



Ira Wyman

Cox: Back in academia

Saturday-Night Survivors

Washington's "Saturday-night massacre," a major milestone in the Watergate drama, rocked the Federal government and the public just two years ago, on Oct. 20, 1973. The high-level bloodletting began after President Richard Nixon ordered Attorney General **Elliot Richardson** to fire special prosecutor **Archibald Cox** for refusing to curb his investigation of controversial White House tapes. Richardson resigned rather than comply with the order, and Deputy Attorney General **William Ruckelshaus** tried to follow suit but was ousted before he could submit his resignation. Finally, at 8:25 p.m. on that fateful Saturday, newly appointed Acting Attorney General **Robert Bork** obliged the White House by discharging Cox and his entire staff.

"Getting fired gave me the opportunity to spend some time in the winter in Maine," recalls Cox. "I don't often get that opportunity." Still crew-cut at 63, the trim New Englander is back at a Harvard Law School post after a year of teaching in England. As a visiting professor at Cambridge University, he lectured British students on American constitutional law and, of course, Watergate. "Sometimes they were more interested in that than they were in the classwork," he acknowledges. This year, Cox is moonlighting from his law classes by preparing a legal brief in defense of the Federal campaign-financing law of 1974. Although he still gets letters from people thanking him for his role in Watergate, Cox spends little time dwelling on the past. "I'm happy and comfortable—and aggravated I don't have this brief finished," he says.

For one year after his resignation, Richardson did a writing and researching stint at the Woodrow Wilson International Center. Last March he was appointed U.S. ambassador to Britain. Richardson,

who has made no secret of his political ambitions, may take a leave of absence to campaign for Gerald Ford next year, and he will also publish a book on how an individual can have an effective voice in government. As for his own part in the turbulent Nixon years, Richardson, 55, says the massacre "was the turning point of Watergate. If you had an Attorney General who had agreed to fire Cox, presumably he would have agreed to the rest of the President's plan to contain the investigation. Had I stayed, the White House would have relied on my willingness to moderate the reaction and that might have enabled them to ride it out."

Ruckelshaus, 43, went from Watergate to the lecture circuit, tested the political climate in his native Indiana but is now back in Washington as a partner in a new law firm. "It was not a difficult decision for me to resign," he says of his role in the massacre. "If Elliot had fired Cox, or, to a lesser extent, if I had, it would have been a more ambiguous event to the country—people might have been less certain that something terribly wrong had happened."

At 48, Bork is back in the Justice Department's No. 3 post of Solicitor General—the same job he held before temporarily assuming the top job on massacre night. A former Yale law professor known for his strictly conservative viewpoints, Bork is now touted as a candidate for the Supreme Court. Does he have any regrets about carrying out Nixon's orders two years ago? "I am convinced I did the right thing," he says. "If I had resigned, it has been argued that the mass of resignations that would have followed would have brought Nixon down sooner through the resulting turmoil. But that would have been wrong. A President ought to be brought down by constitutional means."

—BETSY CARTER with STEPHAN LESHER in Washington and TONY FULLER in Boston



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