PERSONALITY

Boy Scout Without a Compass

In January of last year, still flushed with the thrill of stage-managing Richard Nixon's triumphal second Inauguration, Jeb Stuart Magruder had to take care of what he hoped was one last nuisance left over from the previous year. Putting a handsome, confident face on whatever anxiety he may have felt, he appeared in Judge John Sirica's Washington courtroom and testified falsely as a witness for the prosecution at the trial of the Watergate burglars. Shortly afterward, he hopped a plane to California to explore launching his own elective career for secretary of state.

Last week Magruder, 39, was back before Sirica, this time as a confessed felon. On June 4, the very day of the California state G.O.P. primary he might have won if the Watergate cover-up and his personal game plan had worked, Magruder will go to jail. The ten-month minimum sentence for his part in the scandal was stiffer than he expected after more than a year of cooperation with the prosecutors. His pretty wife Gail could not hold back the tears, but Magruder kept his composure as he read a prepared statement to an impassive Sirica:

"I know what I have done, and your honor knows what I have done . . . Somewhere between my ambition and my ideals, I lost my ethical compass. I found myself on a path that had not been intended for me by my parents or my principles or by my own ethical instincts. It has led me to this courtroom."

To take advantage of Magruder's renewed notoriety, the New York City publishing house Atheneum rushed into print with his memoirs, *An American Life: One Man's Road to Watergate,* which were originally scheduled for release in mid-July. When Magruder surrenders next week to federal marshals who will escort him to a minimum-security prison in Allenwood, Pa., the 338-page volume will be on sale for $10 in book stores along the East Coast.

Written for a reported $100,000 advance with the help of Freelance Writer Patrick Anderson, Magruder's book contains only an occasional hint of the abject contrition that marked his final statement to the bench, and it offers little fresh evidence about the evolution of the Watergate crimes. He guesses Nixon was involved all along in the cover-up: "Based on my knowledge of how the White House operated, I would suspect that once the burglars were arrested, Nixon immediately demanded and got the full story, and that thereafter he kept in close personal touch with the cover-up operation." But he does not know for certain. It is nonetheless a remarkable book, affording damning and often unintended insights into the author's character and the atmosphere of the Administration in which he worked.

WARD—BLACK STAR

MAGRUDER IN HIS WASHINGTON OFFICE EARLY LAST YEAR
"On a path that had not been intended for me."

Magruder begins with two chapters on his childhood and youth. He reveals that he grew up in a family overshadowed by scandal: his grandfather's career as a New York shipyard executive was ruined in the early 1920s when he was convicted and jailed for misapplication of $300,000 in bank funds.

Reviewing his undergraduate days at Williams College, Magruder recalls that it was a dilemma over his sex life that led him to initiate his famous friendship with the Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr. Magruder was dating a Vassar girl named Judy: "We felt a great physical attraction for one another, one that caused us both to be uncertain as to how far we should carry our relationship. Finally I went to Bill Coffin for advice." The reader is left wondering what counsel Coffin offered.

Hack Away. Magruder's book suggests that he was, and still is, oblivious of the moral ramifications of many acts he confesses so candidly. He recounts working on an automobile assembly line the summer after his freshman year. The foreman taught him how to cheat systematically on the job: "I did as the foreman suggested, and even then it was hard to keep up." Period. On to the next anecdote.

Twenty years later, he tried to talk White House Counsel Charles Colson out of sending a phony supporter of Senator George McGovern to a homosexual rally "because it was likely that the trick would be found out." When he discovered that Political Prankster Donald Segretti was busily sabotaging the Democrats during the Wisconsin and New Hampshire primaries, he sent John Mitchell a memo headed "Potentially Embarrassing Situation," urging that Segretti be supervised "lest he harm the [Republican] campaign." (The job of overseeing Segretti went to E. Howard Hunt.)

Magruder is matter of fact to the point of Boy Scout insouciance in reporting how he dutifully carried out an order from Nixon to spread the word that an unfriendly journalist was a Communist agent, or how he produced, on H.R. Haldeman's demand, an eight-point plan to discredit NBC's David Brinkley. Haldeman was pleased. "Jeb, damn good! Hack away. H.," he wrote on Magruder's memo.

Looking back on the Watergate break-in itself, Magruder has mostly tactical regret: "[G. Gordon] Liddy should have had a middleman between himself and the burglars so they could have no idea they were working for us, and even if arrested wouldn't implicate us." Liddy & Co. reflected "an exaggerated view of American political reality" shared by the White House.

The term "public relations" is ubiquitous in the book, just as the concept has been obsessional in the Nixon Administration. Magruder says that the very words public relations were capitalized in presidential memos. The day after the C.R.P. wiretappers were arrested, a solicitous bodyguard in Los Angeles asked Magruder why he seemed worried, and Magruder tried to appear carefree by replying, "It's just a

NEIL SELKIRK

MAGRUDER WITH WIFE GAIL & FOUR CHILDREN JUST BEFORE SENTENCING
Abject contrition mixed with tactical regrets.

little PR problem back in Washington."

