

equanimous self during the crisis, reports Julie. "She just has great inner strength. I don't know how she does it. She's an inspiration to the rest of us, and she's a great help to my dad. I don't think people realize how really great she is." In a week that for Pat Nixon included presentation of awards to Washington youngsters for beautifying the nation's capital, handshaking with surprised visitors to the White House Rose Garden, and greeting the six-year-old poster child for the muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis campaign, a friend found the First Lady's mood "ebullient and confident."

Julie saved her most heated reply for charges of improprieties raised in connection with Rebozo. "He's being attacked to get at my father," she bristles, "and I know it hurts my father deeply. He doesn't mind if his policies are under the gun, that's fair game. He just hates the idea that his family or his friends are being hurt. But we can all take it. It's a really silly situation because he's feeling sorry for us, and we're feeling sorry for him." Julie remains confident that her father will not be impeached—nor, she vows, will he resign. "The people wanted him in 1972. He got a tremendous mandate, and no matter how many columnists write it, that mandate cannot be taken away."

## PERSONALITY

### The Reluctant Dragoon

Few people in Washington are more uncomfortable these days than House Speaker Carl Bert Albert, the "Little Giant" from Bug Tussle, Okla. It is he who set in motion the proceedings that could lead to the impeachment of Richard Nixon. It is he who stands next in line of succession to the presidency until Congress confirms House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford as Vice President. For many politicians, those would be heady circumstances, but Albert relishes neither role. He wants Ford to be confirmed "as quickly as possible," and he fervently hopes, "for the country's sake," that Nixon will be exonerated. That would free the 26-year veteran of the House to resume his duties as Speaker unencumbered by a constitutional crisis, unthreatened by awesome responsibilities he does not seek.

Albert at 65 has no desire for higher office. Born in an unpainted shack in McAlester, Okla., he was raised in nearby Bug Tussle (later renamed Flowery Mound), after his father abandoned coal mining to become a tenant farmer. As a student in a one-room schoolhouse, Albert developed a love of reading (chiefly history and biography). He used his \$1,500 winnings as a champion high school orator to continue his education at the University of Oklahoma, where he graduated with a Phi Beta Kappa key and a Rhodes scholarship.

At Oxford, he earned two degrees,

then in 1934 returned to Oklahoma to practice law. In 1941, he enlisted in the Army as a private, emerging five years later a lieutenant colonel. Then, adopting the slogan FROM THE CABIN IN THE COTTON TO THE CAPITOL, he won election to Congress from Oklahoma's "Little Dixie" district, which borders on the late Speaker Sam Rayburn's district in Texas. Albert entered the House in 1947, the same year as freshmen Representatives John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon.

**Iron backbone.** In Congress, Albert became extraordinarily popular. Small (5 ft. 4 in., 150 lbs.) and self-effacing, he showed himself to be considerate of other members' sensitivities, and trustworthy. Regarded as a tireless worker and gifted parliamentarian, he became assistant Democratic leader in 1955 under Rayburn, who called him "one of the greatest whips the House has ever known." With the death of Rayburn in 1961, Albert was promoted to party floor leader. He became Speaker in 1971, after the retirement of John W. McCormack.

Even as Speaker, Albert is rarely in the public eye. He lives quietly in a modest apartment in northwest Washington with his wife Mary, a former Pentagon clerk. They have two children: David, 18, a student at Harvard, and Mary Frances, 25, who teaches high school in Washington. To keep his weight down, Albert jogs and swims. He is seldom seen on the cocktail circuit, devotes himself to his family and his work, and his strongest expletive is "jeepers creepers."

Albert operates much as Rayburn did—backstage, without seeking publicity or notoriety. Instead of twisting arms, he works for cooperation and consensus. But the very qualities that won him the votes to become McCormack's successor led some Representatives to doubt that he had, in Rayburn's phrase, the "iron in his backbone" needed to be an effective Speaker.

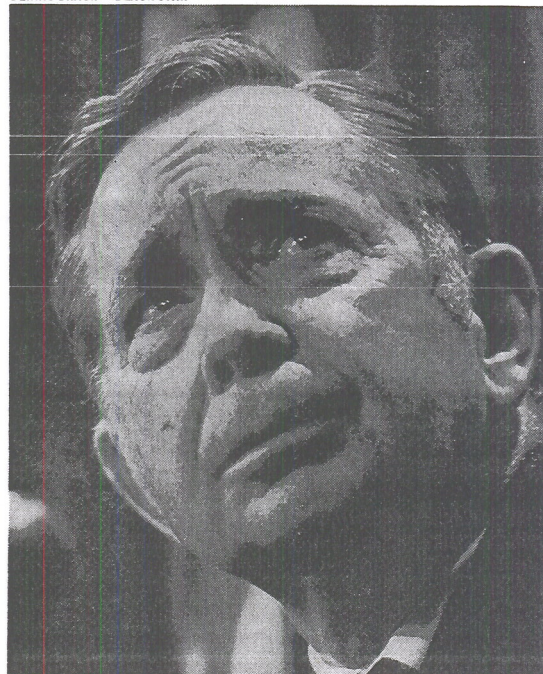
At first, Albert looked as if he did not. He backed away from a confrontation with one of his most acerbic chairmen, Ohioan Wayne Hays of the House Administration Committee, who seized authority over the House staff payroll. Despite tradition, Albert refused to chair the 1972 Democratic National Convention (though he had done the job in 1968). He vacillated on the amendment to end the Viet Nam War, finally voting against it. Even more embarrassing, he was involved in an automobile accident, and it was reported that he had been drunk. Albert denied the accusation, but that did not stop stories about his drinking habit from spreading at the time. Those who know him best now say he has no drinking problem.

This year, however, he seized control of the Rules Committee by insisting that Representatives loyal to him be named to it. That made him the first Speaker in almost 40 years with absolute control of the House's legislative agenda. Then, as crises began to envel-

op the presidency and vice presidency, he quietly ordered the House parliamentarian and legal experts to study how the House should proceed, if the holder of either office resigned or had to be impeached. As a result, the House was able to begin action on Ford's nomination and Nixon's possible impeachment without public wrangling. Also, Albert rebuffed Spiro Agnew's attempt to use the House to block the court proceedings against him.

After Agnew resigned and the Secret Service agents arrived to protect him as next in line to Nixon, Albert was trying to speed the day when they would no longer be needed. "Jerry," he told his friend Ford, "I would vote to confirm you today." Because of the scandal-ridden climate of the times, howev-

DENNIS BRACK—BLACK STAR



HOUSE SPEAKER CARL ALBERT  
"Jeepers creepers."

er, Albert felt (and Ford agreed) that he had to order the Judiciary Committee to be thorough in its investigation of Ford. But he rebuffed Democratic partisans who demanded that he delay House action until after the Senate acts. He explained: "I think I have a personal and an official responsibility to do it as quickly as it can properly be done."

Last week he reluctantly directed the committee to conduct full hearings on whether Nixon should be impeached. Albert does not want to believe that impeachment might happen. "I think it would be a traumatic experience for the nation," he says. "I would lean over backward to give the President the benefit of the doubt." Although he has generally supported his foreign policies, Albert has never admired Nixon as a man. Nonetheless, he declares: "I am not doing this out of animosity for Nixon. I have an overwhelming constitutional responsibility to see that we in the House do our job."