

By Douglas Hallett

A few weeks after I joined Charles Colson's staff at the White House, right after my Yale graduation in 1971, Dwight Chapin called me up. He had heard about the memos I had written to President Nixon and Mr. Haldeman during my senior year at college and had been impressed by a piece of mine in *The Wall Street Journal* on campus unrest that Mr. Nixon had praised at a press conference; he wanted to get together with me. Several days later, I met with Dwight in his office, a spotless, no-papers-on-the-desk, lime green Williamsburg room on the first floor of the White House West Wing. He struck me as polite, soft-spoken, well-meaning and not very broad-gauged. He asked what issues I thought would be important in the 1972 election year.

"Well," I answered, "I've always thought that if we're really serious about the Middle-American vote, we ought to be really pushing this consumer thing. You know, these businessmen don't mean a damn. They've got no vote and even if they did they'd have to be for us. Going after them on these consumer issues could really help us."

"By God," Dwight responded, "that's absolutely right. Here's something I got in the mail the other day. [It was a tirade against Ralph Nader from a business group well to the right of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce.] I've been saying that for over a year now. People don't know where we stand on this Nader business. We need a stronger posture—be for it or against it, I don't care which, but one or the other. . . ."

Richard Whalen, who left Nixon after the Republican convention in 1968, once described being part of the Nixon White House as going to an eight-year sales meeting. I don't know what it was like before I got there in the spring of 1971, but it certainly was as Whalen suggested after that. The Office of Management & Budget (O.M.B.), which is Civil Service except for the top level, ran the Government. Many of the rest of us spent the year-and-a-half before election doing little that was remotely substantive.

John Ehrlichman's shop was in many ways the most image-oriented. Because Big John could gesticulate with his eyebrows, play up-to-the-net tennis and think up great catch-phrases ("This is a credit-card Congress," was my favorite), he was able to con the press into believing his Domestic Council was some kind of fulcrum for creative thinking. For the most part, it was not. Bud Krogh did accomplish a great deal in his areas of D.C. government, drugs and crime control, when he was not running the "plumbers" operation; many of Ehrlichman's people seemed to me to spend as much time on dreaming up new ways to spend the huge "administrative budget" he had somehow won for them as on anything else. Every time I talked to one of them, it seemed, they were asking whether I thought a royal-blue or an emerald-green carpet would look better on their office floor.

Though himself a lawyer, Ehrlichman seemed to favor business-school graduates and former advance-men in hiring his staff. They, in turn, were biased toward technocratic management studies and reorganization plans in lieu of policy-making. The substantive programs that received the Administration's strongest support — the SST, the Lockheed loan guarantee, the ABM — were invariably technological. The one major substantive program for which the Administration was able to

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A low-level memoir of the Nixon White House

'A place peopled by competitive political animals who were rewarded in direct proportion to their expressions of fear, suspicion and paranoia.'



Author Hallett with White House superiors (1972).

work up enough enthusiasm to win legislative backing—revenue-sharing—is really just another technocratic innovation, directed at changing by whom and not for what Federal money is spent.

I worked on politics, P.R. and interest-group liaison for Charles Colson until two months before the 1972 election, when I left to go to law school. For about half of this time, I shared an office suite with E. Howard Hunt Jr. Although he kept his door locked, and locked it behind him when he was in his office, I thought Howard was a nice enough, if somewhat foppish, sort, until one day when he told me about his great regret in life. When he was a C.I.A. agent presiding over the 1954 overthrow of President Arbenz of Guatemala, he had held a group of prisoners on the airstrip just as he was about to leave the country. He decided to show mercy and freed them. A few years later, he learned that one of the prisoners he had let go was Che Guevara, the Cuban revolutionary; he said that had been enough to convince him never to allow himself to become compassionate again.

Aside from an occasional hello or good-bye, however, I didn't have much contact with Howard. One time he gave me a speech draft on the Diem overthrow in South Vietnam, which I reworked and successfully peddled to Senator Bob Dole; mostly, Howard worked in what I later learned was the "plumbers" headquarters in Room 16 of the Old Executive Office Building basement. I knew his duties included some investigative work in connection with the Pentagon Papers, but he was never present at any meetings I attended in Chuck's office, and I had no idea what he did specifically.

I do owe him my one claim to having participated—however unwittingly—in the making of history: A few days after the Watergate burglary, I held open the door as aides of John Dean and Bob Haldeman wheeled Howard's notorious safe out of his office for reasons that only became clear to me later.

I like Chuck Colson, so much so that I was very late in recognizing his responsibility for the collective squalor of Watergate. In contrast to his public image, he is a strangely vulnerable and, when he wants to be, even lovable rogue. When I first got to the White House, I took it upon myself, somewhat naively, to try to warm the place up, and was always trying to put together interstaff softball games and the like. In the same spirit, I held a large dinner party at the four-story townhouse I shared with five housemates. Colson could not come, but apologized profusely and repeatedly; Haldeman's way of responding was to have his secretary phone his regrets to Colson's secretary the day after the party was held.

