

On the outside-inside looking in

## Above the battle

By James M. Naughton

WASHINGTON. There was an atmosphere of serenity, almost of seclusion, about the neat rectangular office with its white walls, blue carpeting and heavy blue draperies. The large, polished wooden desk was uncluttered save for two small stacks of papers and the four elephants and single walrus that adorned the marble base of a pen set. An old-fashioned pretzel jar sat half-empty and hushed on the credenza. Two white-marble gargoyles stood quiet guard over "The Book of Presi-



than ever," to "try to be a little more forthcoming," to let the listener know more of what was in his mind.

What seemed, one day not long ago, to be in the mind of Spiro T. Agnew, Vice President of the United States, was the tone he would have to strike in order to be in a position to become Spiro T. Agnew, President of the United States. If he had chosen, he could have turned from the big desk, drawn back the sheer white curtains beneath the blue draperies and gazed from his second-floor window in the Old Executive Office Building to the front door of the White House. He did not. It was no more than a couple of hundred yards from the oblong office of the Vice President to the Oval Office of the President, but to hear Agnew tell it in our talk on May 30, they had been light-years distant for much of the last four and a half years.

"It was never what you might call difficult to get information if you knew what information you were looking for and sought it," he said. "The traditional, what you might say, oversight of the Vice President that has existed in executive government for years and years, the fact that he's not in the flow of any direct-line responsibilities, sometimes makes it difficult for him to know what information he ought to have, and that situation, of course, will always continue, I think. I have no trouble whatever getting information I'm seeking, but sometimes I'm not always as fully informed as I would like to be, and I think that's typical of Vice Presidents."

His whole career in public life, all 15 years of it, from P.T.A. president in Towson, Md., to zoning commissioner, to Baltimore County Executive, to Governor of Maryland, to Vice President, has been a succession of cases of being in the right place at the right time. Now, though, at age 54, Agnew's political future may hinge on a convincing demonstration that he was not in the wrong place at the wrong time, that he had no part in, and no awareness of, the political espionage and the campaign sabotage and the grand designs for surveillance of dissenters that apparently stemmed from somewhere within the Nixon White House outside Agnew's window. The Vice President told 1,500 Republican loyalists at a \$150-a-dish dinner in Cleveland (on May 31) that he had been out wandering before the banquet—nothing special, he said, merely "walking on Lake Erie." He is, in effect, trying now to walk on Watergate, to remain distinctly separate from, and yet not openly disloyal to, President Nixon and the White House apparatus, while grand juries in Washington, New York, Los Angeles and Miami and investigating committees in the Senate and House of Representatives, probe for the ultimate level of culpability for the Watergate conspiracy and the Watergate cover-up.

"If there is one thing the Vice President can back up," Senator Barry Goldwater told Time magazine recently, "it's that he doesn't know what the hell is going on at the White House."

Nobody has been bothering, exactly, to keep a check list of the Vice President's association, or lack of it, with the scandal that has been consuming the attention of the capital and perhaps of the country. But it is easy enough to gain the impression that Agnew would appreciate it:

"I don't know Mr. Dean personally," he pointed out last month to law students at the University of Virginia. Enter on check list: No contact with John W. Dean 3d, the deposed White House lawyer, key witness in the Watergate hearings, possessor of classified White House documents outlining a grand design for spying on and burglarizing American citizens.

"Newsmen ask me questions about Watergate and they know more about it than I do," Agnew told a dozen state and local Republican leaders

when he met privately with them in Cleveland. Enter on check list: No inside knowledge of who did what to whom or why.

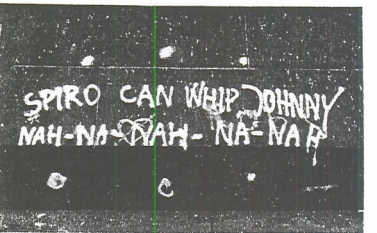
"If I found myself unable to continue on the basis of conscience, I wouldn't stay here as Vice President and use this as a pulpit to criticize the President—I would have to resign," he told a group of Harvard Young Republicans who visited his office on April 25. Enter on check list: No one was going to corrupt Agnew's principles to salvage the Administration.

