

Nixon's 'Final Days' --2 Denials

Washington

Richard M. Nixon's two sons-in-law denied Friday that they saw or said anything to indicate the former President was mentally unstable shortly before he resigned.

Edward F. Cox and David Eisenhower issued separate statements disputing material in broadcast and published excerpts from a new book on Mr. Nixon's last days in the White House by Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, whose reporting of the Watergate scandal won a Pulitzer Prize for their newspaper.

The Woodward-Bernstein book, "The Final Days," says, "For months, David had been waiting

Back Page Col. 6

From Page 1

for Mr. Nixon to go bananas, as he sometimes phrased it. David thought the President might commit suicide. David seemed convinced Nixon would never leave the White House alive."

Eisenhower, a third-year law student who is married to Mr. Nixon's younger daughter, Julie, said yesterday: "I reject categorically the implication I saw or thought anything suggesting President Nixon was demented in the closing days of his administration."

"Rumors of his instability were essentially press-generated," Eisenhower added. "As I told Mr. Woodward, I saw the Nixons too frequently to take the rumors seriously ... I never feared President Nixon would commit suicide ... I observed nothing which remotely indicated he contemplated suicide. I shared a widespread concern for his health."

Eisenhower also rejected what he called inferences that Mr. Nixon and his wife had an unhappy marriage. He said that over-all the book "accepts rumors and assertions of sources too literally and too uncritically, lending an impression which is unfair. It should therefore be read skeptically."

He added that he did not intend to confirm other parts of the book simply because he had not mentioned them in his statement.

Cox in his first public statement since excerpts from the book began appearing in print this month, disputed the book's version of a telephone conversation he had with Senator Robert Griffin (Rep.-Mich.), shortly before Mr. Nixon resigned in August, 1974.

According to published excerpts from the Woodward-Bernstein book, Cox called Griffin only days before the resignation.

The book says, "Cox sounded distraught. He was worried about the President's mental health. The President was not sleeping, and he had been drinking. The man couldn't take it much longer. Cox said. The President had been acting irrationally."

According to the book, Griffin interrupted to reassure Cox that Mr. Nixon had been rational in a recent meeting with the senator.

The book continues: "That was the problem, Cox replied. The President went up and down. He came back from meetings and was not rational, though he had been fine at the meeting."

"The President ... Cox began. His voice rose momentarily. The President was up walking the halls last night, talking to pictures of former Presidents — giving speeches and talking to the pictures on the wall," according to the Woodward-Bernstein account.

The book then says that Cox warned Griffin that "The president might take his own life."

Cox's statement yesterday said:

"At no time in the course of that conversation or any other conversation at any time did I make any of the notorious statements, including particularly the absurd accusation that President Nixon was talking to pictures in the halls of the White House, which recent broadcasts have ascribed to the conversation," said Cox, who is married to Mr. Nixon's elder daughter, Tricia.

"Furthermore, I know of no basis in fact to support in any manner the descriptions of President Nixon and his family alleged to have been made in the conversation," Cox added.

Cox, a 29-year-old lawyer with a Wall Street firm, said, "I have talked to Sen. Griffin, who confirmed in all respects my recollection of our conversation," Cox said.

Griffin said through a spokesman that he would neither confirm nor deny Cox's version.

Cox was contacted by the authors of the book. He declined to be interviewed, but said that he would be willing to review with them any material of a questionable or sensational nature. He said they did not get back to him.

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→ See another quotation of Eisenhower on this, SFC 27 Mar [AP], "Kissinger Says "