Alone among the top-level staff, Chuck ate in the staff mess rather than in his office, often with junior staff members and newsmen. Periodically, he and I would disturb the usual morose solitude of the room with raucous arguments about the President's latest maneuver, me accusing him of being a "fascist" and he, between outpourings into the phone receiver, which I became convinced was glued to his neck, retorting with uncontrolled gales of laughter.

Chuck's strength and weakness is that he is something of an unguided missile. In the Nixon White House, where there was a tendency to devote too much time to reorganizational planning and public relations, Colson stood out as somebody who always kept in mind what was going on in East St. Louis, Boston's North End and St. Petersburg, Fla. He pushed hard, usually over Ehrlichman's active or tacit opposition, for Presidential endorsements of such measures as aid to parochial schools, boosts in Social Security. (Continued on Page 40)

THE ROGUE

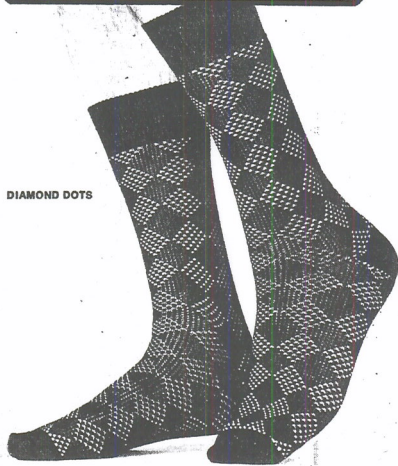


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pension-protection and anti-busing legislation which he thought would appeal to the "new majority" of Catholics, ethnics and blue-collar workers. Unfortunately, he apparently pushed equally hard, and with greater success, for cops-and-robbers spy plans, organized character-assassination, gimmicky P.R. stunts and a go-for-the-jugular Presidential political strategy which, as much as anything else in the Nixon White House, made Watergate almost inevitable.

Colson started out at the White House in November, 1969, with one secretary, as liaison to Washington-based trade associations and special-interest groups; he ended up with a staff of 30 as chief Administration strategist for the A.B.M., the 1971 postal strike and the creation of the U.S. Postal Service as an independent agency, the Haynsworth and Carswell Supreme Court nominations (both of which he had opposed internally), labor relations, the media and public television, and the 1970 and 1972 campaigns. His success in empire-building was rooted in his ability to take over other people's responsibilities without lording it over them as he did so. ("Like a cobra," one underserving victim, Herb Klein, said after his media staff had been removed from his control via an "efficiency study" Chuck cooked up with Fred Malek, who was then White House personnel chief.)

He never traveled with the President and rarely went to White House social functions. He was openly contemptuous of the way Ehrlichman exploited his position with his never-ending round of Camp David tennis parties, Potomac yacht cruises and Presidential plane trips. Colson was a relentless practical joker. When James Doyle, then of The Washington Star-News, wrote an unfavorable story about him, for example, he wrote a letter to Doyle threatening to "knock your goddamned block off" next time he saw him; Chuck didn't send the letter, but did send a copy to Ron Ziegler, who immediately ran over to beg Chuck to do anything necessary to get the letter out of the mails.

Colson used his studied grasp of the human ego to recruit people like TV newsmen John Scali. Scali, who in those days was in charge of publicizing the Administration's foreign policy, was considered a pompous, posturing

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One of the author's handshakes with the President. "I had the eerie feeling nobody was there," he says of such occasions.

man by some of his White House colleagues. Chuck shares that impression of him, but also found him useful. "He's Italian, Doug, he's Italian," Colson said gleefully when I protested Scali's appointment as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. "And besides, it's just a P.R. job and that's what he's good for." He was always careful to feed Scali's gargantuan self-image. "He's calling to have me congratulate him for the speech he gave yesterday," Chuck told me one morning as he picked up his phone. "Yes, John, I'm glad you called. There was something the President asked me to tell you . . . Yes, I was talking to him right after he read the news summary . . . He thinks you were terrific, just terrific, John . . ."

Ken Clawson, Nixon's last media heavy, is a formerly liberal Washington Post reporter whom Colson hired to run Herb Klein's communications shop because, Chuck told me, he knew Clawson was "an opportunist, a gun-for-hire." Mike Balzano, a onetime garbageman who worked his way to a Ph.D in political philosophy, was brought in to service ethnic groups and communities around the country. He spent virtually all his time traveling, to give speeches, hold press conferences and politick for Nixon; because Balzano was Italian too, and had won considerable publicity during his travels, Chuck talked Nixon into naming him head of the ACTION agency, which was probably not too hard since Balzano, each time he saw

the President, told him, in a variation on Jack Valenti's comment to L.B.J., "I can't sleep nights until you are re-elected."

Balzano was far from the only globe-trotter in the Nixon White House. The Rev. John McLaughlin was hired as an aide by head speechwriter Ray Price over the strenuous objections of Chuck Colson and others. Within a few months, he had proved himself incompetent as a writer, at least according to his colleagues, and was disowned by the speechwriting department. Having literally no responsibilities at the White House, he took to the road full-time. After an inspection tour of the Vietnam war zone, McLaughlin presaged his later comments on the Watergate tapes by declaring that American bombing was justified by Christian principles. According to members of the speechwriting staff, his travels were cut short, when, arriving by happenstance on the Asian subcontinent during the Bangladesh rebellion, he appointed himself, much to the dismay of the State Department authorities already on the scene, the President's personal emissary for refugee affairs. Staff members said he had been scheduled for departure from the White House when Watergate provided him with a new focus for his priestly ministrations.

