

Haldeman the Mighty,

By R. W. APPLE Jr.

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WASHINGTON—Ever since he came to Washington, people have been comparing Harry Robbins (Bob) Haldeman to Sherman Adams.

As Adams did under Dwight D. Eisenhower, Haldeman made himself into a latter-day Janus, a guardian of the gateway to President Richard M. Nixon,

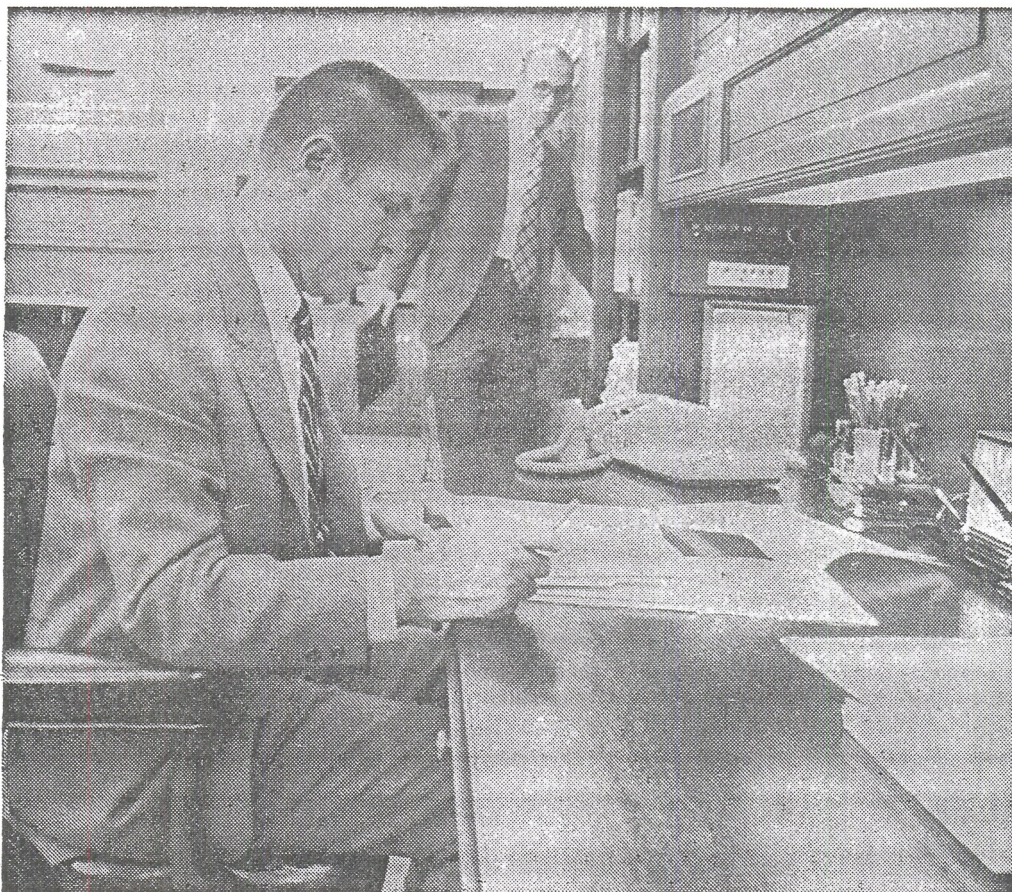
a god of the going and the coming. He decided whom and what the President should see, and so helped to determine how Nixon thought and what he decided.

Like Adams, Haldeman functioned with such bloodless, hard-eyed efficiency and shielded his boss from so much unpleasantness, that he earned trust and respect from most of those within the White House and enmity and contempt from many of those outside.

