

Chief of Staff

With Haldeman gone, Gen. Alexander Haig became the President's shield. Then came the Agnew resignation, the Mid-East war, "the Saturday night massacre." These have been "six peculiar months," says Haig.

By Nick Thimmesch

Once Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. was formally appointed White House Chief of Staff last June, after emergency duty in the void suddenly left by H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, the reaction around town was almost all favorable. After all, as Dr. Henry A. Kissinger's deputy, he was known to be friendly, accessible, hard-working, and always there. Besides, he didn't wear a butch haircut like Haldeman's, nor did his manner suggest the military stereotype. Haig came off as a "good guy," and in an era when the military wins few Oscars, that's a plus. Moreover, Haig's was a grand success story. He had zoomed from colonel to four-star general in four years, and that doesn't even happen in the movies.

Serving as a good guy in a national security (therefore, largely military) slot is one situation. But serving as the man next to the President, where actions and decisions on how the government shall be run, who gets hired and fired, what domestic policies will be, and how the Congress, press and public shall be dealt with, is quite another. In six short months as a civilian official in lofty perch, Haig has felt the heat already, and won't always be regarded as a good guy.

John D. Ehrlichman is a man of stained record, but he is also a man who sat in the "vortex" Haig likes to describe and saw Haig at work as Kissinger's deputy. He's dubious. "I don't think Al is the right man for that job, for all his qualities," Ehrlichman said. "Bob Haldeman may not have been the indispensable man in the White House but he was the closest thing to it."

Whatever, Haig has already had, to use a military phrase, his baptism of fire. He was in the thick of the decisions which shook this city in recent weeks: the resignation of

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Spiro T. Agnew, the first Vice President in U.S. history to be forced from office for a crime; the continuing, traumatic hassle over the celebrated "Nixon tapes," spools more precious than gold; the axing of Special Watergate Prosecutor Archibald Cox and attendant ramming to the wall of Attorney General Elliot Richardson and his deputy, William D. Ruckelshaus, with their consequent resignations; and of course, a situation more familiar to him, and more up his alley, the Middle East crisis.

His base of operations is the large, gold-carpeted room in the West Wing, the same premises once occupied by Haldeman, only Haig doesn't keep the fire going in the fireplace the way Haldeman did. "This office is the same as it was when Haldeman was here," says Muriel Hartley, Haig's steady, witty, red-haired secretary. "General Haig is too busy to think about changes."

The office holds:

Simple pictures of George Washington. An eagle, a panda from Peking, in sculpture, but they aren't Haig's. They are gifts to the President and must be put somewhere. Irving Stone's epic of Michelangelo, *The Agony and The Ecstasy* and *That Most Distressful Nation* by Father Greeley, a social critic. Winston Churchill, naturally. Haldeman's green furniture, the round tables, a chandelier, the flag, that's about it. Haig usually gulps his lunch here—a cheeseburger and iced tea.

Haig customarily is very well mannered, but he can break out in sudden fits of humor. "What influence do you have on the President," he is asked. "Decisive," he bellows out in laughter. But in a moment, he is seriously discussing the decision making process. He chain smokes and worries. He is work-obsessed, disciplined and devoted to his country. But if anything gives him "gas pains" (one of his favorite expressions) it is the notion that a military man is unsuited for high level work in the government bureaucracy.

Ask him what part he played in the painful extraction of Agnew, and Haig laughs

heartily before cracking, "I'll take executive privilege on that." Press him fiercely, as questioners did on "Face the Nation" recently, and Haig will utter an explanation concerning the tape issue which is at variance with the facts. Haig has become a public man, and, therefore, more vulnerable. Unless there is a dramatic transformation, say, like St. Paul's conversion, there will always be a military man in the civilian suits worn by Al Haig. He's sensitive about this, and argues his case.

"I have no pangs of self-consciousness or inadequacy," Haig says.

"I've had 12 years' experience in Washington at the high policy levels in Defense and at the White House. I was exposed to the legislative process, even the judicial process when I was with Bobby Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis. I can state that the military background is a very good cauldron for subsequent duty on civilian status in the bureaucracy. I don't share the concept that there is a military mind.

"Politics and soldiering are very, very close. It's only a soldier who can respect and admire a politician. It's a field where a man lays everything on the line to win or lose. Athletics are the same. There's a camaraderie among men who lay it all out. They're tested by the vote or they're tested in battle. When one doesn't win, the results are fatal, and in the case of the military, quite fatal. So I have a great deal of respect for politicians.