Whenever an O.M.B.-interdepartmental task force came up with a piece of legislation, practically everybody on the staff got a chance to go on the road. New policy initia-

tives called for what was known around the White House as "laying on a donkey-and-pony show," otherwise known as a "P.R. blitz" or a "media offensive." The staff would divide itself up into teams of two or three and visit up to a total of 30 cities, speaking before civic groups and appearing on the local "talkies" (radio and TV talk shows). I hooked myself onto a few of these road shows, and they were great fun. You could be nothing at the White House but out in Seattle or Minneapolis or wherever, they didn't know one aide from another and actually believed the President was daily taking counsel with you.

One reason a lot of low-level people like myself enjoyed getting out was that being inside the White House was sometimes not so great. Past Presidents made do with three kinds of White House staffers: Special Assistants, Administrative Assistants and Staff Assistants. Under Nixon and Bob Haldeman, there were, when I was there, at least 12 different ranks, each with its own set of emoluments: Counselor to the President, Assistant to the President, Deputy Assistant to the President, Special Consultant to the President, Special Counsel to the President, Counsel to the President, Special Assistant to the President, Deputy Special Assistant to the President, Deputy Counsel to the President, Staff Assistant to the President, Staff Assistant, Staff Aide, plus auxiliary titles like Director of Communications, Deputy Director of Communications, Director of the Domestic Council, Deputy Director of the Domestic Council, etc.

To the outsider, the distinctions between these titles were largely meaningless; to the insider, they were everything. Some people could park on West Executive Avenue between the White House and the Old Executive Office Building; others had to park on the Ellipse. Some could eat in the Executive White House mess; others could eat in the regular mess; still others could use only the Executive Office Building mess, and some only the cafeteria; and within each dining area there were different time periods for different classes. Trips on Air Force One, use of White House limousines, tickets to the President's boxes at the Kennedy Center, invitations to White House dinners or the entertainment afterward were all doled out ac-

ording to rank and privilege. Which really shouldn't matter, but did, because these measures of your importance determined, on the occasions you actually did something substantive, whether your phone call or memo would be answered. I mean, a guy with a Special Assistant's commission who was in the 1 P.M. shift at the Executive White House mess and went to a White House dinner twice a year wasn't very likely to answer a memo from a lowly Staff Assistant who ate in the E.O.B. mess and maybe got to go to an afternoon reception with the Girl Scouts once a year.

Not that all of my memos, or anybody else's were that important anyway. For example, I used to get memos from Haldeman which read: "Oct. 15, 1971/Time: 2:35 P.M./MEMORANDUM FOR DOUGLAS HALLETT/FROM: H. R. HALDEMAN/By c.o.b. [close-of-business] Oct. 22, it has been requested that you send your thoughts on how Julie and Tricia can be more effectively utilized in indicating the President's concern for youth." In response, I would sit down beside my Dictaphone and begin mouthing: "In response to your memorandum of Oct. 15, 1971, the following steps are recommended: (1) Bylined articles by both Tricia and Julie in magazines like *Girl's Life* and *The American Homemaker*; (2) A White House 'rock party' for Vietnam veterans; (3) A tour of vocational education schools; (4) Taking advantage of Julie's ability to speak Spanish by putting her before Spanish-speaking youth audiences. . . ." In most cases, the recommendations were interchangeable with the ones I had made the week before on using Mrs. Nixon to increase the President's identity with women, so it wasn't too difficult to get these memos in on time. And, besides, if I didn't, Larry Higby or Bruce Kehrli or one of Haldeman's other "beavers" would be in my office or on my phone screaming that "Mr. Haldeman" wanted my thoughts and he wanted them right now, and if I didn't get them in right now he would get somebody who could get them in right now.

Two weeks after I came on board, at the height of the Daniel Ellsberg-Pentagon Papers controversy, Chuck showed me a memo he had written to the President about "painting Ellsberg black" and tying him to the liberal Democrats in the Senate. (The

memo, like most White House political memos, was addressed to Haldeman to preserve the President's deniability in case of any leaks; in turn, many Presidential memos were either signed by Haldeman or unsigned altogether.) After I wrote a countermemo protesting both the ethics and the politics of Chuck's advice, he cut me off from most of what I guess was the underside of his duties. Once in a while, however, he did get me to do something which in retrospect I should not have done, and which keeps me from becoming too self-righteous about what Jeb Magruder, Dwight Chapin and Bud Krogh did on a larger scale.