"God damn it, how could they!" he is said, by a close associate, to have shouted while reading some of the recent revelations in the newspapers about efforts of senior White House officials to head off a sincere investigation into the Watergate break-in. Enter on check list: No one was more surprised than Agnew to learn about the Watergate cover-up.

"This is not the easiest time to be a high-profile Republican in Washington, but it may well be the best time for Republican partisans to give evidence, in every appropriate way, of our party pride and loyalty," he urged a luncheon gathering of senior Republican members of Congress and their aides. Enter on check list: No one is going to oust Ted Agnew in standing up for the party's innocence of any wrongdoing in the Watergate affair.

Throughout all of this, Agnew has asserted and reasserted that he is "the President's man," that he has seen "nothing at the present time to diminish my confidence in the President," that the public denials of wrongdoing which were issued by Richard Nixon should be taken at face value, that "my position has been simply that we must wait until we see how much fire there is amid all the smoke that's evident today." Yet he concedes that the smoke has fouled the atmosphere, he acknowledges the political peril that Watergate poses for his party in 1974 and 1976, and each time that he has declared his confidence in the integrity of Richard Nixon, he has managed to point out that it is based on faith and not first-hand knowledge.

He is the man on the inside looking in. Though he's the second ranking officer of the Government, he is, apparently, a rank outsider to its inner circle. He is the hooky-playing kid peeking through a knothole at the ballpark, who is surprised to find his teacher peeking out from the other side.



"VICE PRESIDENTS aren't automatically accepted as the logical successors of Presidents, and I hope they never will be," Vice President Agnew said as he sat in his office on May 30 professing uncertainty about 1976. "It's important, for the welfare of the party," he said, "that the party seek the strongest candidate, and a candidate that it feels is best representative of its principles and best equipped to carry out those principles."

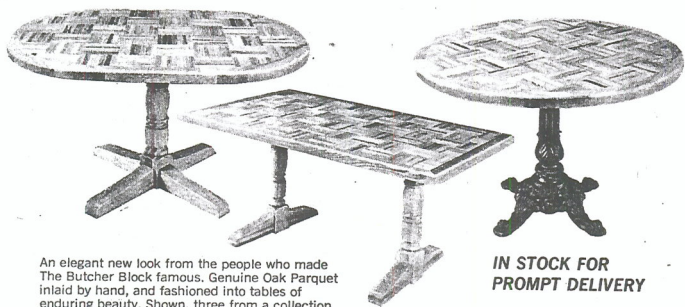
No, he insisted, he had not made up his mind whether to be a candidate for President the next time around, and would not make such a determination at least until after the Congressional

(Continued on Page 38)

dents," Modern Guide to Synonyms, Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations," Webster's Biographical Dictionary. The neat man with the graying hair and white-flecked eyebrows accenting his sun-tanned face might have been anywhere—a corporate executive's office, perhaps, or a tycoon's private sanctuary—as he sat in the leather armchair, his neat, muted-plaid suitcoat buttoned over his neat white shirt and neat gray tie. He spoke softly. He spoke of a desire to "open it up, more

James M. Naughton is a Congressional correspondent of *The Times*.

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# Agnew

(Continued from Page 11)  
 elections next year. No, he maintained, he couldn't begin to discuss what he might do as President to shore up public confidence in Government if circumstances — impeachment, say, or resignation of Mr. Nixon—were to suddenly elevate him before 1976.

"There really isn't any useful result to be obtained by conjecturing on what would happen if I were President. Everyone knows that from the day a Vice President takes office he could become, under certain circumstances, the President. That's what he's there for, among other things, to be backup equipment, and I suppose that every Vice President has, at some time or another, turned the matter over in his mind. But it would be a terrible waste of the opportunities he has to be a good Vice President if all he was doing was considering what would happen if he suddenly had to become President. And I haven't let myself dwell on it since I've been here. And I'm not dwelling on it any more now than I did the day I came in here."

