

THE FINAL DAYS

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Illustrations for Newsweek by Burt Silverman

PART TWO

'He wants to fight it out,' Julie said at a family gathering with Ed and Tricia Cox (left), Bebe Rebozo (foreground), Pat Buchanan (right)—and an unhappy David Eisenhower

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Aug. 3, 1974: 'Daddy's No Quitter'

[Richard Nixon's world was caving in around him. The House Judiciary Committee had voted a three-count bill of impeachment against him. The Supreme Court had ruled that he must surrender 64 of his secret White House tapes to Judge John J. Sirica and the special prosecutor. His own men had come upon a devastating recording of a June 23, 1972, conversation, in which Nixon and his former chief of staff, H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, discussed using the CIA to rein in the FBI investigation of the Watergate break-in. The tape gave the lie to a year's denials by the President; one after another of his senior aides concluded that he would have to be eased into resigning, and only his daughter Julie was left to lead his defense.]

On Friday night, Nixon had shown his family a transcript of the June 23 tape. They had talked nearly until midnight before the conversation finally stopped dead of its own weight. The question of whether or not he would resign was left unresolved, at least in any explicit way. The others left Nixon alone, staring into the fire in the Lincoln Sitting Room.

From her bedroom that night, Julie called the home of Pat Buchanan, Nixon's longtime speechwriter, who had been shown the transcripts earlier in the day. Buchanan was half asleep after a number of Martinis at the Moon Palace. His wife, Shelley, roused him and told him that Julie was on the phone. Buchanan knew why she was calling. He said it could wait until the morning. Shelley told Julie that Pat was asleep.

For Julie and her husband, David Eisenhower, the response was answer enough. Even Buchanan was in the resignation camp.

Buchanan arrived at his office shortly before 9:30 on Saturday and returned Julie's call. "Come on over," she said. He took his time. Rushing right over would only contribute to the crisis atmosphere, and it was going to be a difficult enough encounter.

Buchanan, like Nixon's friend Bebe Rebozo, was treated as a member of the family. Except for his own wife and Rose Mary Woods, the President's secretary, he had been with Nixon longer than anyone else on the staff. No aide was as important psychologically to the President. The two men shared the same political instincts. Now Buchanan was about to recommend to the President's family that Richard Nixon resign from office.

After a half hour, he walked across West Executive Avenue and took the elevator upstairs to the solarium. They were drinking coffee when he arrived. Julie, David, Tricia and Ed Cox, Rebozo.

Quickly, Julie outlined what she called "the family position." They were against resignation, even if it meant conviction by the Senate. "Daddy's not a quitter," she reminded Buchanan. "It would be better for Daddy if he laid it all out before the country. He would have a forum to show what a trivial matter they are taking away his Presidency for. He could stress his accomplishments against this smaller, less significant thing." And, she added, there was always the possibility, no matter how

remote, that he could prevail in the Senate. "He wants to fight it out, Pat."

Buchanan sipped his coffee.

That morning, her father had complained that the staff was giving up before he was ready, she said. And she knew from her own phone calls that the morale of the staff was in danger of collapse.

"If the President decides to fight this out in the Senate, I'll be with him," Buchanan reassured them gently. "I'm not going to hit the silk. But there's no chance of winning in the Senate. If he stays, it's only a short matter of time before even his closest friends start deserting him. People are going to be demanding his resignation. The party will have a terrible defeat in November if he doesn't resign."

Buchanan was swallowing hard. "Hell, I understand why he wants to stay on. But he'd be blackened, Julie. It's a straight road downhill—for him, for the conservative cause and for the country. There comes a time when you have to say, 'It's finished, it's over.' Nothing would be served by dredging it down through the Senate—not for any of us."

David was impressed by Buchanan's arguments. He began to refashion them in his own terms, but his wife interrupted him.

"David," Julie snapped, "Pat's already been over that. We know your view."

The conversation turned once again to the White House staff. The family wanted to know why certain key members were so strong for resignation.

"Are they responding to the tape itself or other things?" Ed Cox asked.

"They're being realistic," Buchanan replied.

"But the tape's not that conclusive," Cox asserted. There was enough ambiguity about it, he insisted, to at least think about trying to redeem the situation.

Buchanan paused, searching for the right words. "The problem is not Watergate or the cover-up," he began. "It's that he hasn't been telling the truth to the American people." He paused again. "The tape makes it evident that he hasn't leveled with the country for probably eighteen months. And the President can't lead a country he has deliberately misled for a year and a half."

Rebozo broke the brief silence. He was smiling slightly. "The President thought you'd come down on the resignation side," he told Buchanan. His tone was friendly.

Pat was just being realistic and open-minded, David suggested.

Julie flashed a menacing look at David.

Rebozo resumed quickly, "Pat, this is a great man we're talking about. He's never walked away from a fight. And he's

done great things for the country." He wanted to know how the tape demonstrated that the President had lied for eighteen months. It sounded to him as if the President had been saying the same thing all along. He was innocent. How could an innocent man resign the Presidency of the United States?