For example, I unwittingly allowed Chuck to use me to spread dissension in the New Hampshire Democratic primary by leaking to the McGovern campaign what appeared to me to be documents from files of the organizer of a Kennedy write-in, which professed Kennedy financing for the effort. I later learned the papers had been drawn up by Colson himself. (It seems laughable now, but I believed Chuck when he told me the documents had been obtained with the organizer's consent.) On another occasion, I helped encourage the Commerce Department to release a study alleging grossly incompetent, unethical practices by an associate of Senator Muskie who was receiving Government economic-development loans.

Whenever the President made a television appearance, we called about 600 names from our in-house "leader lists," which were controlled by Colson and made up of prominent people who were invited to briefings, receptions and dinners or appointed to honorary commissions and boards. The rejects from this list, I have since learned, became eligible for the "enemies" lists, which John Dean drew up at Haldeman's request. The results of these calls, always highly supportive of the President because of the list's make-up, were delivered by me to Nixon and Haldeman in the Oval Office. They would spend the rest of the evening reading the transcripts of the calls and complimenting each other on the "coup" and "triumph" they had just scored.

After Nixon's speech in January, 1972, disclosing the secret Vietnam negotiations and calling for, in essence, a stand-still cease-fire, I decided to phone Yale President Kingman Brewster Jr., whom I had known as an undergraduate. The position Nixon had taken was exactly what Brewster

'I retain feelings of respect and affection for Colson even though I know he lied to me repeatedly during the last two years.'

himself had proposed in his last major Vietnam statement, and, half-kiddingly, I got him to admit it. Proud of myself, I put down the phone and ran to Chuck's office, who then relayed the message to the President. The next morning, Colson told me that C.B.S. vice chairman Frank Stanton would give Brewster full-scale Walter Cronkite coverage if he would repeat his sympathy with Nixon's course before the cameras. I called Brewster back, knowing he would refuse, which he did. The next day Chuck had another "great idea": Why not write Brewster a letter bemoaning his unwillingness to say in public what he had said in private, and then leak it to The Times? I am ashamed to admit I too considered it a "great idea" for a couple of hours, before recognizing it as an unforgivable abuse of my relationship with Brewster.

Most of my time at the White House was spent helping Spanish-speaking and youth groups in their problems with Federal agencies; writing "think" memos to the President complaining about the lack of a philosophic core to what we were doing and begging that more Pat Moynihan and less Spiro Agnew appear in our public posture; taking part in White House and campaign-committee political and P.R. meetings, and preparing speeches and op-ed articles for the Vice President, Cabinet officers and Congressional supporters of the Administration. I was viewed as more of a mascot than a full-fledged member of the staff, which had its advantages: Like Bob Finch, Bill Safire and a very few others on the staff, I was allowed to say pretty much what I thought. Chuck never censored me, even though I was usually critical of his advice. And Mr. Nixon kept requesting my thoughts, even after I suggested in a memo which analyzed a David Broder article on the public's perception of him that he stop going around "as if you have a stick jammed up your —"

The disadvantage of that role was that, also like Bob and Bill, I was usually excluded from the most important matters around the White

House; I was definitely not on the up-escalator within the Administration that carried Jeb Magruder, Gordon Strachan and others to such dizzying heights—and depths.

My duties as a ghost-writer of speeches and articles brought me into contact with Henry Kissinger's National Security Council staff, who provided welcome relief from the White House P.R. types. These contacts also gave me insight into the difficulties Kissinger faced with our end of the White House staff. Kissinger seemed to be insecure around the President, his staff members said, often compensating for this insecurity with elaborate, almost embarrassing, praise of all that Nixon said or did, delivered in tones heavy with historical weight. John Ehrlichman, always self-confident beyond the point of cockiness, and, it was said, jealous of Kissinger's success, seemed to recognize Kissinger's weakness and exploit it. Like Colson, Ehrlichman was an inveterate prankster, and Kissinger was often the butt of his jokes.

One Kissinger staff member tells the story of a meeting between the Secretary and Nixon in the President's section of Air Force One. A glass partition separates the President's office from the rest of the plane, and Nixon was sitting with his back to it as Kissinger faced him across a table. A curtain was drawn across the glass. Ehrlichman, in the rear compartment, taped up an overblown photo of actress Jill St. John facing through the glass and then sent a steward into the President's section to slowly open the curtain. Kissinger's face turned ashen, so the story goes, as the picture of his reputed "girl-friend" was revealed.

And then there was the story of the great breakfast crisis. As I heard it, Kissinger was unable to get his usual breakfast from the mess one morning (orange juice, coffee, scrambled egg whites dyed yellow) and was in one of his not atypical foul moods. After much screaming and fussing, his secretary finally persuaded him to accept coffee

and a hard roll. Ehrlichman, who had been in Kissinger's office, picked up the roll, examined it critically, and said: "Henry, you actually eat these things? I mean nobody, but nobody, around here can stomach them. . . ." The screaming resumed at full throttle, Kissinger demanding that the breakfast be removed from his sight and threatening the secretary with loss of her job.

