

Jerry-mander

By Art Buchwald

There has been a certain amount of consternation among representatives, senators and Republican Party leaders over the manner in which President Nixon selected Gerald Ford as his new Vice President. If you recall, Mr. Nixon asked members of Congress, Governors and party leaders to submit three names to him of people they thought he should appoint. Everyone now thinks they've been had because the President apparently had made his choice before the names were submitted.

I am happy to report that this is not the case. The lists played an important part in the President's decision.

This is what happened. All the envelopes containing the names of vice presidential possibilities were gathered up and flown by helicopter to Camp David where the President, Pat, Julie and David Eisenhower and Tricia and Ed Cox were waiting to count them. Since this was such a personal decision, the President wanted no one but members of his immediate family to be in on it.

The envelopes were dumped on the living-room floor and everyone dove in with letter openers. The President had a yellow legal pad on his lap.

"Here's one from Bella Abzug," Julie said. "She lists Ralph Nader, Father Berrigan and Betty Freidan."

The President wrote down, "One for Nader, one for Berrigan and one for Freidan."

Pat was amazed. "Are you really writing those people down?"

"My credibility is at stake," the President replied. "I want this to be a completely honest election."

Tricia said, "Here's John Connally's ballot. He has only one name on it."

"Who is it?" The President asked.

"Well, it isn't Rockefeller."

The President gave one vote to Connally.

Julie Eisenhower said, "Here's Rocky's suggestion."

"Don't tell me," the President said. He marked one down for Rockefeller.

"Did you ask John Dean to submit any names?" David Eisenhower asked.

"Give me that," the President said and ripped the slip into shreds.

The counting went on during the night. Sandwiches and coffee were served as the family continued their arduous task.

As the evening wore on the leaders in the balloting were Reagan, Goldwater, Rockefeller and Bill Rogers.

But many other candidates were mentioned. George Allen, the coach of the Redskins, got six votes; Judge Sirica got seven; Jimmy Hoffa got two.

"Here's an envelop from Archibald Cox," Pat said.

"Whom did he vote for?" the President asked.

Pat opened it. "It's not a ballot. It's a subpoena for your tapes."

"What a dirty way to serve it," the President said angrily.

"Did you ask Howard Hughes to submit a suggestion?" Eddie Cox asked.

"I did not," the President replied.

"Well, there's nothing in the envelope but \$50,000 in cash."

"Send it back," the President cried.

About 4 o'clock in the morning the President tallied the votes as the family anxiously awaited the results.

"Well," Mr. Nixon said, "it looks like it's Jerry Ford."

"Jerry Ford?" Julie said. "But he didn't get three votes."

"I know, but I decided on Jerry Ford a week ago."

"Then why have we been counting ballots all night?" Tricia asked.

"I didn't want the people whom I asked to submit names, to think I was wasting their time."