It is an old Agnew refrain, less persuasive today than before. Late in 1970, after he had been through the debilitating rock 'em, sock 'em campaign for control of Congress that failed to attain that goal but that some now believe was a proving ground for techniques used in 1972 to undercut Democratic Presidential contenders, Ted Agnew sat on a beach in Honolulu and allowed as how he wasn't even sure he wanted to seek re-election as Vice President. His career seemed at a peak, celebrated in songs, caricatured on wristwatches, diagnosed in editorial commentaries and columns. Yet, he said he had "always treated my political life as a sort of furlough from the practice of law." He spoke of the fun he could have traveling to distant places as a former Government official. He mused about the possibilities of becoming a columnist or television talk-show host, and theorized about the ease with which he might become a senior partner in a lucrative law practice. He philosophized about the detached attitude he was sure he would exhibit should he "revert" to private life, and emphasized that "it

doesn't distress me to think that that may happen—any time."

The tone was not much different in that conversation, two years before his re-election as Vice President, from the tone Agnew sought to set last month during our chat, in which he said that when he did get around to making a judgment about seeking the Presidency, "I'm going to be governed by reality, not by individual ambition. If I feel that conditions are better for another Republican candidate, I'm certainly not going to rush out and attempt to become the candidate. On top of that, I have my own personal judgment to make. I consider the Presidency a sacrifice, not simply an honor, and [a candidate] has to really feel that he can make a significant contribution before he undertakes that sacrifice."

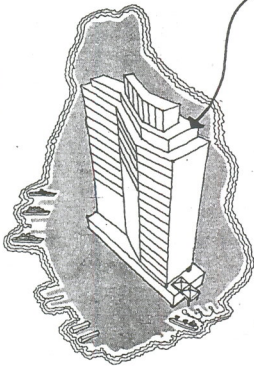
Perhaps the profession of detachment was less convincing the second time around. Perhaps the Vice President's listener was more cynical. But the style, the stance, the statements of Spiro T. Agnew in 1973 all seem designed to guarantee, at the very least, that he will have first dibs on the Republican Presidential nomination in 1976.

"I wish him all the luck in the world," Agnew joked on May 2, the day that John B. Connally, former Democratic Governor of Texas, former protégé of Lyndon Johnson, former Democrat-residence of the Nixon Cabinet, declared himself a Republican and thus took the position of a possible savior of the party at its next national nominating convention. "May his dreams come true," said the Vice President. "May he reach for his star and grasp it firmly—just as John Lindsay has."

There was a bite to Agnew's jocular welcome, as there usually is in his humor. He may well have meant it when, after noting that Presidential front-runners more often than not fall flat on their faces, Agnew said he would be "happy if John Connally gets 75 per cent of the political speculation in the next couple of years." Ask Agnew flat out what he thinks of John Connally and he likely will describe Connally as "a very personable man, a very capable man, an articulate man, a man who cannot help but make my party stronger." Ask Agnew

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why it was that President Nixon seemed to turn instinctively to Connally, rather than to his loyal Republican Vice President, when the Administration got into deep trouble—turning over the battle against inflation to Treasury Secretary Connally in 1971, calling on private-citizen Connally several weeks ago to serve as a part-time reorganizer of the shattered White House staff—and Agnew's response seems a bit more candid:

"Well, the Vice Presidency doesn't require additional duties. You have to remember that John Connally was outside the Government and had no assignment. I have a job and I'm very busy." A mischievous smile plays across Agnew's lips and a glint of one-upmanship lights in his eyes. "Moreover, [the President] did talk to me . . . before he talked to John Connally. He spent almost an hour and a half with me on the 30th [of April], discussing with me, I'm sure, some of the material he discussed with Connally. Now, I'm not trying to downplay the President's desire to have John Connally's advice. . . . But that doesn't mean I am being frozen out of my function, and I refuse to be petulant about the fact the President talks to other people, even if it should prove that he talks to them more than he talks to me." (More recently, there have been suggestions from Connally associates that he, too, has been talking a lot less with the President, that he has been unable to have much impact at the White House and may go back home to Texas lawyering. With Watergate dominating the news, Connally may be taking a page from the Vice President's book.)