On a more serious level, Kissinger's staff sensed he was always afraid of being stripped of his power through the ignorance of the White House palace guard, which had no idea of what he was doing or why. Indeed, many staff members say the rise of Al Haig was due, in no small part, to his ability to explain to the President and others in the White House just what Kissinger was up to. Haig is not an impressively intellectual man. (Whenever he was going to speak at Blair House dinners—briefings held for leader lists at the President's guesthouse—our staff drew lots to see who would have to go; Haig delivered the same exact speech each time, as if it were memorized.) Even the President, who is supposed to have found it difficult at times to comprehend the subtlety and complexity of Kissinger's machinations, took to calling the plain-spoken Haig before press conferences to explain "just one more time" (in the words of the Kissinger aide) how he should answer this or that question. His reward was to have Kissinger pace around him while he was talking on the phone with Nixon, whispering, in the account of his staff member: "Al, what are you telling him? What does he want to know?"

Not having had much personal contact with the President, I had to rely on what people who did see him, particularly Chuck, would share. Most of us saw him rarely, and then usually on ceremonial occasions or to have a publicity photo taken "conferring" with him before we went out speaking.

In contrast to aides like Colson, Ehrlichman and Kissinger, who, whatever else they were, had human qualities, Mr. Nixon had the same wooden, stiff image within the White House as he had without. Even so-called working meetings with the President were highly formalized when more than two or three people were involved. At such meetings, his personal aide,

Steve Bull, would enter the room—either the Cabinet or the Roosevelt Room—and announce as he opened the door, "Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States"; if it was just after some kind of announcement or decision, those in the room would stand and often even applaud as Mr. Nixon strode into the room.

The substance of such meetings, especially large meetings, consisted of rambling monologues by Nixon; his two main topics were a glossy five-minute tour of the globe and anecdotes from his political career. There was rarely any real exchange of views and even intimates like Colson seemed cowed in his presence. At one political meeting in the summer of 1972, the President wanted to know if his order that our staff coordinate with speechwriter Price's had been followed-up. Colson assured him all was going well. I broke in to protest that Price's staff, most of whom seemed to me longer on intellectual pretensions than writing ability, thought they were "above" working with us and had flatly refused to do so: "Chuck and Ray may be coordinating," I said, "but the people who do the work around here sure as hell aren't." Colson put his head down and shook it from side-to-side; later he told me that it was out-of-place to tell the President that something he had ordered done had not been done.

Nixon was capable of displaying human characteristics. Those closer to him than I say that on trips to Key Biscayne, and especially to his friend Robert Abplanalp's island in the Bahamas, he occasionally became quite convivial after a meal and a few drinks; one night at Key Biscayne an aide even saw him and Bebe Rebozo playing "king-of-the-mountain" together on a rubber raft in his swimming pool. John Ehrlichman's son was the recipient of a warm letter of advice when he entered law school, and Nixon regularly called P.O.W. mothers, accident victims and other people he had read about in the papers.

But the President rarely exhibited conviviality and human concern around the White House. I first met him at a White House reception; I had gone through the receiving line, but he did not recognize my name until later when Chuck reminded him that I was the kid from whom he had requested all those memos. Then, after sending a Secret Serviceman to fetch me

from the shrimp bowl, he told me that in coming from Yale to the White House I was going from the ridiculous to the sublime. He laughed heartily at his own joke, though to this day I have not the slightest idea what he meant.

Awkward remarks popped up constantly like his "This-is-a-great-day-for-France" comment at President Pompidou's funeral or his "Do-you-like-your job?" question to a policeman who had suffered an accident during one of Nixon's Florida campaign tours and was awaiting an ambulance. Once, a wood-carver was ushered into the Oval Office to present the President with a chair he had fashioned from single piece of wood. When Nixon sat down in the chair, according to one of those present, it collapsed into pieces. Picking himself off the floor, the President asked, as if nothing had happened, "Well, how do you go about doing this kind of work?" Most memorable of all, at least to me, was shaking hands with Nixon. Each time I did, I had the eerie, even frightening feeling that nobody was there; face-to-face, hands clasped, yet no feeling, no feeling at all.

There were compensating qualities. If he did not appear interested in the details of Kissinger's activities, nobody at the White House doubted that the broad outline of the essentially tactical Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy was rooted in his own tactical instincts; he spoke privately of foreign policy with an assuredness, if not a compelling brilliance, usually lacking in his discussions of domestic choices faced by the country, and we were all aware of the several instances — the Hai-phong mining, for example — when Nixon had tired of Kissinger's waffling and made a crucial decision on his own.

His knowledge of American politics was incredibly detailed, and his judgments on people's motivations were faultless: "Yeah, sure Elliot Richardson is a liberal and an intellectual and all that, but he is also very, very ambitious," I once heard him remark. His language was as colorful as the transcripts of the Watergate tapes indicated, but his swearing, at least in my experience, was not directed vindictively against racial or ethnic groups. He did a great imitation of George Wallace: "We're goin' to have a bus'n' platform even ol' George won't be able to find fault with."

Working at the White House and seeing how pro-

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gramed the President's life was, I grew to suspect even these appearances of spontaneity. There were briefing papers for everything, elaborate question-and-answer books before each press conference, "talking papers" for every meeting, even "suggested conversations" giving him cues for telephone calls. Staff members were asked to recommend that the President make. After Ed Marinaro, then a Cornell running back, broke the N.C.A.A. rushing record, I sent in a "telephone-request" form suggesting the President give him a call. That night, Nixon phoned me at my house to ask how to pronounce Marinaro's name. I was thrilled by the call, but, even as I hung up, wondered whether even that call to get information about another call had not been engineered by Colson to "stroke" me.

