

Jerry The Wheeler- Dealer

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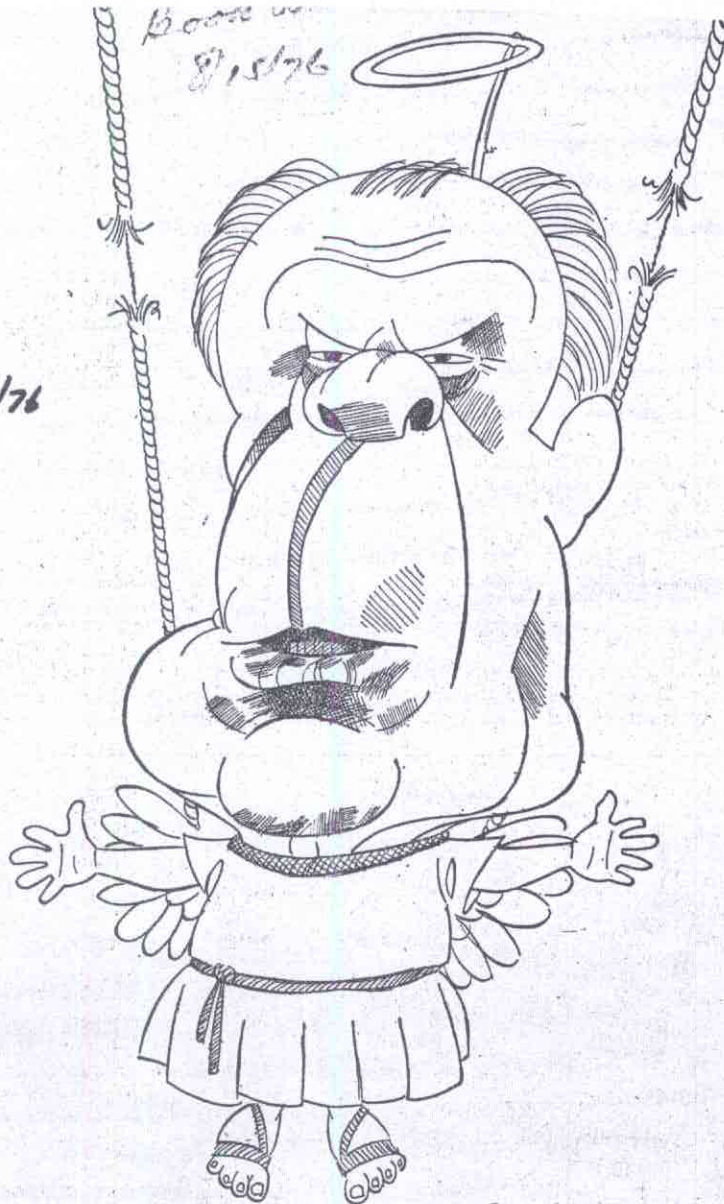
**THE MAN WHO PARDONED
NIXON.** By Clark R. Mollenhoff. Giniger/St. Martin's. 312 pp. \$8.95

By LOU CANNON

JERRY FORD likes to compare himself to Harry Truman, the President whose bust he has given a conspicuous place in his office. And no wonder. Truman seems the perfect analogue for a President who has been battered about within his own party and enters the Republican National Convention unsure even of his own nomination. With less than three months to go before the election, the polls show the President losing by 2½ to 1 to Democrat Jimmy Carter. Entering the fall campaign, Mr. Ford's standing both with the Congress and the country seems at such a low ebb that his defeat is being assumed into evidence much as Truman's was in 1948.

The Man Who Pardoned Nixon is a timely account of the series of policies, pronouncements, miscalculations and blunders which have brought Mr. Ford to his present estate. In Clark Mollenhoff's eyes, Mr. Ford also is the man who gave us untruthfulness on the common-site picketing bill and a dismal record of "politics as usual" on a dozen other issues, including farm policy and executive privilege. Either Reagan or Carter would find in this book a persuasive and documented case for their assertions that Mr. Ford is the product of a chummy Washington milieu in which positions are reversed as easily as they are taken and deals are the order of the day.

But for all its utility to Mr. Ford's political opponents, this book is a disappointment. It is also a misnomer, in



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that it tells us virtually nothing about the mind set and motivation of Mr. Ford even though it contains a great deal of summarized information about the actions of his presidency. Pulitzer

LOU CANNON reports on national news for The Washington Post.

Prize-winning reporter Mollenhoff's earlier books provided useful insights into the workings of organized crime, the Pentagon and Washington lobbyists. What we have here essentially is an unsurprising account of how a more-or-less normal congressman elevated to the presidency by a series of improbable events continues to wheel and deal in the manner he was accustomed to in the House. Mollenhoff tells us in the introduction that he, too, hoped that Mr. Ford would prove another Truman. Instead, one-time Nixon employe Mollenhoff has concluded that "Gerald Ford is Richard Nixon's hand-picked successor and so far he has not let his mentor down."

The Man Who Pardoned Nixon is the most critical of a series of biographies which fairly well trace the reverse pilgrim's progress of Mr. Ford's presidency. First, we had Jerry the

Good, as portrayed by J. F. terHorst, a man who proved too good to be Mr. Ford's press secretary. Then we had Jerry the Clown, the central figure of Richard Reeves's fine book, *A Ford Not a Lincoln*. Now, we have Jerry the Wheeler-Dealer, a man whose departure from his enunciated political standards (as viewed by Mollenhoff) seems the prelude for his anticipated defeat in November.

Mollenhoff's story of the pardon is a familiar one. He begins by relating how the ever-loyal Ford defended the Nixon administration until almost too late, profited politically by Nixon's fall and pardoned the fallen leader after promising that he would not do so. Why? We do not know. Mollenhoff is heavily distrustful of the official explanations, but he offers us no evi-

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