. They are very private people with a small circle of friends, among the closest of which are the John Ehrlichmans. They are almost never seen on the social circuit.

The Haldemans have more money than the Ehrlichmans. At least they have kept a maid whereas Jean Ehrlichman does practically all the housework herself, according to intimates, except for a once-a-week cleaning woman. Jean cooks and sews for her husband and their two youngest children who are at home, besides doing volunteer work for the D.C. public schools' remedial reading program and for concerts and other artistic offerings aimed at inner-city children. John and Jean are easier to know and go out more frequently.

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Over at the White House there was a new atmosphere of caution and sobriety. Mrs. Nixon seemed to be less smiling than usual and very guarded in what she said.

"Everybody is stunned about it. I think she's as bewildered as we all are. I think she's worried for the President's sake," said a White House spokesman.

At the White House dinner for Italian Prime Minister Andreotti, David Eisenhower said he had narrowed his writing choices down to two, but he might still settle for his third choice—studying law.

His listener thoughtlessly cracked, "If you get a newspaper job, I bet your first assignment will be the Watergate story." The smiling face of Julie, who was standing beside him, instantly turned solemn. "She is obviously worried," said a member of the White House staff. "She's very close to her father."

Missing from the White House scene is the atmosphere of prestige and glory that surrounds the most



WATERGATE speculation involved Nixon aide Robert Haldeman, here with his wife.

powerful job in the Western world. High officials with no involvement can't hide their shamed-faced expressions. Said one, "Look at all the good we've done, and now we're being tarred with it. Next time, Teddy Kennedy."

"They can't blame me," spoke up Murray Chotiner at a party. "If I had done it, I wouldn't have flubbed it."

A very earnest man asked the wife of a cabinet officer, "Just why did they do it when they didn't need to?" Cracked the wife, who's always been able to spot the Democratic plant in the campaign headquarters where she'd worked, "Force of habit!"

In the meantime, Martha Mitchell, who burst out last June with, "I'm not going to stand for all those dirty things that go on," appears vindicated. Without a doubt, the hottest show in the country, including anything Broadway has produced in the last 50 years, will be Sen. Ervin's hearings the day Martha is called to the stand.

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Frank Sinatra caused White House employees to be miffed when he was 45 minutes late for his rehearsal in the East Room the day of his performance at the Nixons' dinner honoring the Italian prime minister.

It seems that the word went out that all who wanted to come to the rehearsal could do so providing they were seated by 4 p.m. because it disturbed Sinatra to have anyone walk in when he was singing. His busy fans at the mansion duly assembled on time and while their work awaited them, they sat for 45 minutes before

Sinatra showed up. An Agnew aide said he did not think Sinatra understood he was to appear at exactly that hour.

But the explosive Frank was welcomed so warmly back to Washington and into the good graces of officialdom by President Nixon, you may not hear any more about his outburst during inaugural festivities.

That the Vice President has no intention of dropping him was obvious when he went to the Sinatra-Malatesta house for a party after the White House affair.

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The 10 polished, pleasant, relaxed Chinese who flew in from Peking to set up what will eventually be the first Communist Chinese embassy are engaged in one of Washington's favorite pursuits. They're looking for a place to lay their heads and hang their briefcases.

They're visiting property after property described in the avalanche of prospecti which descended on the State Department as soon as real estate agents here got the word they were interested. The protocol office sorted out the most interesting to show them before turning them over to the individual brokers.

Their first American meal was served in historic Decatur House across Lafayette Square from the White House. It began with Maryland crab cocktail and ended with hot fudge sundaes and Schramsberg champagne which is the same the President took to Peking with him because he considers it our best. They ought to put on the label, "By appointment to RMN."