Colson occasionally showed me memoranda the President had dictated to him; they were always highly political and often contained orders to "get" this opponent or that. On one occasion, Nixon wanted somebody brought in "full-time" to "destroy" the press's image, as if people like Colson and Buchanan and Agnew were not doing enough of that already. Before Tricia's wedding to Eddie Cox, to which the groom had invited his former boss Ralph Nader, Nixon sent a memo around asking for suggested quips he could use in the receiving line. He sincerely believed that most liberals, particularly Kennedy Democrats, were self-serving, even unpatriotic, and once asked me to prepare an essay for internal circulation depicting the Democrats as innately power-seeking, duplicitous people compared with the essentially decent, privacy-oriented Republicans.

He viewed his own mission as making himself tough enough to master what he imagined liberal political tactics to be, so as to beat them at their own game and give other self-made Middle Americans the chance at the helm they were too moral to struggle to win on their own. He saw established Eastern money interests as cowardly, allying themselves with the poor and the intellectuals to prevent the middle classes from winning positions of power in American life. He viewed the establishment's rhetorical backing of the peace movement, job quotas, ecology and poverty

programs as cynical tricks, economically insignificant concessions made to bribe the intellectuals and the poor while insulting the values of the vigorous middle classes and restricting potential competition from them. Perhaps most of all, what I saw of his memos to Chuck indicated that Nixon wanted very, very much to be remembered as a President who had brought peace.

Chuck's rise in the White House hierarchy to eventual intimacy with Nixon began with his attempt to recruit Al Capp, the cartoonist, to run against Ted Kennedy on the Chappaquiddick issue in 1970. His success in emerging as the one and only close aide who had not known Nixon well before his White House days was rooted in the President's perception of him as somebody useful in handling the Kennedys. With an election-eye mailing by 11 Massachusetts Democrats endorsing both John Kennedy and G.O.P. Senator Leverett Saltonstall, Chuck had helped re-elect Saltonstall in the face of Nixon's overwhelming loss of Massachusetts in 1960; Chuck was always reminding me—and I presume the President as well—of that victory, and bragged that he was the only person in the White House shrewd enough to cope with Teddy. Almost up until the Democratic National Convention in 1972, Colson warned Nixon that Kennedy might become a candidate at any moment, and both men pressed me regularly for any gossip on Kennedy I could pick up.

Chuck had liked and admired Ted Kennedy before joining the Nixon Administration. He still thinks highly of Kennedy's political dexterity, and, even more important, of his macho, fun-loving personal life. But under Nixon the social resentments he bore from his days as a scholarship student at the Brown-Nichols School outside Boston took full flower; like Nixon, he seemed to derive an identity from them he could not find otherwise. He bragged about having turned down a full scholarship to Harvard to go to Brown, and wanted his son, a very bright young man who is now at Princeton, to go to a Southern school, preferably Duke, where Nixon had attended law school. He came back from sessions in the Oval Office talking about the need to "destroy" what Nixon viewed as a monolithic "Eastern establishment." When I left the White House viewed the opening of

firm and former Deputy Treasury Secretary Charls Walker's economic-consulting firm, along with the planned transformation of the conservative American Enterprise Institute into a right-wing Brookings Institution, as the beginnings of a movement to replace the spineless, degenerate Washington establishment.

Largely because of Colson's prodding, Chuck claims, Nixon had become convinced by the time of the 1972 campaign that Roman Catholics represented "the real America." He had taken positions on abortion, pornography and aid to parochial schools that suggested an identity with them, and Colson believes that the President even entertained the idea of converting to Roman Catholicism before the election. Chuck, however, told him it would be contrived and phony. As it was, Colson says, Nixon decided that he wanted a Catholic in his Cabinet and

'Largely because of his prodding, Colson claims, Nixon became convinced that Roman Catholics represented "the real America."'

appointed Claude Brinegar Secretary of Transportation primarily because he believed, mistakenly it turned out, that Brinegar was a Catholic.

Colson is very attentive to other people's feelings in his personal life. His wife, Patty, is an enormously warm and supportive individual with whom Chuck maintains a honeymoon relationship; they wait on and feed each other, embrace freely and affectionately, and share private sign language and jokes in a manner one

rarely finds in a middle-aged couple. At his best, these characteristics carry over into his professional life. At dinner one evening, Chuck's wife started criticizing John Dean. She had hardly begun when Colson pounded his water glass down on the table and shouted, "I won't have it. I won't have that in my house. If we do what we think is right, that's enough. He's doing what he thinks is right and if he's not he has to live with himself."

Chuck's "dirty tricks" reputation is highly over-rated.

