

Pat loyal, sober, ex-aide insists

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NEW YORK — Pat Nixon's one-time press director says that contrary to claims made in the "The Final Days" the former First Lady did not turn to drink, consider divorce or neglect her duties in the last difficult days of the Nixon presidency.

Helen McCain Smith, writing in Good Housekeeping, emphatically denied those claims made by authors Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

Smith, now information officer at the American embassy in London, also said Mrs. Nixon was resentful of H. R. Haldeman's growing influence with Nixon and suggested Haldeman felt Pat was a political liability.

"I hesitate to comment on Pat and Nixon's private life," Smith wrote, "because I simply do not know what happened when they were alone together (neither do Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein). But I do know that liquor was never a problem, to the First Lady — before or during or after the Watergate crisis."

Smith said it was not true that the First Lady neglected her public responsibilities because for Mrs. Nixon "work is therapy."

As the pressure on the administration mounted, Smith wrote, Mrs. Nixon "became even more conscientious than before about fulfilling the backbreaking schedule she set for herself. Until the very end she made a point of never missing a White House reception, never disappointing an audience, never staying home from a travel assignment."

Smith was especially severe with Haldeman, White House chief of staff, who she described as "an opportunist."

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