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Chotiner Sees Sweep, Discounts Watergate

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—Murray Chotiner, President Nixon's earliest political mentor, said today there is "no reason for our people to panic" over charges of possible improprieties in Republican campaign finances or of involvement in the "Watergate Caper."

Chotiner, who managed Mr. Nixon's California campaigns in the 1940s and won a reputation for controversial, aggressive tactics, said that as an incumbent the President "should not be on the defensive on anything."

He said that if Republicans stay on a "positive" track, Mr. Nixon has a chance to win "a historic



sweep." But he said that any breakthrough in Republicans' becoming the country's new majority party must wait at least four years, depending on the record of a second Nixon term and the outcome of the 1976 election.

The 62-year-old lawyer, who has emerged from a brief political retirement to

become director of ballot security for the Committee for the Re-election of the President, discussed the 1972 election picture and his old associate, Mr. Nixon, in a wide-ranging interview at the Nixon campaign hotel.

Chotiner said the Democrats were raising "a phony issue" in arguing that the President's campaign committee should make public the names of those who gave it \$10 million early this year, before the new campaign fund disclosure law went into effect.

"I'd like to see the people who gave the money disclose it voluntarily," Chotiner said, "but I understand why Democrats and those who give to both parties would not want to do so."

Chotiner said the commit-

tee itself could do only one of two things to meet the Democrats' demands: Make the donors' names public, which would be "a complete breach of faith" with the anonymous contributors, or give the money back, which would be stupid."

"I don't think it will be an issue," he said, "unless there is some showing of corruption or improper conditions being attached to the money . . . there's no reason for our people to panic."

As for the break-in and bugging of the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate, Chotiner echoed other Nixon campaign officials in saying, "It was so stupid, it's clear it could not have been authorized by any of the responsible people" in the Nixon organization.

Chotiner, who was at Mr. Nixon's side in almost all his hard-fought early campaigns, said he thought his old friend has finally escaped his reputation as a controversial, contentious figure.

"Let's face it," he said. "For years, Mr. Nixon has been an individual you either liked or disliked. There

was no middle ground. Now, there are many who have never liked him but who have come to admire him and to respect the job he's done.

"He's never going to be a father figure like Ike," Chotiner continued. "No matter what his age, he's always thought of as a young man, because his early rise in politics was so rapid. But now there is more intelligent respect for him than there's ever been."

For that reason, Chotiner said, he does not think the President needs to be the aggressive campaigner, carrying the fight to the political opposition, that Chotiner has always advised candidates to be.

"He has an obligation to spend as much time as possible as President," Chotiner said. "That's not staying above the battle; that's doing the job."

Asked if he ever had expected to see the day when the polls would predict a Nixon presidential landslide, Chotiner said, "I never view any race as being a landslide; you never can tell what will happen. But if the trend continues, and if the

campaign organization does its job . . . then he could have a historic sweep."

Chotiner said it was "possible" Mr. Nixon could carry a Republican Congress with have easier legislative sledding in a second term even him, but said he ought to the majority on Capitol Hill. if the Democrats remain in

"It's not like Eisenhower's re-election," he said. "They know he (Nixon) doesn't win because of a lovable image. So if he wins, the Congress will understand the public wants what he's offered, and to protect themselves, they'll be more inclined to support what he recommends."

Dispite his optimism on the November election, Chotiner was cautious about appraising the Republican future, saying it "will depend on the accomplishments of the second term" and the 1976 race. "People are not very quick to change their party affiliation," he said. "It doesn't happen in one election."

Looking to the future, Chotiner said he did not expect Mr. Nixon to arrange for Vice President Agnew or anyone else to move into the 1976 nomination.

"I don't think the public likes the idea of anyone grooming a successor," he said. "It would be a mistake to groom a successor. Whoever it is, will win it on his own."

Chotiner said the President's opponent, Sen. George McGovern, has shown himself "a man of indecision, just not big enough for the job."

"His handling of Sen. Eagleton was deplorable," Chotiner said. "There's nothing wrong with the fact a man felt it necessary to have medical treatment . . . you don't undercut your runningmate that way. People say, 'what kind of man is that?'"