I am quite sure that he did tell John Dean's sleuth, Jack Caulfield—as a joke—to firebomb the Brookings Institution; he fired me repeatedly during the 15 months I worked for him, lecturing me on how I had offended Haldeman or some Cabinet officer with such conviction that I actually believed he was serious. Many gutter tactics attributed to Colson, like the 1970 ad campaign identifying antiwar Democrats with radical violence, came from the President and Haldeman. The 1970 "smear" of Maryland Senator Joseph Tydings that Colson allegedly masterminded actually consisted of fulfilling Life reporter William Lambert's request that an A.I.D. official be asked to speak with him; Lambert, a highly respected investigative writer, dug up an influence-peddling story involving an A.I.D. contract on his own, and it has never been refuted.

On the other hand, in the summer of 1973, after I had left the White House, I told Chuck that I thought he might well have considered forging a cable implicating the Kennedys in the assassination of President Diem of South Vietnam, had Howard Hunt draw up a phony cable and then reversed field by refusing to answer the calls of the reporter who had been shown the cable. He looked hurt—but did not deny it.

While our shop did have the joking designation "department of dirty tricks," I felt then that the "heavy stuff" (whatever it was) was in Haldeman's and Ehrlichman's domain, specifically under John Dean, and, because of that, within the bounds of law. Dean, after all, regularly sent around detailed memos on the improprieties of accepting even \$5 Christmas gifts from lobbyists. I knew John had some kind of private in-

vestigative capacity. During the I.T.T.-Kleindienst hearings, he had obtained the material to discredit the Dita Beard memo suggesting I.T.T. had agreed to a campaign payoff in return for which the Government would drop its anti-trust suit against the company. Another time when I speculated on the personal finances of George McGovern, Chuck forwarded my inquiry to Dean. But Dean reputedly discouraged the more exotic ideas which floated around the White House, and I trusted him as the only senior staff member who always sought out the thoughts of juniors. I never heard the names Gordon Liddy, Tony Ulasewicz or Donald Segretti before Watergate broke, and I never had any indication from Chuck that he would sanction people like them.

Like an Arthur Koestler figure, however, Colson was a man without ethical compass; there was an absence of fixed direction and conviction. He was proud of having worked his way up from practically nothing, and regarded himself as the living embodiment of the American dream. But in the White House he seemed to prove the political adage he rightly loathed most: that it is better to have people of old money and secure social position in high office who are not awed by power.

When the President asked him to negotiate the deal under which John Connally became Secretary of the Treasury—and was guaranteed, in return, Chuck says, Nixon's support for a Connally Presidential candidacy in 1976 — Colson was so flattered and impressed by Connally's commanding presence that he became his chief booster, even though Connally's probusiness positions on tax reform, labor relations and other "new-majority" issues were almost diametrically opposite Colson's. ("Standing on that airstrip of his, in that serape, he looked like some kind of god," Chuck told me upon his return from one trip to Connally's Floresville, Tex., ranch.)

From the winter of 1972 on, Chuck spent hours upon hours with the President; in the last six months of the year, he finally broke through Halde- man's gate and saw Mr. Nixon more than any other staff member. He would return from these sessions all fired-up, demanding that I write a statement and "program" this or that Cabinet officer to blast McGovern, Muskie, Kennedy,

or whomever. A few hours before Nixon announced the mining of Haiphong Harbor in the spring of 1972, Chuck delivered a 10-minute harangue to his staff, ending with a demand that anyone who would not stand by "our leader" quit then and there. After the announcement, he called me down to his office and we had an excellent, even reflective discussion of the merits and demerits of Nixon's strategy in this war which Colson had opposed until he got to the White House.

Colson's relationship with Elliot Richardson typified his multi-edged personality. When both were working for Senator Saltonstall, they became so close that they considered starting a law firm together. And when Richardson was appointed Under Secretary of State at the start of the Nixon Administration, he tried to hire Chuck as Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. Colson was hired as Special Counsel to the President instead. After he left the White House and became enmeshed in his legal difficulties, the loss of contact with Richardson was one of the few things he openly sulked about. ("Our wives still speak in the supermarket, so I guess that's something.") Yet if Richardson was something of a big-brother figure to whom he looked for approval, Colson could never bring himself to follow Richardson's lead and draw at least some lines about what he would and would not do for Richard Nixon.

Bob Woodward, the Washington Post investigative reporter, observed to me at a dinner party during the height of the Ervin Committee hearings that he was surprised by the way everybody at the White House was taking sides with one or another principal aide, rallying to his defense and damning everyone else. It happened because there was no common body of consistent belief and principle which could bind us to something other than personalities, and not even personal loyalty to bind us to the President we scarcely ever saw. We were loyal only to "our guy," the boss who pushed our careers, gave us "benes" like White House mess privileges, and defended our turf from the encroachment of other White House barons.

Probably nobody at the White House thought of himself as subverting the legal process in the cover-up.

That is why many of the structural reforms now being bandied about for preventing its recurrence — appointing a permanent Special Prosecutor, measures to assure an independent Justice Department, reducing the size and power of the White House staff—seem so quixotic. Watergate was an almost organic outgrowth of a White House peopled by competitive political animals who were rewarded in direct proportion to their expressions of fear, suspicion and paranoia.