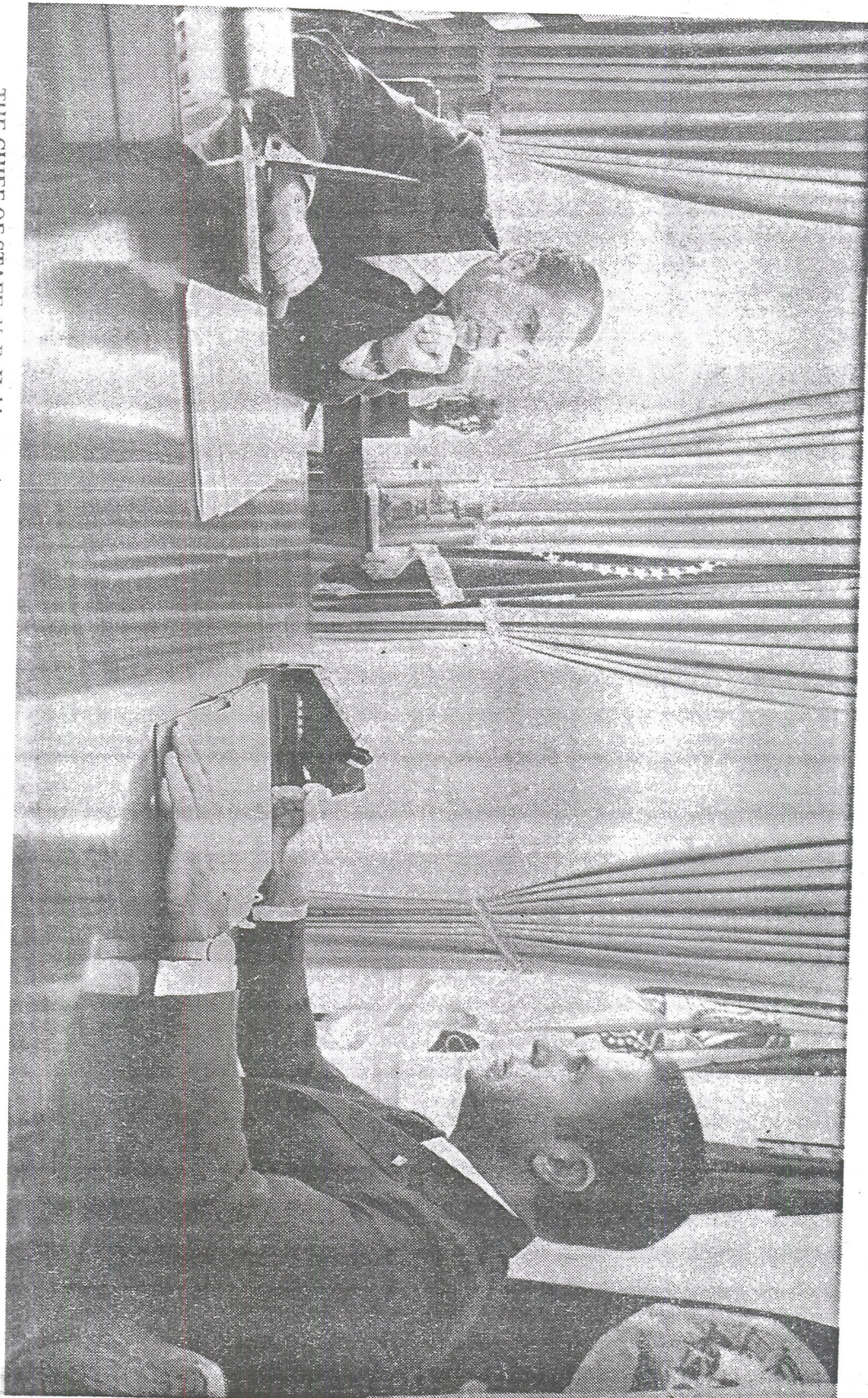
Like Adams, he was called "the sec-

He was the 'second most powerful man' in the nation's capital. He shielded the President, gave him 'isolation.' Then came Watergate, the cover-up, the revelations. And now he is on the way to becoming a Washington memory:

Haldeman the Fallen



THE SCREEN: Haldeman checking whether documents should go to the President.



THE CHIEF OF STAFF: H. R. Haldeman, in an early morning conference with President Nixon before Watergate and resignation.

ond most powerful man in Washington." And like Adams, who was forced from office by his acceptance, in return for small favors, of a vicuna coat, a \$2,400 Oriental rug and \$3,000 in free hotel rooms from a Boston textile tycoon, Haldeman's career came to an abrupt halt in the midst of a major scandal.

