

Nixon's psychiatrist found no sign of mental illness

WASHINGTON—If the Republicans start a whispering campaign about Democratic vice presidential candidate Thomas Eagleton's past psychiatric problems, the Democrats are prepared to raise questions about President Nixon's own visits to a psychotherapist.

It may be useful, therefore, to set forth the available fact.

In 1952, Richard Nixon began calling at Dr. Arnold Hutschnecker's office in a posh Park Avenue building in New York City. A number of witnesses, including newspaper columnist Harriet Van Horn, recall seeing him visit the doctor up to the early 1960s.

Dr. Hutschnecker, educated in Berlin and trained as an internist, came to the United States in 1936. By the early 1950s, his interest had shifted to psychosomatic medicine. In 1951, he published a book on psychosomatic illness called "The Will to Live."

On Oct. 29, 1968, the late Drew Pearson telephoned Dr. Hutschnecker about 10 a.m., and asked him about his celebrated patient.

As Pearson later related it: "I told the doctor I understood he had been giving Mr. Nixon psychiatric treatments . . . Dr. Hutschnecker confirmed that he had treated Mr. Nixon, said that it was a delicate matter, and that he was reluctant to talk about it. He had a patient with him, he said, and asked me to call back at 4 p.m."

During the interim, Nixon's communications director, Herb Klein, was called. Pearson's subsequent call to Hutschnecker brought the response that the doctor had treated Nixon briefly on a matter of internal medicine.

Pearson decided not to write the story but, after the election, revealed the details in a Press Club speech. Presidential press secretary Ron Ziegler responded: "It's totally untrue, of course."

Nixon's treatment

An unnamed source close to Nixon told The New York Times that the then vice president, exhausted after a foreign trip went to Dr. Hutschnecker for treatment and was given "some pills."

Miss Van Horn's recollections were a bit more precise. "When I lived next door to Dr. Hutschnecker," she said, "I occasionally saw (Nixon's) grim visage passing under the next canopy. Nagged by the curiosity that nags all journalists, I once asked a building employe, 'Does Mr. Nixon visit friends at 829?'"

"'Naw,' came the reply. 'He comes to see the shrink.'"

Later, Dr. Hutschnecker made this additional comment on Nixon's mental health: "During the entire period that I treated Mr.

Nixon, I detected no sign of mental illness in him. As I came to know him over the years, we developed a trusting professional as well as amicable personal relationship . . .

'Superior intellect'

"He always impressed me as a man with superior intellect and keen perception.

He was an intense listener and he would ask questions aimed directly at the heart of the matter . . .

"After his election as President, I felt confirmed in my belief, which I had ex-

Jack Anderson

pressed in a casual discussion back in 1955, that Richard Nixon had not only the strength but the imagination and clarity of goal that I thought were prerequisites for a successful leader.

"I felt this in spite of the critical references that had been made to Mr. Nixon's emotional encounter with the press in 1962, after his unsuccessful race for governor of California.

"I believe it is one thing for a man to suffer a personal defeat that seems to end all hopes for his political future and to react to it emotionally. But it is quite another thing for a man in a position of power to be confronted with a crisis that is impersonal and therefore does not have the same emotional impact . . . The first incident involved Mr. Nixon's subjective reaction to a personal traumatic experience . . ."

WASHINGTON WHIRL

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Joe Blatchford b
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A Suggestion: Psychiatry
at High Levels of
Government, by
Dr. Arnold A. Hutschnecker
NYTimes 4 Jul 73, filed
Watergate.

See KPFA News 1 Feb 73,
filed Prep.