

THE NIXON FAMILY

FACING THE ORDEAL

The Nixons have always been intensely private people, keeping their own counsel and concealing their innermost feelings behind the masks they present to the public. Last week, as the pressures on the President mounted, each member of this tightly knit family withdrew briefly even from the others, as if only in isolation could the strength be summoned to face the approaching ordeal.

Normally, the two Nixon girls lunched with their mother when they were in the White House, providing her with the only real companionship she had; in recent months Julie and Tricia saw to it that at least one of them was around to keep Mrs. Nixon company. But last Wednesday was no normal day. Joined by her husband Edward, who had hastily flown down from New York City, Tricia Nixon Cox dined in the pink and white suite that was hers before her marriage. Julie Nixon Eisenhower lunched with her husband David in the third-floor solarium, overlooking the Mall and Washington's great monuments. Pat Nixon ate alone one floor below in her sitting room, where in recent weeks she has spent entire days in solitude reading the supportive letters that arrive at the White House at the rate of about 500 a day. Across the way, her husband lunched alone in the Executive Office Building.

In the past Richard Nixon's family, apparently ignorant of the contents of the fateful tapes, had been outspoken in his defense. Julie faced reporters on the White House lawn and insisted on her father's honesty. The quieter Tricia told newsmen in California that "innocence is innocence and my father is innocent!" Pat, whose composure rarely cracks, twice flashed anger at reporters for persisting in questions about Watergate. Last week all were silent. Their silence bothered some of Nixon's supporters. "What sort of man would hide things from his daughters and let them go out and defend him?" asked Franklin Hallock, a Shelter Island, N.Y., real estate dealer.

There was a strange, almost ritualistic quality to the family's activities as they faced Nixon's final crisis. Monday evening the family, joined by Rose Mary Woods, who has been Nixon's personal secretary since 1951,

boarded the presidential yacht for a dinner cruise down the Potomac. "I felt a stab when I saw them leaving for the *Sequoia*," said a member of Mrs. Nixon's personal staff. "If I felt as bad as I did, how must they feel? Yet they were smiling and seemed really cheerful." The scene was reminiscent of the Czar's family going into exile.

On the evening of the cruise, Nixon was still assuring his family that although the House was lost, he hoped for acquittal in the Senate. By Wednesday that was no longer true. That afternoon

Julie walked from the White House to the Executive Office Building for a brief meeting with her father. Later, Tricia and Edward Cox and David Eisenhower called on Nixon. It was a strange performance since, after their separate lunches, the family would be together for dinner, along with Rose Mary Woods. It is possible that during those oddly formal meetings, Nixon first told the family that he was considering resignation, the option he had always rejected.

The dinner was an emotional affair. His wife and daughters were united against his quitting. Nixon had always said that he would "go down to the wire constitutionally." Julie and Tricia continued to argue that he should. Usually, after such a family dinner, the

Nixons would watch a movie together. Last week there was only somber discussion, then tears and embraces.

Finally, there was only acceptance of what had to be done. On Thursday, David Eisenhower and Edward Cox bade occasionally damp-eyed goodbyes to members of the White House staff they had come to know over the past several years. Friday morning was even more difficult. As Nixon took a long, emotional farewell of the White House staff, the girls had to struggle to keep their composure; even Mrs. Nixon seemed on the verge of losing her almost uncanny air of calm. Later, when the rest of the family boarded a helicopter for the hop to Andrews Air Force Base and the last official flight to California aboard Air Force 1, Julie and David remained behind to take charge of the family's personal belongings. As the helicopter lifted off the White House lawn, Julie gave her father the thumbs-up signal.

For the Nixon girls, the trauma of Watergate is likely to diminish with time. Both have lives of their own to lead, Tricia as the wife of a young attorney, Julie as an editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* and wife of the bearer of a legendary name. But for their mother, the shock of re-entry may well persist. Though her husband's career denied her the more private life she would have preferred, his triumphs should have assured her of honors and deference. Now she has been deprived of even this satisfaction. Pat has lost both ways, and very soon she is bound to learn how Lady Bird Johnson felt after she and her husband returned from the White House to private life. "Suddenly," said Mrs. Johnson wistfully, "all the coaches turn to pumpkins again."



NIXON HUGS DAUGHTER JULIE JUST BEFORE RESIGNING
Now the coaches turn to pumpkins.