books, and among the targets of his criticism of the media the publisher of The Washington Post still ranks as a favorite, but Vice President Agnew, of all people, is cozying up to the press. It is one of the more fascinating indicators of his interest in campaigns future. The same Agnew who became a one-man thesaurus of alliterative accusations against the media in 1969 and 1970, who went to Des Moines to denounce instant analysts in television newsrooms and to New Orleans to natter at negative nabobs in newspaper newsrooms, journeyed to Searcy, Ark., in April to suggest in a speech at Harding College that it was time for a truce. He was still critical of "advocacy journalism" in which opinion creeps into news articles, but he practically endorsed the First Amendment and said that "the Government and the media must put aside their visceral reactions and engage in a productive, intelligent discussion of their differences. The Administration is prepared to participate in such a discussion."

Just in case anybody missed the point, he embellished it on May 2, when the Maryland Press Club—in which conservative public-relations officers, state police executives and politicians predominate—honored him as Man of the Year. "I do not apologize for the content of my early criticism," the Vice President said then, "but I freely admit that it could have been stated less abrasively." The hostility between the fourth estate and the second Nixon Administration was "unfortunate," he declared, and perhaps some of the blame belonged with the media, but "none of us is perfect, and no one with an active, challenging mind can claim to be objective all the time."

standoffish. Victor Gold, who served as press secretary to the Vice President until he turned commentator early this year, once said that it was "a part of his nature" for Agnew to customarily seclude himself from the contributors who paid large amounts to be near him at fund-raising banquets and to prefer a quiet drink in his hotel suite or a gin-rummy game with his staff to a conversation with a ward heeler.

When Agnew visited Arkansas in April, he made it a point to sit down with the party professionals for some reassuring talk about the President's commitment to clean up the Watergate mess. In Cleveland some weeks ago, he spent 75 minutes holed up in a smoke-filled room with the former Republican Governor of Ohio, James A. Rhodes; the Republican Mayor of Cleveland, Ralph J. Perk; and an assortment of other party luminaries from the state and city. Rhodes cautioned Agnew to turn his attention to the fuel shortage, saying that local Republican candidates would go down the tube by the score if voters had to pay 50 cents per gallon for gasoline—or, worse, go without it—come Labor Day. Agnew responded by adding to his speech later that night a demand that members of Congress quit gassing about Watergate and make sure the public had enough gas. Robert E. Hughes, the Republican boss in Cleveland, told Agnew that the party had to quit bobbing and weaving away from the President and give him solid support on the Watergate issue. The Vice President already had a section in his speech lauding Mr. Nixon, but he lengthened it in deference to the party official's strong plea.

Hughes, who had dabbled early in 1968 with a John-Lindsay-for-President effort, came away from the private meeting with Agnew convinced that he was a candidate for the party nomination in 1976. "You know when politicians are not just going through the perfunctory motions of coming out here to make a speech," Hughes said the next day. Before, Agnew had been guilty of that on occasion, Hughes suggested, but this time "he was warm and outgoing toward us. Actually, he's a hell of a warm guy to talk to. He's not as standoffish. There's more give and take. He was very interested in what people had to say."