"From my perspective, I have always found that a military man can have his views respected. The military has to know its own framework in order to influence policy. There are always positions for capable military people at the highest level.

"I am a case in point. I sat at Henry's (Kissinger's) elbow where I could have considerable impact on policy. I did at the Defense Department where I was Joe Califano's deputy and at McNamara's right



Alexander Haig in the "vortex," answering questions from the press.

Associated Press

hand. To say I did it (had influence) to a degree I preferred to, is something else. I don't suffer frustrations in being able to influence policy. Precisely the opposite. I suffer frustrations with military men who can't recognize the best way to do it."

The civilian who has been Haig's greatest booster for years is also an attorney for the Democratic Party in the case which has made Mr. Nixon's White House a living hell for most of 1973. That booster is Joseph Califano, who urged Haig on Kissinger when he was looking for a deputy back in 1968. Califano quickly tells you he loves Haig and can't stand or trust Mr. Nixon. Haig will tell you he has respect and admiration, variously, for both Califano and the President. Well, put that aside, for a moment.

"Al took this job to serve his country in the highest sense," Califano says of Haig's decision. "He wanted to get out only a few weeks after he went in, but he wound up resigning the Army because he thought he would be serving in a more important way."

Califano recruited Haig as his deputy in 1963 when Secretary Robert McNamara was on the lookout for the brightest majors in the Army to backstop civilian officials. "These were broadly educated men, a new breed of officers," says Califano. "Liberal, renaissance kind of men. Al Haig was one of them. We wound up outstaffing the State Department on international committees with these kind of officers. We put the State Department in the bush leagues."

Through the Nixon years, Haig had repeated opportunities to work in the diplomatic area, particularly with South Vietnam's President Thieu. Indeed, Haig became such a strong member of the White House team that Nixon came to depend on him nearly as much as he did Kissinger in the closing months of the Vietnam war. Haig's reward was to be promoted over 240 senior Army generals to the post of Army Vice Chief of Staff and the four-star generalship which went with it.

When Nixon's shield, (and Nixon has said he needs a shield in order to function) Haldeman, had to be discarded, the President almost instinctively reached out for another shield he had used—Haig.

There are precedents, of course, for the strong presence of military men in the White House. Once Sherman Adams left the White House, in what must be regarded as minor scandal today, President Eisenhower leaned on Gen. Wilton B. Persons, U.S.A., retired, to serve as liaison man with Congress. Eisenhower also relied heavily on Gen. Andrew Goodpaster, on military matters. But neither man was Ike's shield. Haig is shield to Nixon and is loyalty itself. Yet, it's like pulling teeth to get Haig to finally murmur that he voted for Nixon in 1972.

"I'm not a great voter," he said after a

long pause. "I was raised in a military tradition—it changed during the Eisenhower years—that it was best to stay out of it. Politics wasn't to be discussed by young officers in the dining hall. That was bad manners."

"I learned to be an observer in politics, not an advocate. I made value judgments and kept them to myself. But that's changing. I have strong views—I'm not a eunuch or a whore—but it's not an excessive burden to restrain them."

The amalgam of Nixon-Haig is forming, and with it, a single-minded admiration for Nixon by Haig. It could turn into narrow loyalty. Anyway, Haig talks of the President's burdens, the agonizing over Vice President Agnew, and the "terribly complex relationships with the press which have not been satisfactory."

After "six peculiar months," he feels "a greater appreciation for Nixon's inner strength. He has experienced an unnatural and excessive amount of personal difficulty. I do believe he has come out stronger." And Haig believes that President Nixon's work in the international area is "historic in its proportions, and lasting as a contribution."

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Haig gave up the surety of the Army for the bitter grind in the White House, but that's his way. "This is the pinnacle of decision making," he says. "The buck stops here. That can't help but add a degree of exhilaration or tension. I've had a great deal in my military career. I enjoyed my responsibilities at the Pentagon. I liked running a rifle team, and felt the same way commanding a battalion in combat. Combat is the epitome of responsibility. In many respects, the same flavor is here."

