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Mrs. Ehrlichman, Mrs. Dean and the Haldemans: Prying cameras, jangling phones and a daily pall of suspicion

Family Fallout: Painful Days

They never mixed with outsiders much, even in the best of times. The men who followed Richard Nixon to Washington generally kept to themselves—shunning personal publicity, socializing occasionally with one another, spending most of their free time quietly at home with their wives and children. Now, in the shadow of Watergate, these quintessentially Nixonian families are suffering through a painful period of notoriety and stress. And it seems a condition for which they were left largely unprepared by their previously sheltered existence.

The prying cameras, the constant phone calls, the pall of suspicion have become daily facts of life for the men tainted by Watergate—and for their families as well. Even the Nixon family has talked about the impact of a resignation by the President (“We’re saying to him, ‘We believe in you,’” Julie Eisenhower reported last week). And John and Martha Mitchell—though long used to publicity—have been physically and emotionally shaken by Mitchell’s recent indictment. The impact seems equally severe for those who play lesser roles in the unfolding drama. “It’s so tragic,” says one Nixon campaign veteran who knows many of them. “These were a bunch of young family men on their way up. They had everything going for them, and now their lives have been wrecked.”

The strains are obvious. Former White House counsel John Dean found that neighbors were reluctant to visit while TV crews kept the Deans’ two-story brick

home in Alexandria, Va., under constant surveillance. “The cameras were everywhere,” said his wife, Maureen, 28, and added brightly: “I had to worry about a change of clothing every time I went to the grocery store.” What Mrs. Jeb S. Magruder found most offensive was the inescapable late-night calls from reporters who found her despite a new, unlisted number. “It’s crude and I don’t like it,” she said.*

Some old friends seem to avoid the shadowed Nixon men and their families like the plague. “We wouldn’t think of going to see them,” says one former employee of the Committee for the Re-election of the President. “If you ever knew anybody these days a link is attempted. There is so much paranoia and guilt by association.”

The snubs have driven some of the hard-pressed families to consider fleeing Washington altogether. The Haldemans, friends say, have quietly put their \$140,000 house in Georgetown back on the market and are considering plans to move back to California. Gail Magruder has applied for a passport and is tinkering with the notion of escaping with her five children to Europe for the summer.

But some friends—and even a few casual acquaintances—have gone out of their way to be helpful. At the National

*The Magruders are undergoing a special hardship because of the sudden death of his mother. (“She was a rock to us,” says wife Gail.) Former Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans, indicted along with Mitchell, faces a double burden of his own with the recent hospitalization of his wife, Kathleen.

Cathedral School, sympathetic parents scratched the initials H.R.H. off a briefcase donated by H.R. (Bob) Haldeman for a fund-raising auction—and also removed potentially embarrassing divider labels marked “Current,” “File,” “Hot” and “Destroy.” Former Transportation Department Under Secretary Egil (Bud) Krogh, who resigned after admitting that he ordered the 1971 burglary of Daniel Ellsberg’s psychiatrist’s office in Beverly Hills, is receiving more invitations than ever, along with offers to take advantage of friends’ country retreats. “People have been so kind,” says his wife, Suzanne. John and Maureen Dean actually did hide out briefly (even got in some sun and sailing), but soon returned to Alexandria and an approximation of life as usual.

Dishes: Most of the others have adopted the same tough-it-out tack. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman keep up their weekly battles on the tennis court. Ehrlichman, his wife and young son were spotted recently in a local Virginia Pizza Hut; Haldeman leads his family to church each Sunday; his wife, Joanne, shows up regularly at Junior League meetings, as does Gail Magruder. Most of the working wives have continued to hold down their jobs while their husbands, formerly some of Washington’s busiest executives, spend more time than they have in years with their children or with the household chores. “I haven’t ever done so many dishes,” laughed Bud Krogh.

Children inevitably suffer most in a crisis whose moral dimensions they can scarcely understand. Taunts from peers are predictable. “Their name is now a household word,” says a friend of a



Mills: 'A tragic overreaction'

Waterbugger whose children have come in for some hazing. "You know how cruel other children can be." Egil Krogh's small son, Peter, got his baptism one day as he drove past the White House on a school outing. His classmates booed—and he burst into tears. But older offspring, at colleges and universities around the country, seem to be taking each day's developments in stride—maintaining the same stiff lip they always do when the talk turns to Washington. "This isn't a very good time to give interviews," said H.H. (Hank) Haldeman, 19, at UCLA recently. "It would not be helping my father."

The first prize for good humor in the face of adversity probably goes to Joanne Haldeman. When a florist turned up with a potted plant from a well-wisher last week, Mrs. Haldeman told him to leave it on the stoop in the rain. She had a wry explanation: "I wanted to drown the bugs in it first."

A Fatal Footnote

The widening investigation into corruption at the financial wellsprings of the 1972 Nixon campaign claimed its first fatality last week: Rep. William O. Mills, 48, an obscure Maryland congressman—and protégé of former GOP National Chairman Rogers C.B. Morton—who found himself identified at the outermost fringe of the Watergate scandal, and chose death over that disgrace.

