

Murray Chotiner, Nixon Mentor, Dies

Campaign Aide Since '46 and Strategy Deviser

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 30 — Murray M. Chotiner, President Nixon's first formative tutor in a tough school of campaign politics, died this morning, a week after having suffered a concussion, a broken leg and other injuries in an automobile accident.

According to physicians at the Washington Hospital Center, the 64-year-old Mr. Chotiner "almost certainly" died from a pulmonary embolus, or blood clot, most likely caused by the accident.

At the White House, Gerald R. Warren, deputy press secretary, said Mr. Nixon was "deeply saddened" by the news.

During five years of the Nixon Administration, Mr. Chotiner played a variety of behind-the-scenes roles in law and politics here, in and out of the White House. He was controversial to the end.

As a special counsel to President Nixon in 1970, he helped design former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew's slashing attacks on "radic lib" Senate candidates, who included former Senator Charles E. Goodell, Republican of New York.

In 1971, as a private lawyer, he helped James R. Hoffa, the convicted former president of the Teamsters' Union to win an early parole from prison, and he argued the milk producers' case for higher price supports at the White House.

In 1972, Mr. Chotiner later acknowledged, he hired two secret agents to pose as reporters and send him daily intelligence reports on Senator George McGovern's Presidential campaign against Mr. Nixon.

But he made his most famous possibly historic imprint on Mr. Nixon's political career two decades earlier.

In 1946, when Mr. Nixon first ran for Congress in California against Jerry Voorhis, the Democratic incumbent, Mr. Chotiner was already well established as a criminal lawyer in Los Angeles and as a political public-relations man, associated primarily with Earl Warren, later Governor of California and afterward Chief Justice of the United States. For a \$500 consultant's fee, Mr. Chotiner advised Mr. Nixon to associate Mr. Voorhis with "Communist principles" of a few radical Democrats.

Mr. Nixon won that campaign, and four years later he hired Mr. Chotiner as his campaign manager and used a similar theme in his successful race for the Senate against Helen Gahagan Douglas.

Mr. Chotiner took credit for isolating the issues on which Mrs. Douglas had voted with Representative Vito Marcantonio of the American Labor party, a New Yorker. Mr. Chotiner's leaflet outlining Mrs. Douglas's "soft on Communism" voting record was printed on pink paper.

"We never accused her of



Associated Press

Murray M. Chotiner

being a Communist, or of sympathizing with the Communists or of being in league with them," Mr. Chotiner later recalled. He never admitted the "smears" that Democrats charged him with; he often said he had done nothing in politics he was not proud of. "All we did," he said of the campaign against Mrs. Douglas, "was publish her voting record."

Story of 'Checkers Speech'

In 1952, when disclosure of a private political "Nixon fund" threatened Mr. Nixon's survival as the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate, Mr. Chotiner's bold tactical counsel kept his protege on the ticket.

In his book, "Six Crises," Mr. Nixon recalled the pressure to step down coming from close friends of General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Presidential candidate. As he pondered his decision, Mr. Nixon recounted, "Murray Chotiner stuck his head in the door. I looked up, irritated that even he would interrupt me at such a time.

"Bluntly, he plunged right in," Mr. Nixon wrote. "'Dick,' he said, 'a good campaign manager must never be seen or heard. But if you're kicked off this ticket, I'm going to break that rule. I'm going to call the biggest damn press conference that's ever been held. I'm going to have television present. And I'm going to tell everybody who called who, what was said—names and everything.'"

"Would you really do that?" I asked.

"Sure I'd do it," he answered. "Hell, we'd be through with politics anyway. It wouldn't make any difference then."

His spirits revived, Mr. Nixon proceeded to deliver his famous "Checkers speech," a popular triumph on the new television medium. Even after that, Mr. Nixon believed that General Eisenhower wanted him to quit the ticket, and he dictated a telegram of resignation to Republican headquarters. His secretary, Rose Mary Woods, did not send it, however, perhaps because, as Mr. Nixon told the story, "Chotiner took the copy and tore it up."

In later years Mr. Chotiner spoke of the Checkers speech

Lawyer Had Key Role in 'Checkers Speech'

as a "classic" example "that will live in all political history" of the art of answering a dangerous political attack.

"When you answer it," he told a Republican campaign class in 1956, "do so with an attack of your own against the opposition for having launchehd it in the first place."

Politics of Attack

In the same lecture—which democrats republished to discredit him—Mr. Chotiner rationalized the politics of attack: "I say to you in all sincerity that if you do not deflate the opposition candidate before your own campaign gets started, the odds are that you are going to be doomed to defeat."

The Nixon-Chotiner political partnership broke up in 1956, when Mr. Chotiner was subpoenaed by a Senate committee to explain calls he had made to the White House in behalf of legal clients. Mr. Nixon once told the columnist Stewart Alsop in an interview, "it was a tragedy that he had to get involved in the kind of law business that does not mix with politics."

Mr. Chotiner played no visible part in the Nixon Presidential campaigns of 1960 and 1968, but he reappeared in 1969 as the man to see for ticket to the first Nixon inauguration and as Mr. Nixon's original choice to run the Republican National Committee. When opposition gathered against that appointment, Mr. Chotiner took an obscure job as Government counsel on trade negotiations and then moed to the White House staff at the star of 1970.

Collision In Virginia

Mr. Chotiner was born in Pittsburgh on Oct. 4, 1909. He graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1926 and received his law degree at Southwestern University there.

Mr. Chotiner was on the verge of opening a new law partnership here with George Webster when his car collided with a Government-owned truck on Route 123 in McLean, Va., on Jan. 23. The accident occurred behind the home of Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, who called for an ambulance.

Mr. Chotiner seemed to be recovering from his injuries until last night, when he began gasping and physicians at the Sibley Hospital diagnosed a blood clot near the lung. He was transferred for emergency treatment to the Washington Hospital Center, where he died about 1 o'clock this morning.

Mr. Chotiner leaves his fourth wife, the former Nancy Michel; a son by an earlier marriage, Kenneth L., who is a lawyer in Los Angeles; a brother, Jack, who is a retired lawyer, and two adopted daughters, Renee and Julie.

Funeral arrangements were incomplete tonight.