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Kleindienst Career Marked by Contrasts

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Richard G. Kleindienst told a reporters' breakfast a few months ago that if he should ever be asked to leave his job as attorney general, "I'm not going to have any sour grapes. I'm going to feel I've had one of the great experiences a dumbbell lawyer from Arizona could have."

That was vintage Kleindienst — self-effacing but proud.

He is a man of many contradictions, capable of offending people with his brashness on one day and impressing them with his frankness on the next.

He served the administration by pushing even harder than necessary for enactment of stern "law-and-order" legislation, but at the same time embarked on a completely unauthorized private crusade for prison reform and aid to ex-offenders.

Invariably known as Barry Goldwater's protégé and a darling of the right, Kleindienst has nonetheless maintained close friendships on the other end of the political spectrum, sometimes dining at the homes of persons presumed to be his enemies.

He has been known to shout at aides in his Justice Department office, but the shouting could barely be heard over the symphonic music coming from his radio.

There were many who said it couldn't be done—for a political has-been like Kleindienst to become the nation's chief law enforcement officer.

At the end of 1964, he was thoroughly discredited. His Republican campaign for governor of Arizona had been a disastrous failure (he won't even talk about it now), and he was credited with a sinister "capture" of delegates to the 1964 GOP National Convention for Goldwater.

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he was named deputy attorney general under John N. Mitchell in 1969, and he hardly ingratiated himself with his civil libertarian critics in the months and years that followed.

He was not really popular among the more sophisticated and genteel Easterners like Mitchell either, but he won points by carrying a controversial ball for the team.

In 1969, he was quoted as favoring the incarceration of violent dissenters in camps established under the Emergency Detention Act of 1950. (Once the dust had settled on that remark, he announced the White House's desire to have the act repealed.)

He was the author (with the then assistant attorney general, William Rehnquist, now a Supreme Court Justice) of the policy of mass street arrests during the Mayday antiwar demonstrations here in 1971, and his design of "Operation Intercept" to cut the smuggling of marijuana into the

United States infuriated the Mexican government.

As deputy attorney general, Kleindienst was in charge of clearing administration appointments to federal judgeships, and he earned plenty of enemies in the White House and on Capitol Hill by rejecting political nominees as unqualified.

Those enemies came back to haunt him early last year, when Mr. Nixon named him to succeed Mitchell as attorney general.

A furor erupted after columnist Jack Anderson published a lobbyist's memorandum linking the settlement of antitrust cases against the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. to the conglomerate's pledge of cash to help bring the 1972 GOP Convention to San Diego.

Many of the President's trusted aides, including John Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, urged that Kleindienst be dumped when, without clearing the action with the White House, he

demanding on the eve of Senate confirmation that the hearings on his nomination be reopened.

Those hearings turned into one of the most anguished experiences of his career, and he was mocked for his constant need to have his "recollection refreshed." But Kleindienst ultimately pulled through and was confirmed for the cabinet job last June with only 19 votes against him.

Privately, Kleindienst has told his friends that his only strong resentment from the hearings is against ITT executives, whom he regards as "some of the stupidest people I've ever met."

Having achieved one of his life-long ambitions by becoming attorney general (he has renounced any desire to be a judge), Kleindienst was desperate to stay in the post for at least a year. However, it took a trip by Goldwater to see the President at Camp David to beat back internal White House objections to Kleindienst's reappointment to the second Nixon cabinet.

Last weekend it was Kleindienst himself who went to the mountain, and this time the message was that he would have to go as part of the Watergate cleanup.

It has generally been assumed that Kleindienst, the son of an impoverished railroad worker from Winslow, Ari., and a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, would return to Phoenix when he left the government.

But he has decided to stay in Washington—his wife and family like it here and he wants now to make a lot of money practicing law to put his four children through school.

Amidst yesterday's uproar Kleindienst made it clear he hasn't fallen completely.

He sent a message to a luncheon meeting of the Federal Bar Association, saying he would remain as its president and hoped that the membership would "keep up the good work and get their asses in gear." That sounded just like him.



Associated Press

Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst reads the text of his letter of resignation in front of a portrait of Robert H. Jackson, a former attorney general.