One Agnew staff member said that the Vice President

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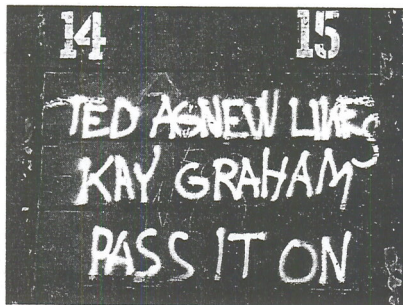


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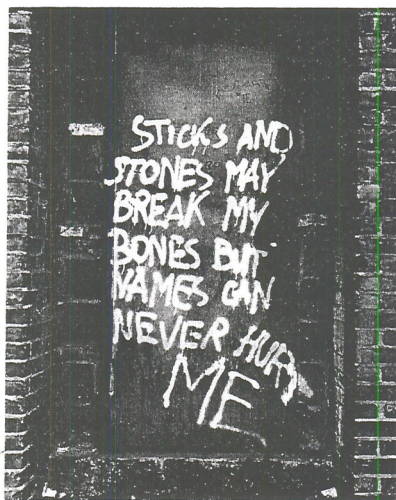
plans to spend much more of his time on Capitol Hill, visiting informally with members of the House, volunteering to campaign for them in their home districts next year, consulting with them about party and Government matters. Another aide said that the Vice President might even offer his services to nominees of the G.O.P. for local office. "He's running for President, no question about that," concluded a third political adviser. "The only question is, in 1973, with things as volatile as they are, can you really take a hard look at what's likely to occur in 1976?"

President Nixon and in his determination and ability to resolve the Watergate matter to the full satisfaction of the American people."

He has not deviated from that position since he asserted it, in front of a battery of television cameras, on April 25, and then turned and strode from his conference room. He would not speculate for a "self-serving purpose" on all the rumor and hearsay and innuendo, he stipulated, nor would he discuss the substance of the Watergate case until the criminal investigators had sifted fact from "fiction." Within that framework, how-

had been impressed by the senior Republican on the committee, Senator Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee. (In a speech two weeks ago, he was more critical of the hearings, saying they could hurt the reputations of innocent men since normal courtroom safeguards against unsubstantiated testimony were lacking. He also warned of a "swell of prejudicial publicity" that could make it virtually impossible to find impartial jurors if there are trials.)

Yes, Agnew agreed, Watergate could harm Republican candidacies next year or two years after that if the facts are not produced expeditiously, if the issue is "just hanging around with nobody knowing the truth of what happened." But no, he couldn't go along with the suggestion that it would have come out more expeditiously already if the White House had been more forthcoming, because "you can't use 'the White House' as though it were a generic term—there may have been some individuals in the White House who found it advantageous to keep it from coming out as quickly as it should." Yes, he said, the President had made a more "definitive" explanation in May than he had in April. But, no, "I'm not in a position" to judge whether the President acted as swiftly as he might have, given the chief executive's concern for national security.



## SIRO AGNEW is

hardly the first Vice President to encounter personal political turmoil because of the policies or problems of his boss. Indeed, the trauma of Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968 may well have been more pronounced: Humphrey campaigned for the Presidency with fellow liberal Democrats sniping at him for supporting Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam war policy—and Johnson hunched over the news-service tickers in the White House following the course of the Humphrey candidacy. Agnew unquestionably is loyal to President Nixon. When some advisers suggested that the Vice President make a public declaration that would set him indelibly apart from the White House on Watergate, Agnew drafted a 90-second statement disavowing the comments of "unnamed 'associates' and 'advisers,'" and affirming "full confidence in the integrity of

ever, Agnew seems to have discovered a method of illustrating noninvolvement in the Watergate conspiracy. It is, quite simply, to begin responding to requests for private interviews that have been pending since February or so and, as an almost certain consequence, to display his lack of knowledge of any particulars.

No, he replied in one such session, he had not gone out of his way to acquire an insider's view of the Watergate case. He had had no briefing from the Watergate prosecutors, no tidbits from the inner-office mail. He had read the newspapers. He had watched some of the telecasts of the Senate's Watergate investigating committee—"I can only say that, of course, what I watched was interesting to me," although "most people who are not involved in the law get a little tired of the very careful building of information"—and, like most everyone, he

Yes, he said, in confirmation of President Nixon's May 22 explanation that some excesses may have been the result of a legitimate concern for the security of classified information, "I do recall that this was a matter of some concern" back in 1969, when, according to Mr. Nixon, leaked information was endangering major, diplomatic ventures. The White House rationalized wiretapping of some of the President's own employees on the "National Security Council, along with at least four journalists, on the basis of this same longstanding fear of news leaks, but no, the Vice President said, "I never heard any discussions of wiretapping."

