

John Dean

Closeup Profile

Washington

Until last spring, until the base of the Watergate iceberg surfaced, John Wesley Dean III basked in his own notion of success.

Inside the Nixon circle he ranked nowhere near the top on scales of power and independence. In fact it is difficult now to determine what impact the smiling young lawyer made on the administration.

But he relished his imposing title — counsel to the President — even though he rarely counseled the President. And his trappings advertised a man who had made it to the top.

In any one of many \$200 suits, he drove a maroon Porsche 911 to the White House each day from his townhouse in Alexandria overlooking the Potomac. He and his wife, Maureen, sailed their 20-foot boat on the Chesapeake Bay on weekends. There were vacations in the Mediterranean and in the Philippines.

STAR

Now, discharged from his position, he is locked in an epic struggle with the White House over President Nixon's involvement in the Watergate affair. Fighting to stay out of prison for his role in the Watergate cover-up, Dean took the stand yesterday as the star witness in the hearings of the Senate Select Committee on Watergate.

Colleagues, friends and enemies have searched for the ingredients that distinguished John Dean in the

plentiful ranks of young lawyers in Washington, and led Mr. Nixon to appoint him to be presidential counsel — a position often reserved in previous administrations for some of the finest legal minds in the country.

All agree that he is bright, but not brilliant, that he works hard, and with a certain charm. But did he claw his way up, using people and turning on them — as he has turned against the administration — for immediate advantage? Or was he rather — as his Watergate testimony suggested — a mere ornament, a man who was used by the real powers in the administration? Friends say he was manipulated;

SFChronicle

JUN 26 1973

Nixon 'Aware' Of Testimony

San Clemente

The Western White House said yesterday that President Nixon "is fully aware of what is taking place" at the Senate Watergate hearings in Washington but will have no comment on the subject this week.

Press secretary Ronald Zeigler said Mr. Nixon "is

being informed by staff assistants, including General Alexander M. Haig Jr., of pertinent parts" of testimony by his ousted counsel John W. Dean III.

As in the past, Zeigler insisted Mr. Nixon himself does not watch the hearings.

Associated Press

foes say he was always a manipulator himself. Both may be partly right.

ROOTS

John Dean's roots sprouted in solid Nixon country, mid-America, and society — upper middle-class. His father was a middle-level executive at Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. in Akron, Ohio, when Dean was born on Oct. 14, 1938, and provided his only son with more than a few advantages.

But young Dean left no distinguished academic record behind at any of the schools he attended as he floundered in choosing his directions — not at Staunton Military Academy in Virginia (where he roomed with Barry Goldwater Jr., now a Congressman from California); not at Colgate University; not at American University; not at Wooster College where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in 1961; and not at Georgetown



Former White House Counsel John Dean III (far right) was the center of attention—for photographers and the Senate Committee—as he read his long statement

AP Wirephoto

University Law School, where he attained his law degree.

"Average" is the common term used by the professors and classmates who recall John Dean.

He did possess a boyish smile, a trim physique and gentle manner, which attracted Karla Hennings, among others, the daughter of Senator Thomas Hennings (Rep.-Mo.). Dean's marriage to Miss Hennings ended in divorce, but his association with Hennings—a highly respected member of the Judiciary Committee who died in 1960—gained him entry to many of the power centers in Washington.

Thus, when he was graduated from Georgetown Law School, he was hired by the law firm of Welch and Morgan, because, as one member put it, "he was Tom Hennings's son-in-law." Edward P. Morgan, the senior partner who hired Dean, had been a friend of Hennings.

After only six months as an associate in the law firm, Dean was dismissed. Vincent B. Welch, senior partner in the firm, which spe-

cializes in television licensing, charged Dean with "unethical conduct" — a phrase he later softened to "basic disagreement" over policy.

The problem, in any event, was that Dean, while preparing a St. Louis television application for Welch, was, at the same time, privately working on a rival application with friends.

Another Welch and Morgan lawyer says that Dean had already decided to leave the firm before he was dismissed.

"John realized his strongest talents couldn't be brought to bear" in private practice, said the lawyer. "What distinguished John was the combination of a shrewd judgment of people, with a very pleasant manner. He knew it to be one of his marketable capabilities."

The market that beckoned was politics, and Dean quickly sold himself as minority counsel on the House

Judiciary Committee.

During Dean's year on the committee, he made a valuable friend, however, in Richard Poff, a Republican, now a justice on the Virginia Supreme Court and once considered by Mr. Nixon for appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Poff made Dean associate director of the National Commission on the Reform of Federal Criminal Laws.

One of the projects Dean worked on during his two years on the commission was the proposal that gave birth to the provision in the 1970 Omnibus Crime Control Act allowing prosecutors to grant "limited immunity" to witnesses.

"Use immunity," as it is also known, prevents the Watergate prosecutors from using Dean's testimony before the Senate committee against him, unless they can establish the evidence independently.

Louis B. Schwartz, now a professor of law at the Univ-

ersity of Pennsylvania, who served on the commission, said he was "unimpressed by any great principles" Dean held. Dean, he said, "knows there is an exception to everything." But Schwartz noted that Dean kept an "open mind," and was "flexible," and had changed his positions, for example, from approval to disapproval of capital punishment.

CRIME

In his spare time, Dean worked on position papers on crime for Richard Nixon during the 1968 presidential campaign.

Law-and-order was a major issue, and Poff knew John N. Mitchell, who was about to become attorney general. In February, 1969, Dean was named associate deputy attorney general and designated the Justice Department's liaison with Congress.

Before the big anti-war demonstration here in 1969, Dean negotiated with the

protest leaders, dickering over routes and the parade permit. The administration had predicted mass violence and when the troubles proved minimal, Dean was given a piece of the credit. The next summer, when John D. Ehrlichman, then the President's chief domestic adviser, looked around for someone to take his old title of "counsel," Dean was one of the few possibilities.

"There weren't five guys in all of Washington that were good Republican young lawyers," said one lawyer who worked with Dean.

"He got the job as counsel for two reasons," said one Justice Department official. First "he was bright and good looking. Those are public relations people in the White House," he added. "Secondly, John Ehrlichman didn't want someone in that job who would challenge him."

GRATEFUL

In June, 1970, John Dean joined the flock of bright young men in the White House — men beholden to the President and his chief lieutenants for their authority and chance of advancement. They were not men who had known distinction before they were chosen to serve the President. They were grateful and diligent.

Dean plowed through his assignments, which included handling some personal affairs for the President and interviewing candidates for nomination to the Supreme Court, while earning the reputation of an expert on the unwritten doctrine of "executive privilege."

In 1972, his chores came to include such things as sitting in with John Mitchell on meetings to plan espionage against Democrats and ordering Howard Hunt to flee the country.

The prospect of jail is a powerful influence on men. In John Dean's case it has done many things — it has fired him out of anonymity into the most dramatic solo role in the Watergate affair so far, and into a showdown confrontation with the most powerful office in the world.

New York Times