

Don't Damn Henry For Eternity Now

"Say it ain't so, Joe," the urchin is supposed to have pleaded as he tugged at the coat of Shoeless Joe Jackson, emerging from the Chicago courtroom where he had been damned for eternity as one of the fixers of the 1919 World Series.

"Say it ain't so, Henry," might well replace that tearful tableau of American folklore when Dr. Kissinger, the most beloved and admired figure in the Nixon Administration, moves back into his familiar haunts at Washington.

He emerges in the wake of testimony that he went along with the Administration's conspiracy to bug the telephones of 13 members of his staff, plus the phones of some of his staunchest fans among the Washington press corps.

No baseball fan young or old conceived of underhandedness in Joe Jackson. He was the hardest-working and most diligent player of his day. He rose to particularly great heights when his team, the Chicago White Sox, met the Cincinnati Reds in the World Series of 1919. Although his team lost in what was considered an astounding upset, Shoeless Joe was surely not to blame. He hit .375, batted in 16 runs, scored five himself, and had a home run. Thus it was unthinkable that he could have been part of a sordid scheme to throw the series to the Reds — a scheme which was carried out successfully by teammates but Joe was a part of it.

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NOW, HENRY. It was so obvious for so long that Kissinger was a man apart, separated from the business-as-usual politics of the White House.

NO KOW-TOWER, HENRY. He was his own man, and a remarkable performer; clever enough to feign "Delhi belly" in Pakistan while he flew off to Peking to arrange the historic meeting between President Nixon and the top Chinese.

He was the great non-conformist, the antidote to those sombre guardians of President Nixon — Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman. By word and deed he jovially hacked away at Ron Ziegler's diligent efforts to canonize the President, and in that he obviously had the support of Nixon himself.

JUST BEFORE THE China trip, Kissinger was the guest of honor of the Newspaperwomen's Club of Washington — during which the President called him twice. He was an adored guest, and he brought down the house when he said that everything was perfectly arranged for the China trips with one exception; nobody had been able to figure out how to get Bebe Rebozo's houseboat up the Yangtze river.

In China, Henry was at the President's side when the chief executive had his hour-long meeting with Mao Tse-tung, Secretary of State Bill Rogers was not invited. At the toasting sessions during the big dinners and when the momentous declaration was released at Shanghai, it was Kissinger again — not Rogers.

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IN TOTAL, he's been something very special in our lifetimes, a man for all seasons, the one amused intellectual in the sober-sided Establishment. During the height of the Administration warnings to the media to cool-it-or-else, Kissinger was just about the only member of the Nixon team a Washington correspondent could call up or go to to receive assurance that the First Amendment was not in the process of being repealed. He was a breath of fresh air.

He could have returned to Harvard in unique glory after the magnificent handling of the Peking and Moscow summits. Instead, he went along — often in a \$10,000,000 presidential jet.

Like Joe Jackson, he was just too talented to become mixed up in a mess that will never go away. It would be unfortunate, perhaps even calamitous, if circumstances develop to a point where Kissinger is denied the right to practice what comes naturally to him, just because he went along in one preposterous case involving "leakage" of the thunderous fact that our B-52's were (and are) still bombing Cambodia, to bolster the regime of some nobody named Lon Nol.