

from column by Bob Considine

... cry  
... place, and in all  
... cry. Incurrible horse  
... swope once swore, "The thorough-  
... ampest animal on the face of the earth." He  
... had have added, "... except for people who bet on  
them."

★ ★ ★

THE PRESIDENT'S Watergate speech brought back memories of his Checkers speech of 21 years before. Both soul-barrings were forced upon him.

In '52, Gen. Eisenhower sent word to his young running mate that he must prove to the American public that he was as clean as a hound's tooth -- an expression that has since become as archaic as, say, "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too." Last Monday it was his GOP confreres, the American public and press that combined to send the President to the microphone in a similar fight for his prestige and political life.

Both speeches were blood-draining ordeals. In '52 the young aspirant for Vice President had to acknowledge receiving a "slush fund" from friends to further his political aims, and to justify it. The "slush fund" was ridiculously small as compared to the tens of millions of dollars that helped to give him his overwhelming mandate last November. But at the time it all seemed pretty sinister, and the junior Senator from California pulled out all the stops in fighting for his political life.

He denied any personal gain from the campaign pot, made wistful and appealing reference to the fact that Pat -- smiling bravely in the background -- had a plain cloth coat, not a mink. The little dog Checkers did all but lick his hand, on camera. When it was over, Nixon wept on the shoulder of the senior Senator from California, Bill Knowland.

There were tears in his eyes after the Watergate speech, too, according to TV technicians in attendance. And understandably. He had torn up the kind of team he always preferred having around him: utterly loyal, hard-working, and dedicated to moving him into his place in history. He would not find that team's likes again in the uncertain years that lie ahead.

He could have used Pat last Monday night. And the pooch.