Magruder's evocation of the prevailing mentality in the White House is, in its way, nearly as revealing as that of the Nixon transcripts. In the best locker-room and fraternity tradition, all the President's men had their nicknames. John Dean told the Ervin committee last year about H.R. ("The Brush") Haldeman and John ("The Pipe") Mitchell, but Magruder adds to the list. Transportation Secretary John Volpe was "The Bus Driver"; Defense Secretary Melvin Laird was "The Bullet"; Postmaster General Winton Blount was "The Postman"; and Martha Mitchell was known as "The Account," an advertising term for a client. Nixon himself was above nicknames; in memos and meetings he was referred to as "RN," or "the President," or occasionally by his military code name, "Searchlight."

Mere Mortals. Nixon's once much feared palace guard emerges as more petty than sinister. Magruder describes how Haldeman once gave his young aide Larry Higby a brutal dressing-down for failing to provide a golf cart to take him 200 yds. across the presidential compound at San Clemente. Haldeman loved to make his far-flung assistants jump by activating their Pageboy beepers, especially when traveling in Air Force One: "[Nixon] and Haldeman and Chapin and the others in the traveling entourage would get up there, 30,000 ft. above the earth, and something would happen to them. It must have been the close-in atmosphere, or perhaps the plane's well-stocked bar or something about the altitude that made them feel God-like, but they would invariably begin to rain down calls upon us mere mortals here on earth, and there was no way to talk to them or reason with them." Magruder characterizes Press Secretary Ron Ziegler as "a former Disneyland guide who was scarcely more than a ventriloquist's dummy." Magruder came to the White House from a cosmetics-marketing firm.

The No. 1 villain of Magruder's piece is Colson, whom he calls "an evil genius." Despite his reputation as a grandmother-stomper, Colson comes across as almost pathetically small-time. When not waging interoffice battles against then Communications Director Herbert Klein, Colson seems to have been preoccupied with setting up something called Silent Majority, Inc., a proposed conservative research institute to counter the influence of the liberal Brookings Institution.

The author manages to make even Liddy seem like a logical addition to the Nixon team. After cataloguing examples of Liddy's unstable, potentially homicidal behavior, Magruder concludes blandly: "My personal distaste for him aside, he seemed like the right man for the dual job we envisioned [legal counsel and supersleuth for C.R.P.] . . . He was, in short, a professional, and ours was a campaign that looked to professionals for guidance . . . Perhaps it was just bad luck that he got there, or perhaps there was a certain historical inevitability to Liddy—perhaps if there had been no Liddy we would have created one." Elsewhere he quotes White House Aide Gordon Strachan as saying more succinctly, "Liddy's a Hitler, but at least he's our Hitler."

Only on the subject of Nixon does Magruder offer a sustained, considered judgment: "Without question, Nixon had the potential to be the greatest conservative political leader of his time; he knew his goals and he had the skills required to achieve them. Yet he had a fatal flaw too, an inability to tolerate criticism, an instinct to overreact in political combat. I don't know which came first, the liberals' loathing of Nixon or Nixon's loathing of the liberals, but the passions fed on one another, grew more and more bitter, until once he achieved the presidency, Nixon could not resist the urge to use his awesome powers to 'get' his enemies. A President sets the tone of his Administration."

POLITICS

The Kennedy 1040

For incumbents and campaigning hopefuls, 1974 has become the Year of Financial Disclosure. So far, 85 members of Congress have made their tax returns public or revealed their net financial worth; others say they are preparing to open their books to the public or are considering doing so. Last week Massachusetts Senator Edward M. Kennedy released his U.S. tax return for 1973, thereby displaying what will surely be a political asset: he paid a lot of taxes.

On a total income of $461,444, the Senator paid almost half—$217,844—in federal taxes. The bulk of the income, $418,004, came from four of the trust funds set up by the late Joseph P. Kennedy for his children. Two of these trusts, yielding taxable income of $340,-427, were set up for Ted, while two others are his share of trusts originally established for his brother Joseph and sister Kathleen. After their deaths, the trusts were divided among the surviving Kennedy children. In addition to his Senator's salary of $42,500, Kennedy also earned $3,335 in writing and speaking fees and received $3,507 in income from his minor interests in four oil wells in Texas and Louisiana.

Tantalizing Clues. Kennedy released only his federal tax return, not a full statement of his assets and net worth. Nevertheless, the return provides tantalizing clues to the possible dimensions of his personal fortune. If the income Kennedy received last year from his trusts represents a modest 5% return on investments, the principal would amount to about $8.36 million. On his tax returns, his $94,744 in deductions included a hefty $20,434 in mortgage interest payments and $8,180 in real estate taxes for his home in McLean, Va., $3,171 for his house in Hyannis Port, Mass., plus $3,890 interest on a chattel mortgage for his 50-ft. sloop *Curragh*. He also claimed losses of $3,938 from two rental properties in Boston and Madison, Wis. Though the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation, of which the Senator is president, has given an average $2 million a year to charity since 1946, Kennedy made personal charitable contributions in 1973 of $4,678—objects unspecified. He also took the maximum allowable $25 credit for "contributions to candidates for public office."

Kennedy gave copies of the return to two Boston papers, the *Globe* and *Herald American*, which had been pressing him for a financial accounting. Previously, Kennedy had refused to divulge such information, arguing that his finances are so intertwined with those of his family that to do so would jeopardize their privacy. But he added that he would expect the family to understand if he made such disclosures as a candidate for national office. Thus, some saw in last week's move a significant clue to his intentions for 1976.