Backbiting Among Aides

He was driven from his White House job, along with John D. Ehrlichman and John Wesley Dean 3rd, after several weeks of reports that White House officials were involved in the Watergate bugging and break-in, and after two weeks of backbiting among White House aides.

So far, Haldeman's known involvement in the case is less direct than that of other leading figures in the Nixon Administration. He apparently was not present at the meetings where the bugging of the Democratic National Committee's Headquarters was first discussed, as was former Attorney General John N. Mitchell. But the connections are there, nonetheless.

According to Federal investigators, Haldeman was one of five persons authorized to approve disbursements from the secret — and probably illegal — campaign fund that financed the Watergate bugging and sundry other acts of political espionage during the campaign of 1972.

Where Money Went

Much of the money went to Jeb Stuart Magruder, whom Haldeman had installed as the number two man at the Committee to Reelect the President, and from him to G. Gordon Liddy, who ran the Watergate operation.

Magruder is only one of the Haldeman proteges who has been caught up in the scandal; others are Dwight L.

Chapin and Gordon Strachan, both of whom have since left the White House staff.

It is conceivable, of course, that Haldeman intended to set in motion only an espionage campaign, probably legal, if doubtfully ethical, and that his underlings, in their zeal to insure "four more years," exceeded their mandate.

That sort of thing sometimes happens in campaigns, even in campaigns run by men who pride themselves on their managerial *expertise*. But if that was the case, Haldeman, as the Chief of Staff, must take much of the blame for creating the permissive atmosphere (oh cruel irony!) in which young assistants were so obsessed with technique that larger questions of ethics, honor, even legality, were submerged.

They were submerged in a mindless pragmatism summed up in one of the staff's catch phrases: "We believe in what works."

After the Break-In

Unanswered questions also surround Haldeman's conduct after the Watergate break-in. He was known at the White House as a man who could shake information out of the bureaucracy on command, producing position papers for the President from the most recalcitrant department.

But in the Watergate case, he produced only a report purported to have been drawn up by Dean, the White House counsel, and delivered orally. Orally? In an Administration that lives on paper?

In the scramble for self-preservation that began in mid-April, Dean's friends have been telling reporters that his report was somehow altered before it reached the President, that Mr. Nixon's heated denial of White House involve-

Continued on Page 6, Col. 3

Continued From First Page

ment, based on the report, was therefore misguided. The man most likely to have received the Dean report is Haldeman, since all the internal communications channels lead to his desk, and he was also in control of the entire White House effort to discredit the early Watergate reporting in the press.

Suppose, however, as do some of the players in this game of get-your-buddy, that Dean was the real architect of the White House cover-up. How did it happen that Haldeman the fierce, Haldeman the loyal, failed to see through Dean's game?

How was it that he was unable to draw from Magruder, his agent at the Re-election Committee, the account of the February and March planning meetings that Magruder gave to the grand jury in April? "It is hard to imagine," says a friend of Haldeman's on the staff, "and even harder to imagine that he wouldn't have gone to the President with what he knew."

Only two constructions of that statement, and of the rest of the evidence, seem plausible: Either the superloyalist let his President down, or both Haldeman and President Nixon were privy to the cover-up from the first.

Once before, during the President's disastrous 1962 campaign for Governor of California, Haldeman and his principal showed a fondness for the seamier sort of political operations.

In that year, an organization known as the "Committee for the Preservation of the Democratic Party in California" conducted a spurious \$70,000 mail poll whose purpose was to discredit Mr. Nixon's opponent, Edmund G. Brown. Brown was described on the poll ballot as an extremist, and the 900,000 recipients were asked to state their agreement or disagreement with him and to send in money to help move the Democratic party back into the middle of the road.

Committee Was Front For Nixon Campaign

In fact, Judge Byron Arnold of San Francisco Superior Court later found, the committee was a front for the Nixon campaign. "Mr. Nixon and Mr. Haldeman approved the plan and project," the judge wrote, and the funds "were solicited for the use, benefit and furtherance of the candidacy of Richard M. Nixon." By the time the judgment was rendered, the gubernatorial campaign was over.

