

'You Draw Closer To God'

By Ann Blackman
Associated Press

Washington

The wife of Watergate coverup defendant John D. Ehrlichman says President Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon was "tremendously compassionate," but her husband did nothing wrong to warrant similar action.

"If you take a pardon, you're admitting there is something to be pardoned for," said Jeanne Ehrlichman. "We're saying he didn't do anything wrong."

In an hour-long interview Thursday at the hotel where she is staying, Mrs. Ehrlichman discussed the impact of the Watergate scandal on her family, her marriage and her private life.

"You draw closer to God whenever you have anything that's tough," said Mrs. Ehrlichman, a Christian Scientist. "When other people are saying things that you know aren't true, you have to sort out your own identity . . . you have to be very strong in what you know to be the truth, what you know your motives were. If you have that, you can live with yourself."

Ehrlichman 49 once one of Richard Nixon's closest White House aides, resigned his domestic affairs post in April, 1973, in the midst of the Watergate scandal. Last July, he was convicted of conspiring to violate the civil rights of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist and two counts of perjury. He has appealed the conviction, which carries a sentence of 20 months to five years.

Until at least the end of this year, Ehrlichman will

be defending himself against accusations that he and four other men tried to thwart investigations into the Watergate scandal.

Throughout these long, agonizing months, Mrs. Ehrlichman has been almost a constant companion to her husband, appearing at his side in the courtrooms, consoling him in the privacy of their Seattle home, smiling bravely for photographers as the coverup trial began. Even when a demonstrator spat at her husband Wednesday, Mrs. Ehrlichman kept her composure.

Mrs. Ehrlichman said one of the hardest times was a month before her husband resigned from the White House when headlines thrust him into the snowballing Watergate scandal.

"Those days I was very unhappy," she said. "But honestly, you can only be unhappy just so long. . . . So I'm beginning to get very good at passing these things off."

Mrs. Ehrlichman said she and her husband of almost 25 years have been brought closer together by the Watergate scandal. It's also had an impact on their five children, three boys and two girls ranging in age from 14 to 24.

"We have felt our children have had an opportunity through this to learn at a very early age some very basic lessons. Sometimes people are well along in years before they understand what it's like for someone to be accused, for someone to be maligned, to



AP Wirephoto

JEANNE EHRLICHMAN
She told of Watergate's impact on her life

be ridiculed, to be criticized, to be . . ."

Her words ran together as she reached a verbal crescendo, not taking time for breath. Then abruptly, she stopped.

She skimmed over the fact that she has taken a salaried job for three days a week as coordinator of family concerts for the Seattle Symphony, an organization for which she once did volunteer work. And the children worked last summer to pay for school expenses, she said.

Sources familiar with Ehrlichman's legal defense fund said that only \$50,000 has been raised, while Seattle attorney David J. Williams, the managing trustee of the fund, figures that \$300,000 will be needed to pay for all

criminal and civil suits and appeals.

Ehrlichman, a lawyer, has been suspended from practicing law in Washington state. His wife insisted, however, that he doesn't mind changing professions.

"He will do anything," she said. "He's very open about it . . . How often does a man get the opportunity to take stock and start again? He has a fine legal mind and many other abilities and should be able to make a real contribution wherever he is needed."

Asked if she worries about financial troubles, Mrs. Ehrlichman said, "No, I would have years ago, but I feel like we're going to be cared for because we've been blessed with such a marvelous amount of love."