And that is why I retain feelings of respect and affection for Chuck Colson, even though I know that he lied to me repeatedly during the last two years. He was human enough to let Watergate break him. Chuck shared his new-found religious convictions with me when I returned to Washington after my first year at law school. I resented the "born - anew," "baby-in-Christ" language with which he and Senator Harold Hughes discussed them, because I felt it represented an implied comment on those of us who had found much to like and admire in Chuck long before his enlightenment. I was taken aback by the primitive, often foolish, form Chuck had adopted for his religious expression. But I soon came to accept it for what it was, the sincere expression of a strung-out, unread, essentially unsophisticated man, who had nothing to replace the idols of success, money, power and Nixon which were crumbling all about him. I suggested that he read "The Confessions of St. Augustine," and gave him Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "Letters from Prison" when he went to jail.

Chuck's conversion, despite the understandable cynicism with which it has been greeted, did change him. He has lost his balance several times since he became serious about it, most notably when he accused the C.I.A. of engineering Watergate and the cover-up in an effort to discredit Nixon. On the other hand, he has lost also a lot of the razor-sharp resentment and unharnessed aggression which characterized many of his past dealings and periodically offended those of us who worked with him.

Watergate also broke me. After I left Colson's staff in September, 1972, to enter law school, we continued to talk and correspond regularly. I was outraged by the revelations of Woodward-Bernstein

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Charles Colson after his guilty plea in June to one count of conspiring to obstruct justice in the Ellsberg trial. Now serving a minimum one-year term in Alabama, he is seeking a pardon.

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in their second series on Watergate, just before the November election, and pleaded with Chuck to do something; the news of mass dismissals and the hard-line attitudes emanating from the White House right after the election further convinced me that something was wrong. But when Watergate broke open in April, 1973, I reacted out of personal loyalty to Chuck, my contempt for the self-righteous piety of men like Lowell Weicker and Joseph Alsop and, not least, my fondness for a good dogfight. I soon became enmeshed in Colson's defense, offering him advice on which of my Harvard Law School professors he would do best with at the Special Prosecutor's Office, editing his planned Ervin Committee testimony, arguing his case before various investigative bodies and conferring with his attorneys, David Shapiro, his law partner, and James St. Clair, whom Colson later turned over to Nixon.

Last year I became friends with former Special Prosecutor Cox when he returned from Washington to law school. He recognized me from my first-year Constitutional Law class (spending most of my time watching the Ervin Committee hearings that spring, I was something less than a class luminary) and started sitting with me

at the law-school breakfast table. Only after about three weeks of talking Watergate virtually every day did it click with him that I was a former Colson staffer. Although I was somewhat nervous at how he would react, it turned out that we had more in common as Watergate aficionados than as partisan adversaries.

Cox's tolerance of my advocacy of Chuck's case—in striking contrast to the White House's evident intolerance of him as Special Prosecutor—forced me to reconsider my own allegiances. By this time, the Watergate tapes had revealed that at the very least Chuck's awareness of the cover-up had to be far greater than he had admitted to me. I was already convinced that whether or not Colson had foreknowledge of the Fielding break-in (I think not), and whether or not he had the requisite criminal intent in the Watergate cover-up (I think he did), he should bear some responsibility for what resulted. I do not believe the plea Chuck and Dave Shapiro negotiated with the Special Prosecutor's Office, a one-count felony charge for conspiring to deprive Ellsberg of a fair trial by leaking defamatory material, really reflects what he, in fact, did intend in that endeavor, but I do believe the one-to-four-year prison sentence he drew accurately measures his responsibility.

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sibility for the criminal environment he helped create within the White House.

At its best, the intellectual challenge the Nixon Administration posed to established political dogma was easily the most comprehensive since Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal: a recognition in foreign affairs that the post-World War II "Pax Americana" was exhausted; a recognition in domestic policy that the Government could impose its moral conceptions and preferred living patterns on the people only at a moral cost; a recognition in politics that the will of the emergent middle classes could not continue to be disregarded. Given the overwhelming opposition to this challenge in the articulate sectors of the Congress, the press corps, the universities and even the business community, Nixon and his men were not totally wrong to have spent so much energy attempting to win him a massive re-election victory and, thus, reshape the political character of the country before tackling extensive substantive implementation of their views. The best of men would have had trouble withstanding the hostility to which Nixon's Government was exposed as it sought to advance its ideas; something like Watergate might even have been inevitable in a country which has never had a lasting conservative tradition beyond economic self-interest and fear of crime.

But that we will never know, for the Nixon White House included few of the nation's best, and many there did not even try to endure in civility and decency. A country which for the first time in its history is being forced to acknowledge the outer reaches of its power over its economy, its environment and its fellow nations was ripe for a legitimate conservative movement. Rather than provide it, the Nixon Administration expended much of its energy on self-defeating, vindictive political gamesmanship, at the last developing eavesdropping systems both inside and outside the White House that instead of exposing as never before, through the most advanced applications of American technology, the bankruptcy of the opposition and the brilliance of the President, ultimately revealed Nixon, Colson and the others for a fraud, and a shoddy, criminal fraud at that. ■