The tragedy started almost as a footnote to a report on the President's 1972 finance committee released last week by the General Accounting Office. According to the report, the congressman accepted a \$25,000 loan in 1971 from Nixon campaign funds. Mills used the money to bankroll his successful bid to fill the House seat left vacant when Morton signed on with the Nixon Cabinet as

Secretary of the Interior. The money came from a \$1.7 million fund administered by the President's personal lawyer, Herbert Kalmbach—the same fund that was later allegedly used to finance the Watergate burglary—and Mills failed to report the windfall to the Maryland Board of Elections, possibly in violation of state law.

Unusual: No one accused Mills of any involvement in the Watergate affair himself, and officials from the Committee for the Re-election of the President explained that the contribution, though unusual (it was handed over in cash) was free of Watergate taint. "It would have been an embarrassment to lose that seat to a Democrat," observed one GOP topsider. "At the time we needed all the votes we could get in Congress."

For the moment, Mills's only connection with the scandal seemed to be that he had fed from the same money trough that later nourished the Waterbuggers. But even that distant association hurt. "He wasn't wringing his hands," recalled one friend in Washington last week, "but he reflected great pain."

Mills anguished for three days with his friends and family (a wife, Norma Lea, a son, 16, and a married daughter, 24). He denied any wrongdoing on local television near his shore home in Easton, Md., and in a taped radio message. Then a little before 7 the next morning, Mills left his house, drove to a nearby stable, Mulberry Hill Farm, went into the barn and shot himself through the heart with a 12-gauge shotgun. Seven notes were found, one near his body, saying he didn't know how to prove his innocence—"there was no other way out." Friends were stunned. "He was so remote from Watergate," said one. "It was a tragic overreaction."

POLITICS:

Percy's Gamble

Jetting across the country these days, Illinois Sen. Charles Percy flips frequently through a pack of file cards bearing his latest Watergate wisecracks (one somewhat limp sample: "I have found far more support for my prison-reform legislation since Watergate broke open"). In a spate of personal appearances from Washington, D.C., to La Crosse, Wis., he bolsters his warm-up jokes with fat paragraphs of indignation. Watergate, Percy likes to tell the crowds, "is an outrage to decent men everywhere . . . and I am one of them."

Some fellow Republicans question Percy's political decency, but he is certainly outraged. More than any other national political figure, and certainly more than any other Republican, Charles Percy has made Watergate his personal issue for now—and perhaps a solid base for a run at the White House in 1976.

Percy's gadfly tactic is a sharp contrast to the pre-Presidential stance of his leading Republican rivals. Vice Presi-

dent Agnew and John Connally both have their fortunes linked to the President's; Connally seized the Watergate opportunity to switch to the GOP as a Nixon loyalist. New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller and California Gov. Ronald Reagan see their chances rising in proportion to Mr. Nixon's injuries, but cannily say as little as possible about the whole messy business. Reagan won't even concede that the Watergate buggerers are properly classified as criminals ("They're not criminals at heart").

Mr. Clean: But Percy has clashed with Mr. Nixon before—over Vietnam, the ABM and G. Harrold Carswell's nomination to the Supreme Court—and he sees Watergate as a chance to take the moral lead. Even though he clearly risks alienating GOP loyalists around the country, his Mr. Clean approach has brought him phenomenal success with Illinois voters, and he is betting that it will work as well nationwide.

The President's Watergate message had barely faded from the TV screen last month when Percy introduced a Senate resolution—passed by 5-0 when the floor was nearly empty—calling for a special prosecutor in the case. "The executive branch should not be investigating itself," he declared. The President reportedly fumed at a Cabinet meeting that Percy was making a cynical bid for the Presidency, and predicted he would fail "as long as I have anything to say about it." But Percy was ready with a stinging counterattack. Said the senator: "I think it's absolutely ghoulish that the President would raise a political issue in the midst of a scandal that is shaking the country to its roots."

Mess: Percy continued his campaign after last week's statement by the President. It was, he said, still too little, too late. Calling big money the root of most political evil, the millionaire senator has also proposed a campaign-spending reform act with stiff criminal penalties.

The strategy may seem a little opportunistic to those who remember how the senator skirted Watergate last year in his own campaign. Indeed, when his outspoken wife began talking to reporters about "the disgusting mess" that was then just beginning to unfold, Percy all but kicked her in the shins ("Now, Lorraine . . ."). "Chuck does seem to rush up front at the last minute on some things," concedes a political ally. Conservative GOP leaders are more outspoken. "He's always looking out for himself," fumes state Rep. Henry Hyde. "This is the time the President and the party need help and support."

But Percy maintains that even Republican voters will respond to a candidate who tries to expose the full story of Watergate and cleanse his party in the process. "The man who picks up the pieces on this has to be independent," he told NEWSWEEK's Tony Fuller. "If the price I have to pay for my independence is some criticism from the so-called professionals, then I'll pay it."

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