

President's Secretary

Rose Mary Woods

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 8— "People have come and gone," says Murray Chotiner, "and Rose Woods remains and goes on forever." Mr. Chotiner, an old associate of President Nixon, was alluding to the shifting tides that have swept the Nixon staff in the past months. H.R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and a number of others are gone, but Rose Mary Woods is still there with "the Boss"—as she calls Mr. Nixon—just as she has been for 22 years.

Woman
in the
News

Today, Miss Woods, who has served as Mr. Nixon's personal secretary for most of his tumultuous political career, gave a rare public exhibition of the qualities of toughness and loyalty that over the years have made her stand out among Mr. Nixon's aides.

Appearing in United States District Court here, she was asked to explain her role in typing the transcripts of the White House tapes sought by the Watergate presecutors. Miss Woods responded in calm and measured terms, but her irritation was obvious when she was repeatedly asked to remember details of what she had typed.

"I don't think anyone here realizes what a job it was!" she finally exclaimed.

But Miss Woods, a petite 55-year-old woman with strawberry blonde hair, is used to hard work, the 18-hour days and the sleepless nights. What makes her special, Mr. Nixon wrote in his book "Six Crises," is "that rare and unique characteristic that marks the difference between a good secretary and a great one—she is always at her best when the pressures are greatest."

'A Great Secretary'

However, she is more than "a great secretary." In a sense, Rose Woods is Richard Nixon's link to the past, a person who has been with him through good times and bad. In the White House, where Mr. Nixon's principal advisers—Henry A. Kissinger, Ronald L. Ziegler and Alexander M. Haig Jr.—are relatively recent acquaintances, she is the exception, a staff member who frequently lives privately with the Nixon family, who has known the Nixon daughters since they were children.

It is Rose Woods who is entrusted with Mr. Nixon's personal correspondence, who types the "reading copy" of

the President's speeches. And it is Rose Woods who keeps in touch with old Nixon friends, who makes sure that they receive invitations to the White House and that their letters are answered.

Despite her relationship with Mr. Nixon—whom she first met in 1947, when he was a freshman Representative and she was a secretary for one of his committees—the years in the White House have not all been easy ones for Miss Woods. Her feud with H. R. Haldeman, the President's demanding chief of staff, was an open secret, and it was even rumored that Mr. Haldeman wanted to transfer Miss Woods from her office two doors from the President's to a more secluded one across the street in the Executive Office Building.

A new Title

She is reportedly happier now as a result of a White House reorganization last spring, which gave her a new title, "executive assistant," and more to do.

The third of five children, Miss Woods was born in Sebring, a small town in northeastern Ohio, on Dec. 26, 1917. Her father, a potter, served as a vice president of his local union until he was made superintendent of the factory where he worked.

An Excellent Dancer

Miss Woods remains particularly close to her older brother, Joseph, who served as the Republican sheriff of Cook County in Illinois for four years and who is now an officer of an armored car company in Chicago.

Beneath her calm and discreet exterior is a wit and gaiety noticeably missing in the White House. Miss Woods is known as an excellent dancer. One performance took place at a reception in San Clemente last August, when Miss Woods, late in the evening, danced a skillful tango, alone, to the music of a three-piece Mexican band.

She has as sharp temper, however, which is particularly directed toward anyone she believes is unfair to Richard Nixon.

After today's testimony, Miss Woods was relaxed and smiling as she answered newsmen's question. A few minutes later, as she was walking out of the courthouse, a reporter asked if she still believed President Nixon was "an honest man."

Miss Woods paused, her eyes flashing, and replied:

"That is a rude, impertinent—the answer is yes."