Like Richard Nixon, Bob Haldeman springs from the exotic soil of Southern California. But whereas Nixon grew up in the lower-middle-class drabness of Yorba Linda, Haldeman grew up in the splendor of privileged Beverly Hills.

His grandfather had been one of the originators of the Better American Foundation, an early anti-Communist organization, and Haldeman shared his views. At UCLA, he was fascinated and repelled by the work of the Communist-front groups.

After graduation, he joined the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. In the 25 years since, he has had only two real concerns—the career of Richard Nixon, who shares his anti-communism, and the selling of products such as Seven-Up, Sani-Flush, Griffin shoe polish and Black Flag insecticide.

Inevitably, as he moved back and forth from politics to advertising — he was an advance man in the 1956 Vice Presidential and 1960 Presidential campaigns; he managed the 1962 effort in California, he oversaw the traveling party in 1968 — the two worlds meshed.

He brought to the 1968 Nixon campaign a belief in merchandising and tight staff control. These were reflected in the campaign in two important ways. In a memorandum written late in 1967, before he joined the Nixon entourage, Haldeman emphasized, as Theodore H. White later wrote, that "Americans no longer gather in the streets to hear candidates; they gather at their television sets or where media can assemble their attention."

You didn't sell bug spray in the nineteen-sixties by word-of-mouth alone, so why sell a candidate that way?

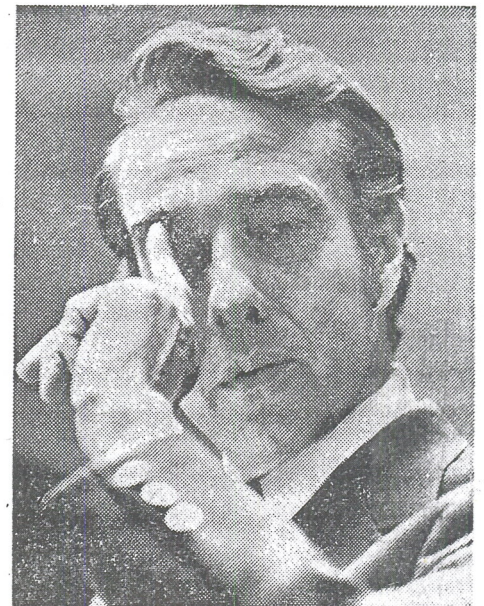
The outgrowth of that insight was the carefully restrained Nixon campaign, with a minimum of public appearances, especially those where the candidate could be challenged or heckled. That fit in nicely with a Haldeman corollary: Nixon tends to push too hard in a campaign, to exhaust himself, to make mistakes.

Haldeman helped to fashion the new Nixon, the Nixon who squeaked past Hubert H. Humphrey and the divided Democrats to win.

And so to Washington. Neither Haldeman nor Ehrlichman, who quickly emerged as the President's principal adviser on domestic po-



EDMUND "PAT" BROWN was hit by a phony poll when Nixon ran against him for governor of California. Haldeman, said a judge, had approved the plan.



SENATOR Robert Dole, former GOP chairman, was infuriated by the way Haldeman blocked him when he sought to gain access to the President.

licity, knew anything of the capital's mores or power structure, but they were unflinchingly—some would say blindly—loyal, and they knew their man and what he wanted.

Haldeman had continued to believe in the downtrodden Nixon in 1963, when almost everyone else had left him for dead, and he continued to believe in "the tremendous overall ability of the man, the way he deals with people, his intellectual ability, his articulation."

He believed so thoroughly that he took in silence what other men might have resented; once he told a close friend that he wasted "hour after hour" dealing with "all the bitching and all the demands" of Mrs. Nixon and her two daughters, but added cheerfully that he was delighted to do it if it made Mr. Nixon's life any easier.

His wife, Joanne, whom he married in 1949 after a campus courtship, is reported to have said after the 1968 victory, "Thank goodness Nixon won, because now Bob will have something to devote his life to."

