

Richardson: An Intense Perfectionist

Washington

ELLIOT L. Richardson brings to his new job as attorney general that peculiar Boston political skill that enables him to get a dirty job done and still stay out of trouble.

He'll need that skill to conduct an investigation of the Watergate mess — his newest assignment in a spell-binding ascent which has seen him hold three cabinet posts in a few months.

Richardson said he had accepted the nomination as attorney general "because I believe I have an overriding duty to do so."

On the day they were interviewed, the Richardsons were eating roast beef for breakfast in their \$165,000 McLean, Va., home.

The pensive cabinet member was impeccable in a natty Arthur Adler suit, paisley tie and Harvard horn rims. In spite of his 52 years, his smooth skin is a peachy hue. And in spite of sometimes unseasonable weather, he swims daily in his outdoor pool.

He says that he enjoys



MRS. RICHARDSON
"We just laugh"

anything "demanding," whether it's swimming, fly fishing or a new job.

His brothers, friends, wife and colleagues describe Richardson's love of challenge as "intensity," "doggedness" and the desire "to do everything perfectly." Others translate his determination as unbridled ambition and his serious manner as smugness.

Whichever it is, it has served him well in his rise from undersecretary of state, secretary of health, education and welfare to secretary of defense and now as attorney general. But not so well on the political front.

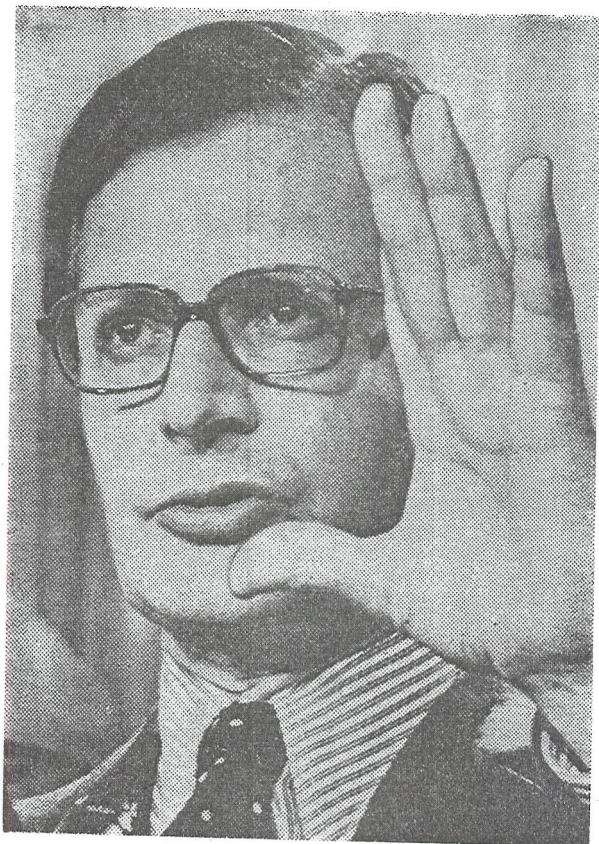
Says a Kennedy aide, "He's still aloof. He has no future in elective politics, because he's just no good at it."

Nevertheless, Richardson's last post before going to Washington was an elected one — as Massachusetts attorney general from 1967 to 1969. Before that he had been lieutenant governor, a special assistant U.S. attorney in Massachusetts and assistant to Governor Christian Herter and Senator Leverett Saltonstall. He graduated Harvard Law cum laude in 1947.

Even his brother, E. P. (Edward Peirson) Richardson, M.D., admits Elliot has had to learn how to carry on a "free and easy exchange with large groups of people. It was very difficult for him because it is not his nature."

With a record of shyness, how will he ever run for the presidency, which many say he would like to do? Or the vice presidency? Rumors have Richardson paired with either John Connally or Spiro Agnew on the 1976 Republican ticket.

Richardson sips his coffee and skirts the issue. "I've never really made any ca-



ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON
The ameliorator of Watergate?

reer plans. I think it's fair to say I've never really known what was going to come up. Each job has come as a surprise, and most of the time I would have liked to have stayed on doing what I was doing."

He would have preferred staying at State. In fact, it was rumored he would succeed William Rogers and many were shocked when he was shifted from State to HEW: "I would have been glad to go back to State," says Richardson quietly, "but one doesn't plan these things."

Why did Richardson think the President chose him for Defense? "I guess it's because I had shown the ability to lead a large organization. And, of course, military and foreign policy objectives are closely related."

As defense secretary he did not agree the image of the brave, bold serviceman has been tarnished by Vietnam. "I think there have been some gains in the last year or so. The returning POWs gave a great lift to the national morale and brought back respect for the military."

Several ideas for Defense were in the hopper prior to his latest appointment — a pilot project with Health, Education and Welfare to

utilize medics for emergency services such as highway accidents and a project to involve military personnel in the performing arts, as teachers and participants, in communities surrounding military installations. He was working on this with National Endowment for the Arts chairman Nancy Hanks.

He gives his tall, white-haired, doe-eyed wife a kiss on the lips and climbs into his long blue limousine clutching *The New York Times*. "I always read in the car," he explains.

Athletic Anne Richardson says of her husband, "he's an ameliorator — a patient man who enjoys dealing with knotty problems, a born problem-solver." She cannot understand the charges of "arrogance" and "coldbloodness."

"We just laugh at it now. He's not that way at all. He's warm and affectionate. He gives and needs a lot of affection. He's not a back-slapping politician."

Will he be president? "I think he'd be great, but the process would be unthinkable. I don't see it. He's so wrapped up in what he's doing, and he never takes a job because it leads up a ladder, but simply because it's worth doing."

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