Nothing, perhaps, better illustrates the parameters of the Vice President's posture—his specified support of the President and his advance abhorrence of whatever wrongdoing may finally be assessed in the Watergate case—than his attitude toward domestic wiretapping: "I believe in any method of collecting information if it's related to the na-

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tional security, so long as it's not abused, and certainly we expect the President, being the only person that all the people of the United States have entrusted with this responsibility, should be able to make a proper judgment on that." Then again, "I have an ordinary individual's repugnance to the idea that somebody is snooping on someone else. So the kind of wiretapping that's done illegally I find reprehensible and totally abhorrent. One of the things I would never do is tap another person's conversation, regardless of how advantageous it might be to me individually."

In other words, wiretaps and domestic surveillance are permissible where national security is at stake because it is the President who has the ultimate responsibility to make that determination—even though the suggestion in the Watergate case seems to be that the President was unaware of things done in the name of his ultimate responsibility? "Well," said the Vice President, "I'm not sure of that." The wiretapping is all mixed with other things—national security, Watergate, and so on. "I don't know enough about the facts to comment."

and said that he had "been told that I'm going to have to move more into the domestic area, but I'm not exactly sure of the specifics of those assignments yet. I'm still waiting for the President to think through that situation." He could always thump his foot on the floor; every once in a while the President works in a hideaway suite below Agnew's in the Old Executive Office Building.

Two years ago, when it may have seemed more appropriate, the Vice President's associates sought to persuade skeptics that this Administration was different, that this President kept his Vice President informed, that the two men were closely attuned on diplomatic and domestic initiatives, on the Nixon Doctrine in Asia and the New Federalism in America. Now, with the President's second Administration wallowing in a Watergate backwash, there is an attempt to certify that, just like most of his predecessors, the Vice President has really been kept in the dark about a lot of things.

"I saw the President, as you know for a long private conversation on the 30th [of April]," Agnew noted recently, "and I haven't had a conference with the President



**T**HE White House announced on May 2 that President Nixon would assign some new responsibilities to Vice President Agnew. Nearly two months later, the Vice President seems to be unhappily in the dark about what they are. On May 15, he told Lou Cannon of The Washington Post, "Quite candidly, the President hasn't defined my role yet." Fifteen days later, Agnew made it apparent that the White House had not picked up the hint. In the course of our interview, the Vice President furrowed his brow, wagged his right hand in a tight circle—about as agitated as he gets—

since then, although I talked to him privately for several minutes on some occasions in the course of other meetings and events, such as the prisoner-of-war dinner that was held here. So I wouldn't say I had any formal consultations with him, but I have had a chance to talk with him."

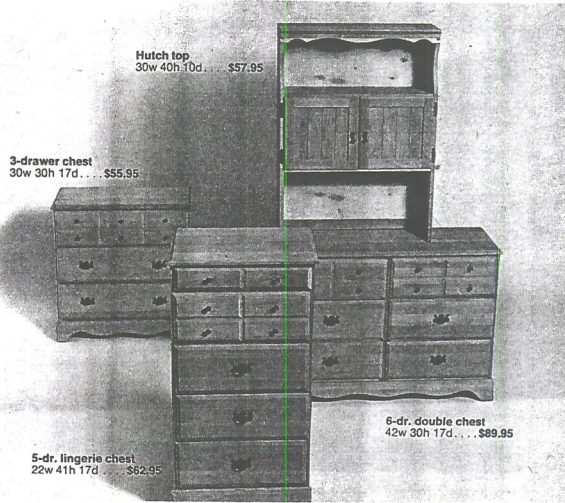
On the customary relationship between the Vice President and the White House, he has said: "There's a built-in friction between a Vice President and a Presidential staff that's very difficult to overcome. It relates to the fact that the Presidential staff has its ideas as to how the Presi-