Alexander Haig was born Dec. 2, 1924, in Philadelphia, into what he calls a "well-to-do, upper middle class family." His father had been Assistant City Solicitor of Philadelphia, and was a promising attorney on the rise when he died of cancer at 38, in 1935. Haig's mother was left with three children and "a minimum estate, just enough to carry us five years." A wealthy aunt helped, and

Haig remembers "working, I always had to work." The Haigs had lost their standard of living, but not their station.

He describes his mother as a "strong, exceptional woman," now 83, active and alert, and living alone at Pennington, New Jersey. Haig's older sister, Mrs. Regina Meredith, is an attorney in partnership with her husband. Haig's younger brother, Father Frank Haig, S.J., teaches physics at Baltimore's Loyola College, a Jesuit school.

"My father was Scotch-English and a Republican," Haig says. "My mother's maiden name was Murphy and she was Catholic, but she was also Republican. She was lace-curtain Philadelphia Irish. Her brothers were all doctors and lawyers."

"It was a tough time for us when my father died. It brought our family close together, what was left of it. He was a breadwinner who overextended himself."

"Dad's death made me fairly conscious of what I had to do," Haig says. "I had to be self-reliant and fend for myself. That meant, A. Get an education, and B. Cut an inch."

Haig's mother remembers "Alec" as the most personable of her three children. "He always had a houseful of boys around," she says. "Alec was the leader. I wanted him to be an attorney like his father. But he always wanted West Point."

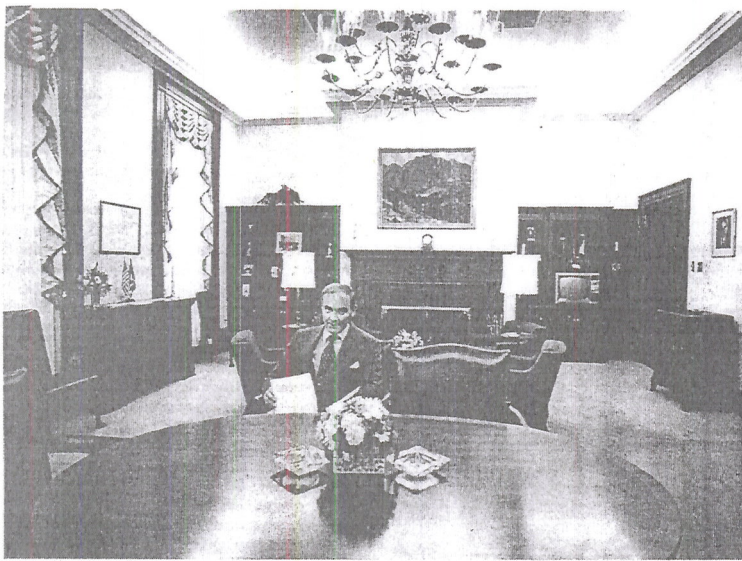
After using up a partial scholarship at a private school, Haig was graduated from Lower Merion public high school. He put in one year at Notre Dame and then an influential uncle got him into West Point where he entered in 1944 with the last of the accelerated wartime classes. He did not distinguish himself academically. He finished 214th in a class of 310, and was graduated in 1947.

Haig was sent to Japan where he was assistant to Gen. Edward Almond. An enormous experiment was being conducted in Japan at that time, and its unlikely director was Gen. Douglas MacArthur. A political system far to the left of anything tolerated in the U.S. was being introduced to the defeated Japanese nation. Haig was a first-hand witness.

"I was always interested in politics," he said, "and started early in Japan with a rather sophisticated view of how the military ran it. I worked in MacArthur's inner sanctum. A constitution was developed for Japan, under MacArthur, which was a mirror image of the most progressive American conceptions. There was a strong Communist influence in Japan then, and our major consideration was the kind of government which was going to evolve."

"This wasn't test-tube stuff, this was formed in the vortex of a political situation. I could watch the factors contributing to the Korean war, and what the influence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was on MacArthur."

In 1950, Haig married Patricia Fox, daughter of Gen. Alonzo Fox, Chief of Staff of the Far East Command. Haig soon became aide de camp to his father-in-law.



Photographed by Matthew Lewis

Gen. Haig in his office. He has not had time to redecorate since Haldeman occupied it.

But the Korean War had broken out, and Haig was soon into it. He was in the war 11 months, saw action, got hepatitis, and was shipped home.

He was an admirer of MacArthur all the way. "He was one of the dying breed of American bureaucrats," Haig says. "He was a very accomplished American leader, at the end of a generation of leaders who could operate largely on their own. Chip Bohlen was that kind of guy, too.