What Nixon wanted Haldeman to give him was, first of all, isolation. The President shrinks from personal conflict, prefers to reach decisions on the basis of staff papers rather than oral argument, and needs what Haldeman has called "chunks of time that are not planned, partly to give himself an opportunity to react, partly to initiate on his terms rather than someone else's."

Haldeman obliged, setting up a system of "action memos" that flowed from a yellow pad, on which he scribbled notes of his conversations with the President, to other staff members, then back for Presidential action. He would decide which among the "hundreds or perhaps thousands who want to see" Mr. Nixon, again in his own words, "have no legitimate claim."

Bob Dole, the former Republican National Committee Chairman, was one of those infuriated by Haldeman's protective attitude. During his term in office, he told jokingly of calling for an appointment with the President, being put off and finally receiving a call from Lawrence M. Higby, who was known in the White House as Haldeman's Haldeman (his job, it was said, was to keep unwanted visitors from bothering Haldeman). Higby said Dole could see the President in a few minutes—"on television."

Haldeman lorded it over the Congress, the bureaucracy, the Republican politicians and the press, and many in those quarters came to see him as a Rasputin.

Politics to the Right Of the President's

Haldeman's own politics are conservative, a bit to the right of the President's; on a scale where zero represents radicalism and 100 reaction, he says, he would fall near 75.

He seldom makes public statements, so his views on most issues are not known in detail. But in January of 1972, he agreed to appear on

the NBC "Today" show—and what he had to say startled a lot of people. Of the opponents of the Vietnam war, in which the United States was still involved, Haldeman declared, "the only conclusion you can draw is that the critics now are consciously aiding and abetting the enemy of the United States."

The remark, which he repeated in paraphrase a few moments later, amounted to a textbook accusation of treason. The White House promptly asserted that he was speak-

ing for himself, not the President, which nobody believed, and Haldeman has never retracted the statement.

How much did his attitudes color his relationship with the President? One former colleague tells of Haldeman acting as a devil's advocate in several crucial meetings; others report that he didn't need to push his own view with the President, because he thinks like Mr. Nixon on most matters of consequence.

Haldeman himself, in an interview with Allen Drury, said "Ehrlichman, Kissinger and I do our best to make sure that all points of view are placed before the President. We do act as a screen, because there is a real danger of some advocate of an idea rushing in to the President or some other decision-maker, if the person is allowed to do so, and actually managing to convince them in a burst of emotion or argument. We try to make sure that all arguments are presented calmly and fairly across the board."

His Conception Of 'a Liberal'

But the dimensions of that board were suggested by Haldeman's description of Raymond K. Price Jr., one of the President's speechwriters, as a liberal. By most definitions, Price, a moderate Republican who used to write editorials for The New York Herald Tribune, would be considered a centrist.

Ken W. Clawson, one of the Administration's innumerable public-relations men, said before Haldeman's departure that "there is no policy that Haldeman is responsible for, yet there is no policy that he doesn't have a hand in somehow." In one way or another, to use the favored White House locution, he made his input felt.

If Haldeman's power stemmed from proximity and was reinforced by his ideological compatibility with the President, it was confirmed by his rigid control over the staff. In looks—nineteen-fifties crew cut, iron jaw, dark eyes—and in manner Bob Haldeman, at 46, lived up to one of his nicknames, "the Prussian."

Few were willing to challenge his authority or his judgments, and most of those who did have suffered for their temerity. In 1972, for example, Haldeman ordered Secret Service agent Robert Taylor, during a campaign rally at Providence, R.I., to drop the restraining ropes to allow the crowd to swarm around the President. Good television.

But Taylor, then the chief of the White House detail, thought it bad security, and in the test of wills that followed, he threatened Haldeman with arrest if he did not desist. Before long, Taylor was on his way to exile in a minor post.

The fear Haldeman engendered was only occasionally visible to the outside world, but it was pervasive. A high-ranking Presidential aide once urged a reporter to include a good word for Haldeman in a piece he was preparing. The reporter protested that Haldeman had nothing to do with the subject he was writing about, that there was no reason even to mention Haldeman. "Say something nice about him anyway," replied the aide, wincing.