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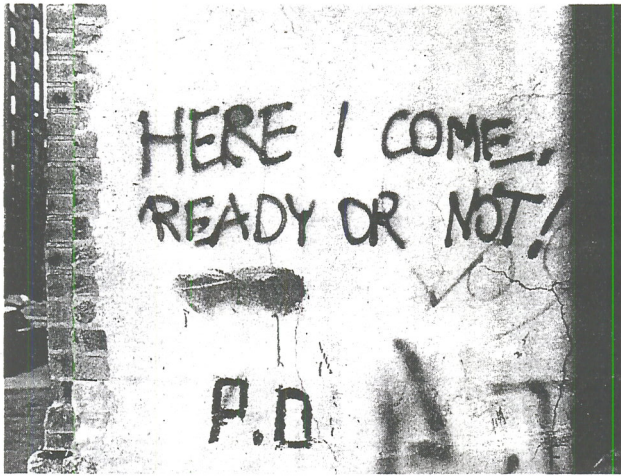
dent is best served, the Vice President may have his ideas that could possibly differ. Consequently, each, in trying to serve the President, may run into some head-knocking. And this is, apparently, from what I've heard from other Vice Presidents and from what's been written about, not unusual and probably endemic to the job."

On the change in atmosphere at the White House since the resignations under fire of H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, and the appointment of Army Gen. Alexander M. Haig as chief of staff, Agnew has had this to say: "Yes, I think there's been a change. . . . My relationships with Mr. Haldeman were always cordial, and he was always helpful when I sought help from him. I didn't have that much direct contact with Mr. Ehrlichman, but I think that because of the apparent lack of communication that may have existed at certain times, there is an effort on the part of General Haig to be certain that more information flows, of his initiative, to me." On whether he feels comfortable with the explanation that Watergate occurred

**'May he reach for his star,' said Agnew of Connally's change of parties, 'and grasp it firmly—just as John Lindsay has.'**



because the President was betrayed, as it were, by some of his subordinates who exceeded the limits of their mandate to protect national security: "There are so many explanations about what happened, I prefer to wait until all the facts are developed before I comment. There's so much speculation, so many remarks from undisclosed sources and so many statements by people who are already personally implicated, who are rushing to save their hides, that this doesn't seem the proper time to comment."



**"T**HE one thing about Spiro Agnew, he's grown so much. There's been a tremendous measuring up to responsibility and even to potential for the future."

Forget that this unsolicited testimonial came from J. Marsh Thomson and that Thomson happens to be the Vice President's press secretary. So what? Had it come from Ralph Nader, the consumer-activist whiz kid, or from John Gardner, the citizen-lobbyist whiz, or from George McGovern, the whiz that was, it would have been no more and no less certifiably accurate. The point is that hardly anyone can really tell if a Vice President has measured up tremendously to responsibility. What responsibility?

The single job conferred on a Vice President by the Constitution — presiding over meetings of the United States Senate — can be performed adequately by any 6-year-old. The presiding officer need do no more than sit there, like an elegant dunce, and repeat aloud whatever the parliamentarian stage-whispers to him. It is about as challenging as having your hair cut, and Agnew, like every Vice President before him, has learned to spend more time in a barber chair than in the Senate President's chair.

Consider the assigned duties: Agnew is Vice Chairman of the National Security Council and the Domestic Council, which means that he gets to conduct a private meeting of either group if the President doesn't show up. If the President doesn't show up, of course, few people outside the

White House hear about Agnew's work as his understudy. During his first term, Agnew was director of the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, but that liaison office was absorbed by the regular White House staff early this year and now Agnew's attempts to serve as a White House conduit for governors or mayors or county executives are strictly voluntary. He sits in on economic policy meetings, but others make economic policy. He participates in meetings with bipartisan leaders of Congress but others—most notably the new White House domestic adviser, Melvin Laird—decide officially how to treat members of Congress. Small wonder that Agnew volunteered, at a session with Republican Senators early this year, to put himself at their disposal in conveying their thoughts to the President—or that few of them have bothered to take him up on the offer.