"They were highly independent, self-assured, competent, and became the focal point of policy in that part of the world. They were able to operate with a degree of independence no longer acceptable. Faster communications and public communications—the press—changed all this. It's a worrisome phenomenon to me. It's more difficult for our system to produce this kind of guy, or for him to survive. But it took a MacArthur to fashion a whole new democratic society out of Japan's feudalism, emperor worship, war lords and textbook democracy.

"I learned a lot out there. Some of the decisions made by Truman in the Korean conflict gave me gas pains. But he was one of our greatest Presidents. I always had an interest in history from the standpoint of lessons to be drawn from human behavior."

Haig was spotted as one of the risers and was dispatched to the appropriate round of schools—the Army and Naval war colleges, and then to Georgetown University for a master's degree in 1962. He developed a strong interest in strategical considerations in foreign policy, and still loves to talk about it.

"We shifted from massive retaliation to

flexible response in the early sixties," he says. "General Maxwell Taylor became identified both with flexible response and conventional warfare, and that became the Kennedys' strategic philosophy. There was sterility in massive retaliation.

"But the applications of the Taylor philosophy were something else. The Cuban missile crisis, Berlin and contingency plans—they involved miniscule escalation. Do the minimum necessary during confrontations to minimize a nuclear holocaust—that was the thinking. You never applied one iota of force. I was against this. It provided incentive to the other side to up the ante. I had a serious problem with it. It gave me gas pains."

But this was about the time Califano intercepted him and Haig had to keep his gas pains to himself. He begged to go to Vietnam, but Califano kept him one extra year. Haig arrived out there in 1965, served with an infantry division, and then commanded an infantry battalion. He won the Distinguished Service Cross for his effort in the Battle of Au Gap, became a lieutenant colonel and took command of a brigade before coming home in 1967.

With battlefield action in two wars behind him, Haig has this to say: "War shows me the essentiality of training discipline. Without it, there can be costly mistakes. War enhanced my perception of professionalism. Those leaders who seek perfection in time of peace provide an incalculable benefit in combat situations. That takes a sense of drive and push in a peacetime environment and that's hard. The

Army has suffered a degree of damage to its standards due to Vietnam. But the Army has its eye on the ball right now. There is introspection and assessment."

Califano said he lunched with Haig about two weeks before the My Lai massacre story broke. "He was grim, but wouldn't tell me why. He only said that about the worst thing that ever happened to the Army was going to break."

After Vietnam, Haig's next chapter was at West Point where he was made Commander of the Third Regiment of the Cadet Corps. The two years there were pleasant for him and his family. The West Point stint would go unnoticed were it not for the writing of a severe critic who was around Haig then. He is Lucian Truscott IV, a former West Pointer, grandson of the illustrious World War II general, and the latest roman numeral in a family of military officers.

Truscott is a muckraker for the leftist Village Voice these days. His long piece on Haig portrays him as super-ambitious and a compulsive "cover up" artist, especially on matters reflecting on his command. Truscott charges that Haig used coercion and deception in cases involving marijuana, cadet cheating on exams, and a cadet challenge to the West Point regulation on compulsory chapel attendance. Naturally, as an advocacy journalist, Cadet Truscott winds up in physical confrontation with Col. Haig. Molars are ground. Fists clench. Curses are uttered. Shades of Brother Rat.

The Truscott article must be regarded as chalk smears on an otherwise clean slate of press attention to Haig. Nowadays, Haig says this of Truscott: "This is a young fellow who suffered a number of problems of alienation. I wouldn't presume to know why. I didn't know the young man that well. He was separated for cause from the military (subsequently) for a number of reasons. The article didn't embarrass me because except for a few factual things, it was totally incorrect. I didn't know what he was talking about."

When Haig arrived in the White House in January, 1969, as Senior Military Adviser to the President, he was a colonel, and his role was then considered only nominal. The job had already been offered to Alexander Butterfield, also with a first-rate military background (Butterfield, with military correctness, is the one who testified that President Nixon's conversations had been taped for years, thus creating a still raging controversy).

