

Sale: '54 Model, One-Owner, Recon

By Art Buchwald

My friend Moonslinger is a skeptic by nature and the other day, as we were having a drink together at the Press Club he said, "Nixon's credibility has reached a new low. You don't know what to believe any more."

"I always believe the President of the United States. That's how I was brought up."

"Yeah, but this is different. Every day you read the paper witnesses say Nixon knew more about the Watergate than he did the day before."

"We used to have a saying in France," I told Moonslinger, "*Honni soit qui mal y pense*" which means 'Evil to him who thinks evil.'"

"Don't you have it any more?" Moonslinger asked.

"Not since Pompidou was elected."

"Well, anyway," he persisted, "what worries me is

that if we can't believe the President on the Watergate, how can we believe him on Vietnam? For example, how can we be sure that we have 'Peace With Honor'?"

I said, "The President would never lie to us about something like *that*."

"But suppose, just suppose, there isn't any 'Peace With Honor' there and the South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese are still fighting?"

"Impossible," I said. "After 10 long years we have achieved a peace in Indochina that everyone can live with."

"But let's say, just for argument's sake, that something went wrong. Suppose after Kissinger's meeting in Paris with Le Duc Tho, the President goes on the air and says he has just received new information that we don't have 'Peace With Honor' in Vietnam? Will the American people believe him?"

"Of course they will."

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"All right, let's go one step further," Moonslinger said. "Suppose he says because of this new information he will be obligated to start bombing North Vietnam again because he doesn't want to be the first impeached President in the history of the United States to lose a war?"

"Then the American people will have to support him, unless, of course, you want Cambodia to fall."

"Nobody wants Cambodia to fall," Moonslinger said. "But because of the President's credibility problem, many Americans may not believe him when he says he has to bomb again. This could bring the students and antiwar demonstrators out into the streets."

"That's where the President likes them," I said. "He wants his enemies out there in the streets where he can see them."

"Okay, then you have demonstrations, riots, arrests and Jane Fonda. The President declares a national emergency and, whammo, everyone forgets about Watergate?"

"Moonslinger, are you trying to tell me the President would bomb North Vietnam to take our minds off a domestic scandal in his own administration?"

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"Any more farfetched than the White House breaking into Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office with equipment loaned to them by the CIA?"

"That's different," I said. "The President had no choice."

"All I can tell you is when Nixon goes on the air in a few weeks and says, 'My fellow Americans, the North Vietnamese had better head for their bomb shelters.'"

"Moonslinger," I said. "The trouble with you is that just because of third-rate burglary at the Watergate you've lost your faith in the leaders of our land."

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