Another frustration may be the size of his own staff. It was sliced egregiously in the celebrated house cleaning at the outset of the second Nixon Administration. Herbert Thompson, a speechwriter who had been with Agnew since he was Governor, went packing to a State Department job in Africa. Victor Gold, who had wanted to return to private life anyway, left the press secretary's post and began writing television and newspaper commentaries often critical of the White House ("A setting sun giveth forth little heat," Gold wrote of the lame-duck President). J. Roy Goodearl, who had been the Vice President's best

political technician, landed a job working on energy policy at the Interior Department. Jack Surrick, another veteran of the Annapolis era, was shifted from Agnew's office at the Capitol to a post in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. At a time when an incumbent Vice President might be expanding his staff in anticipation of a battle for the Presidential nomination, Agnew is reduced to explaining that "we seem to be getting along all right," and adding, with the pointed laugh of a man whose staff at least has not been diminished by grand-jury investigations, that "I didn't take the kind of cuts the White House did."

Agnew loves foreign travel, particularly the rest stops. He has been to Asia so often to reassure allies of American intentions that they must get lonesome without him. But the cosmetic nature of those assignments is becoming increasingly evident. So far, he has not been assigned to set foot in Latin America and, although the President declared 1973 to be the Year of Europe, the Vice President has neither been entrusted with any of the diplomatic negotiations for a new Atlantic Charter nor enlisted in the efforts to arrange *détente* with the Soviet Union.

He altered his image, from that of the friendly political bumbler of 1968 to that of the fearsome political bomber of 1970, by telling it like some people wished it was. But he lowered the decibel count of his speeches in an effort to come off more statesmanlike in 1972, and hardly anybody bothers to vilify him anymore.

He used to call himself a rallying point for frustrated Americans, but more and more Agnew is becoming—well, if you must know—just one more frustrated Vice President.

"When you're elected Vice President," Agnew said in a quip that publisher Hugh Hefner, quicker than a bunny, turned into full-page newspaper ads, "you have to give up Playboy—which is possibly why you see so few men running for Vice President." Yet even Agnew's other peccadilloes seem to be losing their savor. Sure, he manages to get to Palm Springs, Calif., often enough to deepen his suntan, or go golfing with pal Frank Sinatra, or pick up some new one-liners from pal Bob Hope, or merely immerse himself in the atmosphere of wealth that he cherishes. But it has been years since Agnew beamed anybody with a golf or tennis ball, even longer since he slipped and scraped his nose while greeting the President. Middle Americans used to identify with him—rejoicing at his crackling criticism of the media, empathizing with his concern for a son getting divorced or a daughter dabbling in pot, relishing the reports of his millionaire high life with the millionaires and movie stars. Now Agnew is going around talking about developing a constructive dialogue with the journalism fraternity, J. Rand Agnew is remarried and Kimberly Agnew has her high school diploma. And Vice President and Elinor Judefind (Judy) Agnew have just moved from the Sheraton-Park Hotel to a house in Potomac, Md. Holy crabgrass! A commuter at the White House.

Tot it up and it doesn't sound like much: He has little to do in the Senate; his administrative duties are less than visible; his staff is depleted; his phrases have less zing; he is settling into the suburbs. But it is hardly a slide toward obscurity. Add it up again: So long as the Senate Watergate investigation is under way, the Senate is hardly the place to appear; a low profile right now at the White House isn't exactly harmful; his ex-aides remain loyal to Agnew wherever they may be; his speeches project the restraint of a man eager to demonstrate security, sensibility. And a guy with a house and a yard—maybe even a rumpus room in the basement?—can't be too different from the rest of us who worry about the mortgage. He may walk on water yet. ■