The nominal job didn't make Al Haig, it was the other way around. He was fired with ambition, ability, and an enormous capacity for hard work. And he served under Dr. Kissinger who needs organization like we all need air. It was Haig who kept things in place, who stayed until 11 p.m. or midnight when Henry had to be off somewhere, who came in regularly on Saturdays and Sundays, even devoting hours

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to journalists trying to figure out the end of Vietnam. His 14-hour days were standard. Amazingly, his health didn't break. He was promoted to general only 10 months after arriving.

By early 1970, Haig was considered indispensable. He was made Kissinger's deputy. As the Indo-Chinese situation went up and down, with such episodes as the Cambodian invasion, the Laotian incursion, the 1972 spring offensive by the North Vietnamese, testing the administration sorely, Haig became less a deputy to Kissinger and more a tandem-partner, at least on military matters. Increasingly, President Nixon summoned Haig for the military briefing, and let Kissinger tend to the diplomatic end.

And Haig was a hard-liner in the crunches (so was Kissinger). When the North Koreans sent their MIGs into the sky over the Sea of Japan to shoot down one of our Navy reconnaissance planes with 31 aboard, in April, 1969, Haig joined Kissinger in recommending that U.S. planes bomb North Korea in retaliation, so the "Indo-China war could be a whole new ball game." President Nixon instead sent a covey of Navy ships to show the flag, denounced the North Koreans, and let the incident fade away. Haig was for the full use of force in Cambodia, Laos, in the bombing and mining decision of May 8th and the 1972 Christmas bombing.

He gritted his teeth in absorbing what was written and broadcast about the Nixon handling of the war. He fumed, and sometimes let his anger loose at the arguments and press reports of these he considered lefties and far-outers. The Vietnam war was an issue by which Nixon tested his associates. The closer they were to him on the issue, the closer they were to him, period. This is what cemented Kissinger's relationship with the President, and Haig's as well. Both were steadfast and super-loyal.

That loyalty was measured very early in the Nixon administration when there were leaks from the National Security Council staff which bothered Dr. Kissinger and the President. Kissinger, with the President's knowledge and approval, went to J. Edgar

Hoover to inquire about surveillance. Subsequently, Kissinger and Haig supplied Hoover with a list of those who warranted such surveillance. Kissinger, now an extraordinarily visible public figure, hasn't lived that one down.

Ellsberg is a name Haig says through clenched teeth. One surprise in the Ellsberg trial was the unexpected arrival in the courtroom of Gen. Haig. He was in full dress uniform, ribbons and all, and testified as to the jeopardy to national security inherent in the theft and dissemination of the Pentagon Papers. We'll never know what the jury really thought of Haig's appearance or testimony. But Haig had done his duty.

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When he is intense, the military training deep-rooted in his mind directs the phrasing. Therefore, nothing colloquial, rather, the latinized and technocratic. "Confrontation" recurs. There is "increasing tension and fractionalization." Men are forged or shaped in the "cauldron," and "degrees of exhilaration and tension" are carefully measured. The "vortex" is ever-present, and "perceptions" abound. Always, the "essentiality of discipline." Haig keeps in touch with his brother by "telephone communication."

On "Face the Nation" recently, Haig was articulate and personable, but in the crunches, understandably, he reverted to training. Elliot Richardson didn't quit over principle; that would only be five words. No, Haig took an 85-word-sentence to say that, winding up with, "...his personal commitment at the time of his confirmation before the Senate Judiciary Committee required him as a matter of conscience not to be the instrument of the order to separate Professor Cox."

That was a surprise, or as Haig put it: "No one, least of all the President, anticipated that Professor Cox would reject the proposal in the sense that he did reject it, and that is to publicly confront the President with a refusal to obey an order."

But it is unfair to portray Haig as absolutely this way. In a room, with the door shut, he can smile and dissolve with a visiting newsmen.

Unlike the California men around the President, Haig is matter-of-fact, friendly, and doesn't give bum steer guidance. He became popular with the press, and still is. He talked about matters other than military, though couching his opinions with lengthy qualifiers in militarese jargon.

He discussed the war and the Berrigan brothers and other social questions with his brother, Father Frank. "I didn't have any hangups over the Berrigans," Haig says, "but my brother, who knew them, was more charitable and understanding of their activities than I was. I would say that Frank is a progressive Jesuit. When he got more ex-

ecutive responsibility, as a college president, he became less progressive."