Haldeman's power over the staff and his access to the President (on Nov. 5, 1970, as an example, he saw him four times for 155 minutes) were never prostituted for personal advantage; he has no political ambitions.

But his methods of operation contributed to the greatest concentration of power within

the White House in modern times, and the greatest concentration of power within the White House in the hands of a select few. That in itself helped to create a climate in which the Watergate operation could come to flower.

In the weeks before his departure, Haldeman no longer conducted the 8.15 A. M. meeting with the other senior aides — Ziegler, Kissinger, Ehrlichman et al. — that used to begin the White House day. It may have been a casualty of the Watergate case.

The other participants always attempted to make it sound like a gathering of equals, but it was not; it was always held in Haldeman's Williamsburg-style office, before the perpetually-crackling log fire.

In Government, as in the National Basketball Association, the home court is a big advantage. At the meetings and in his memos and notations on memos, Haldeman's style was usually brusque. He conceded readily that "every President needs his s.o.b., and I'm Nixon's."

Once several years ago, after appropriate staff work, a memorandum was sent to the President urging him to call a mortally ill Republican Senator. Haldeman intercepted it, concluded that it would be a waste of time inasmuch as the Senator probably couldn't talk on the telephone anyway, and decided that it would be better to call the widow later.

Back down through channels went the memo, with a notation in Haldeman's crisp hand: "Wait until he dies." When approached about the incident later, he characteristically saw neither ghouliness nor humor in it.

On another occasion, venting the deep distrust of journalists shared by most of his peers in the advertising business and by the President, he sent word to John Osborne of The New Republic that a mildly critical Osborne piece was "the - - - - iest piece of journalism I ever saw."

For all his arrogance, however, Haldeman sometimes operated with a subtlety that belied his reputation for insensitivity and bullheadedness. By all accounts, he was extraordinarily adept at reading Mr. Nixon's many moods, deciding when to let him alone, when to go to him with a difficult problem, when to sit and let the President talk.

One associate remarked that when Haldeman sensed something wrong, he would sometimes delay implementing a Presidential order. After waiting an hour or even a day, he would go back to the oval office, the associate said, and ask, "Do you really want to do that?" More than once the President changed his mind.

Something of the same touch must have helped in Haldeman's relationship with his eldest son, H. H. (Hank), which is perhaps the most widely known aspect of his private life.

Hank Haldeman's hair hangs down past his shoulders, and he wears steel-rimmed glasses and torn jeans. He is, so far as appearances are concerned, a walking, talking symbol of the hated counterculture. And yet the 46-year-old father and the 19-year-old son, a student at U.C.L.A., have somehow worked out a *modus vivendi*.

Plays Chess and Tennis, Doesn't Drink or Smoke

Haldeman seems, in fact, to be the model family man, secure in the middle-American values that Richard Nixon so admires. A Christian Scientist, he seldom drinks or smokes. His off-hours enthusiasms are chess and tennis (which he plays aggressively but without noticeable style), taking and showing home movies, whose only subject is Richard M. Nixon on tour, and chatting away with his wife Joanne and two of their four children who are not away at college.

The Haldemans live in, but are decidedly not a part of, the 18th- and 19th-century enclave of Georgetown, in northwest Washington. No cocktail parties or chic dinners have kept the lights burning late at the Haldemans' newly purchased \$140,000 town house.

Haldeman, a man of steely intelligence, reads a good deal—his office bookshelf held a copy of every book written about Nixon and a generous selection of studies of Presidential power — but none of his friends describes him as an intellectual, and he has no apparent interest in art or music or literature. (His musical tastes run to Johnny Cash and "Jesus Christ Superstar.")

Working for a President who admires technique and reveres efficiency, he was the bright and efficient technician who had little interest in long, philosophical discussions or the play of ideas.

But Haldeman and his allies failed to protect the President in the Watergate case — failed to save him and the Presidency from the strain of scandal even while helping him to triumph in China and at the polls. For that, he was not forgiven.