

Royce Brier

## The Sharks in The Aquarium

**YOU COULDN'T MISS IT** on the newsstands — grim, earnest Newsweek splashed in outrageous color. There stood a buxom blond with golden skin in a vivid cerese bikini at poolside. And laughing.

In face she was prettier than Haldeman, in torso surpassed, one guesses, Ehrlichman. You can imagine the editorial board session a few weeks ago, when some rebel pipes up: "Haven't we had a bellyful of browns and grays and blue serge suits on our covers?"

Let the Time people cry themselves a river, that they didn't think of it.

A flash-in-the-pan, alas. Next week back to the old drawing board—brown, gray and blue serge. Happily Mr. John Dean III was gone. For years the people have been hearing of the Plastic Man, but never saw a real one. It was like the Siberian legend, Big-Foot.



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**SO HERE HE WAS**, and you must be kidding! Forty-six hundred and eighty-three incidents in Mr. Dean's administrative year, all hearsay, surmises, conclusions, deductions, inductions, each allocated to a "point in time" in Mr. Dean's nasal utterance.

The Senators and Counsel tried to trip him, and no way. How do you trip a plastic man dishing up plastic memories, which transpired as constructs or plastic impressions? Can a plastic impression be rendered less phony by refutation? It reminds you of the furniture advertisement offering genuine, simulated mahogany.

Mr. Dean was succeeded by other browns, grays, and blue serges, you forget their identities. They were not honest-to-God plastic men, not even genuine simulated phonies, but zeros.

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**SO CAME UPON US**, quietly and warily, John Mitchell, the Watergate Senators' white hope. Mr. Mitchell allowed the most indispensable goal last year, like maintaining the stability of the star we call the sun, was re-election of President Nixon.

To achieve this it was necessary to fool Mr. Nixon a little about what was going on. He didn't tell Mr. Nixon what was going on, and at some junctures you wonder if he told Mr. Mitchell. In any case, it was an immense current service to the President who, by Mr. Mitchell's testimony, was left knowing virtually nothing of the misprision whooshing about Mr. Mitchell's ears, and racing through the corridors of government like a hot wind under draft.

Mr. Mitchell's primary weapon against the Ervin Committee was "to the best of my recollection." Who of us in a crunch can do better? Moreover, it was enough, because they didn't crack Mr. Mitchell.

In the big tanks at Steinhart Aquarium the sharks weave to and fro. Occasionally they pause and look you in the eye, weird. But if you aren't spellbound you'll note they peer ever at their fellows in the tank to learn of their intent. In all the animal kingdom you will not encounter a more alert tension for the next move, unless it is on the witness stand of a Senate hearing when the chips are down.

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