As he went into his late forties, Al Haig thought a lot

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about service to the Republic, to the Office of the President, to the Commander-in-Chief. "I served in many administrations," he told me. "Eisenhower, Kennedy, then Johnson and now Nixon. I wouldn't serve in anyone's administration, but I don't want to project that as a partisan idea. There are probably some Democrats whom I could be comfortable with in this role."

To Haig, the President is the Commander-in-Chief, and that's a term he uses freely, without blushing or flinching. He had been particularly impressed with this Commander-in-Chief, Mr. Nixon, was pleased with "the way the military got its message to him in the past four years."

So feeling very much part of this White House, and holding deep earned loyalty to the Commander-in-Chief, Haig responded immediately to Mr. Nixon's request for him to take over for Halde-

man when he resigned May 4. "When I came in, I was asked to fill a void on a tem-

porary basis," Haig says. "I thought that job would be better filled on a long-term basis with someone from a different background. But after I moved into the responsibilities, it became very clear to me that the characteristics required wouldn't necessarily be better contributed by someone with a different background."

"I always had excellent rapport with the President. And I could see that any controversy over me was a liability for a President who was under enough heat already, and also a liability for the U.S. Army. So when my situation at the White House was challenged by Senator Symington, Congressman Moss and others, I decided not to go through long controversial hearings."

"I decided to retire from the Army. Intellectually, it was not a tough decision. But it was a problem of the heart. My wife almost decided independently and concurrently with me that it was best to step down. I'm not sure that I couldn't have prevailed before the Senate committee, but the President was in enough trouble already."

Haig was hailed as a breath of fresh air at the fouled White House. But this was really the backlash from Halde-

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man's departure. Haig did make it possible for staffers to communicate with one another more freely. When he's asked how the Haig "system" works, he described his "system." Says Haig: "I don't want to portray myself as a big decision-maker. On major policy areas, I try to be sure that the President, who is very jealous about his prerogatives, gets the best advice from as many valid sources as possible."

"I don't know that the system has been changed here. I

don't believe in a lot of paperwork, as an administrative style. You can make a good case that in the current environment, with so many of our memos appearing before grand juries and in the newspapers, it's a self-serving tactic."

There follows heavy chortling from Haig, the kind probably heard in officers' lounges around the world. But he's not going to be drawn into criticizing Halde-

man's obsessive, and damaging, memo system. President Nixon really doesn't like politicians. He likes privacy, silence, analysis before action, and then obedience. So he brought Melvin Laird, the politician, to the White House, to smooth Congress's jagged, if not inflamed, feelings over Watergate. But he allowed Haig to hold the ultimate power as to what went on in the White House, who got hired and fired, and what to do when the crunch was on. In the Saturday night massacre, when the bodies of Cox, Richardson and Ruckelshaus went flying into the air as though blasted by an artillery barrage, it was Haig, not Laird, the seasoned politician sensitive to public reaction, who was consulted. The result was a political disaster and a worsening of the Watergate crisis, as it must be called generically.

To President Nixon's way of thinking and operating, Gen. Haig is just the man he needs now. There is a fortress mentality at the White House much like that felt in late 1967 and early 1968 in President Lyndon Johnson's White House. The disciplined men who think of the President in terms of the Commander-in-Chief are the closest to Mr. Nixon. Laird, Bryce Harlow, Bill Timmons—they are left to hold Congress off until Jerry Ford arrives to take Agnew's seat.

There is Haig, the West

Pointer who became four-star general. There is Haig's deputy, Gen. John C. Bennett, U.S. Army, retired. There is Haig's aide, Maj. George Joulwan, U.S. Army, active, a husky, outgoing young man who talks proudly of how he was able to rap with hippies and radicals and still keep his integrity as a military man. There is another West Pointer, Fred Buzhardt, recently a civilian official at the Pentagon, and now assistant White House counsel. And there is Ronald Ziegler, press secretary, who didn't have to graduate from West Point to attain the wooden obedience he shows the President.

The White House has blessed relief from the Halde- man memo system, but the crispness remains. President Nixon sets the tone, and what is so remarkable about that?

"I maintain a degree of formality in our relationship which he expects and wants," Haig says. "I'm comfortable with it because it's not unlike what I'm accustomed to in a military organization."

What does Haig want in a good staff member?

"First and foremost," says Haig, "is that I like to see a staff officer perceive of himself as a staff officer. That means he is an individual who facilitates and coordinates the flow of decision making. That he doesn't tend to view himself as the fount or imprimatur of policy, but the individual who may create ideas for the decision maker. That he may facilitate the bringing forth of considerations that go into the decision. That he might help in implementing the decision."

