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Ex-Nixon Aide John Dean Disbarred Over Watergate

By Joanne Omang

Washington Post Staff Writer

A three-judge Virginia Circuit Court panel yesterday found former White House counsel John W. Dean III guilty of "unethical, unprofessional and unwarranted conduct" during the Watergate affair and revoked his license to practice law in Virginia.

Dean, who did not speak throughout the Alexandria court proceeding, had no comment on the action, which is the same thing as disbarment. The panel had three options — reprimand, suspension and revocation — and chose the most stringent of the three.

The disbarment is effective only in Virginia, although Dean has never practiced law in the state. Commonwealth Attorney William L. Cowhig said that the Court's action would not prohibit Dean from taking the bar examination in any other state.

On Nov. 12, the D.C. Court of Appeals suspended Dean's

license to practice law in the District. Yesterday Dean's local attorney, Thomas P. Mains Jr., said he did not believe Dean has passed bar examinations in any other state.

The three judges — Franklin P. Backus, W. Moscoe Huntley and W. Carrington Thompson — deliberated less than an hour before returning their unanimous verdict. In doing so, they rejected a lesser penalty suggested by Mains, that Dean's license be suspended indefinitely.

"It is our feeling that the full information and the final chapters have not been written on Watergate," Mains told the Court. "There is substantial information yet to come forth to both the public and this Court . . . that will be largely mitigating in nature so far as John Dean is concerned."

Dean earlier agreed to most of the charges made by the Eighth District Committee of

the Virginia State Bar in its complaint asking the panel to rule on disbarment. "We can't seriously contend that (only) a reprimand is in order; therefore we do not ask it," Mains said in requesting the suspension.

The complaint, filed Nov. 20, noted that Dean agreed he had violated Virginia canons of ethics for attorneys by withholding evidence during development of the government case against those accused of the Watergate break-in on June 17, 1972.

Dean's attorneys took issue, however, with the allegation he appropriated for his own personal use \$4,850 out of \$15,200 entrusted to his care.

The judges, however, ruled that the allegation had been proven.

Their verdict is subject to appeal to the governor of Virginia or to the state Supreme Court of Appeals, which could reinstate Dean anytime. His attorneys declined to say

whether the ruling would be appealed.

Dean and his wife, Maureen, appeared cheerful and joked with reporters during a break in the proceedings.

"I've been doing a lot of reading lately, rereading old favorite books," Dean said. "I've just finished rereading (George) Orwell's '1984,' which details a dictatorship of the future. He said he had also read Gore Vidal's 'Burr' and Arthur Schlesinger's 'The Imperial Presidency.'"

Dean declined to comment, however, on any aspect of the Watergate case or on the recent conflicting views on the validity of his committee testimony accusations against President Nixon.

Special Watergate Prosecutor Leon Jaworski was quoted Sunday as saying there was no reason to suspect Dean had lied, while White House special counsel James D. St. Clair has held that presidential tape recordings "do not support" Dean's testimony.



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

DISBARRED—John W. Dean III and his wife, Maureen, walk home from Alexandria courthouse after he was prohibited from practicing law in Virginia. Judges found Dean guilty of unethical conduct during Watergate affair. Story, Page D1.