"But he must be conscious that he is essentially a facilitator and coordinator. He must have a philosophic approach to his duties. In the host of decisions he makes, he must try to be objective and balanced. Make sure that a host of viewpoints are brought forward and not a loaded deck."

Besides all this, Haig also has a lovely family. He credits his wife, Pat, with keeping that family close. "She understands the requirements of military service," he says. "She is very understanding. We've only had two vacations in the past five years, and one alone. Sometimes on trips to the Florida or California White House, the President suggests I bring all of them

along, and I do."

Pat Haig says "we're not morning talkers," so she tries to catch up on weekends with her husband, or "talk with him through his secretary." She and Al never get to the movies (by circumstance, he occasionally sees a movie at Camp David on weekends), but they try to get to the Kennedy Center for cultural events. They almost took in the ballet recently, but a last-minute emergency kept Al away, and Mrs. Haig went with friends.

Haig has been coming home nights at 10 and 11 o'clock for years, but he finds his children waiting for him. "We talk while I eat dinner," he says. "We discuss what went on in my day, though if it is something sensitive (like Agnew's resignation), I wait until after the event."

The eldest is Alex, 21, a senior at Georgetown University. Brian, 20, is a sophomore at West Point. Barbara, 17, is a senior at Georgetown Visitation high school.

"I kept close to the boys through athletics," Haig says. "When I was in Vietnam, the boys felt a responsibility to their mother and sister, and that meant something to them. They might have lost something. But not as much as I would fear about my daughter. Girls are different, more complex. My daughter and I get along well and are close, but our relationship has been victimized by my work."

"The boys know my views. They may not agree with them, but they respect me. I have been a strong disciplinarian with them, something they will appreciate in later years. At the same time, we have been close, free and natural."

Haig is also close to his brother, Father Frank, 45, now a professor of theoretical physics at Baltimore's Loyola College. "People might think I'm his mentor," Father Haig says, "but Al is really my mentor. We've discussed important matters since we were boys."

"The closest he ever came to having a spiritual crisis was after high school when he couldn't get in West Point. He went to Notre Dame and that year there changed him from an adolescent to a man. I remember him coming home and seriously discussing evolution and God, and how to reconcile them. When he got to West Point, he got over his rough times by going to

chapel.

"Al's right of center in religion. He accepts the positions enacted by the Vatican II council, but without deviations. He doesn't want to go back to the Latin mass, but he doesn't want any wild stuff in church, either.

"He always wants me to tell him about the state of discipline in the Jesuits because the Berrigan brothers bothered him. Watergate is also a major concern to him. Al feels a man must work out his ethi-

cal norms before he takes a decision-maker's position. responsible to the public interest; he is an intelligent student of politics who's learned about politics as a military observer. A footnote here might be the observation that it was the lack of political sense which got this administration into its frightful inability to control the government.

Perhaps Al Haig will learn fast. Anyway, his brother, Father Frank, believes he might be headed for a political career. "He's so dedicated to the national interest," says Father



Photographed by Matthew Lewis

cal norms before he takes a decision-maker's position."

This sense of duty comes through strong in Haig.

Indeed, Al Haig has given a lot in the line of duty. He represents a new kind of military officer, one who can easily move into command position in the civilian bureaucracy without feeling discomfort. And he champions this new role for the military.

Without going into a doom-sayer attitude or engaging in the worry-wart rhetoric of those who think the military can do nothing right, it still must be said that the openness and flexibility of our society is leagues apart from the military method. This must make Al Haig's work as the man who can open the world to the President, particularly what goes on in the United States, a difficult chore.

For Haig is not a politician knowing the perils of being

Haig, S. J., "that I think he could put his executive skills to work in politics one day. He is better in executive functions than legislative. Al is a brilliant speaker, and he's great in the give-and-take afterwards. He can change to anybody's wave length. People like him. I don't know. He might go into politics."

That would suit Al Haig's mother fine. "If he had followed my advice years ago, he'd be a Senator by now," she says emphatically. "I wanted him to be a lawyer. The Army is such a slow procedure, and you can't make any money. Money is the thing you want as you get older.

"I don't know how Alec can work so hard. The strain has made him look so much older. He admires Mr. Nixon so much. I'll be glad when it's all over." ■