Buchanan tried again. He explained the background of the President's May 22, 1973, statement, in which he denied having tried to limit the FBI inquiry for political reasons. Buchanan and his colleague Ray Price had raised the question then. They had sent Nixon's lawyer Fred Buzhardt back to ask the President. "At that time there was knowledge on the President's part that the tapes were there. It would have been a simple matter to check."

David was impatient. Last night's discussion, now this one, and he could see the same conversation continuing for weeks. They would all do

About The Excerpts

"The Final Days," to be published by Simon and Schuster, is a work of 456 pages. The narrative spans the period from April 30, 1973, to Aug. 9, 1974, when Richard Nixon resigned the Presidency. The book is based upon previously unreported material. The first portion describes the efforts of Nixon, his family, lawyers and key aides to keep the President in office at almost any cost, from April 30, 1973, to July 24, 1974—the day that the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to surrender his secret White House tapes. The last 200 pages are the detailed, day-by-day account of the final two weeks inside the Nixon White House. NEWSWEEK has selected 30,000 words of excerpts from the full 175,000-word book text. In so doing, the sequence in which certain events are described in the book has been altered for purposes of magazine serialization.

well to consider the implications of what Pat was telling them, he said. Especially about the damage to the party, the country and Mr. Nixon if he tried to fight his way out.

Julie flared. "We've heard that from Pat already, okay, David? You don't have to tell us again."

David realized that he *was* doing a lot of repeating. He was talking as much as Buchanan. Ed appeared irritated with him, too.

Cox resumed his cross-examination. Why did there necessarily have to be a big defeat for the party in November? What were the figures? How many seats would be lost? Why did there have to be a decision on resignation right away?

Buchanan was impressed with Cox—with his forcefulness, his intelligence and his insistence on dealing from facts, not emotions. He was somewhat surprised. He couldn't remember who had dubbed Ed "the Prince," but Buchanan had done his part to see that the name stuck—that and Cox's other nickname, "Fast Eddie." Buchanan was a city kid who had grown up in the streets. His perception of Cox had always been of a brat who had earned the calluses on his hand playing tennis at the country club. His opinion was changing as Cox pressed the argument: why should the President resign before testing political and public reaction to the transcript? What harm was there in waiting until the tape hit?

Buchanan had been thinking along the same lines. He knew what the public and political reaction would be. And when the President, when even Julie, saw the reaction, they would see the wisdom of resignation—for Nixon's own sake.

"Maybe the reaction won't be as bad as you think," Julie said. "Why not give it a while—a couple of weeks?"

Buchanan was agreeable. It would be better for the President to be convinced by events than to be swayed by the judgments of his own staff.

On the way back to his office, Buchanan stopped in to see Rose Woods. Their affection for each other was profound: the White House Irish, bound by temperament, unswerving loyalty to Richard Nixon and—probably more than any of the others—an understanding of the man.

Woods was anguished; her eyes were puffy and red, her voice was tremulous.

"How's the Old Man holding up?" Buchanan asked.

She was having too much trouble holding herself together to deal with the question.

Woods had never had many illusions about Watergate, especially since the spring of 1973. She and Buchanan had discussed it more than a few times, always careful to avoid specifics. ("Rose, he's really screwing this up and you and I know it," Buchanan had said on one such occasion. "He's up to his ass in this." And Rose had nodded, an expression of helplessness on her face that said, "But what can anyone do?") There had even been fleeting moments when Woods had thought the President would be better off if he resigned.



'Let's smile as if we liked each other,' the First Lady told Rep. John Rhodes

More than anyone else, she could see what it was doing to him. It would be better to escape with what honor was left him than to be crushed and humiliated in the end. But, like Buchanan, she knew that Nixon was determined to persevere, and she too believed passionately that he was a victim of his enemies.

The last nine months in the White House had been excruciating for her. Her bitterness at chief of staff Alexander Haig and the lawyers had intensified since the episode of the 18½-minute gap in one of the White House tapes. She felt ridiculed, both by the press and by the members of the staff, who found her testimony about how she might accidentally have caused part of the gap hilariously unconvincing.*

On this particular Saturday morning, Buchanan and the

*Privately Buchanan had told others, "Rose knows she erased a good part of it. She was protecting him. I've never asked her and she's never told me what happened. It's not hard to figure. After Rose had erased the first part the Old Man would say, 'Oh, my goodness, Rose, somebody left the tape on.'" And at this point in telling the story Buchanan would imitate Nixon closing his eyes and pushing the button that erased the rest of the 18½ minutes. Buchanan's theory was that Nixon gave the tape to Woods because she would know what to do with it. "Either Nixon said something like 'See what you think we should do with this, Rose,' or she knew what to do without being told." When he got to the part about Nixon closing his eyes, Buchanan would laugh uproariously.

President's secretary did not debate the issue of resignation: each knew where the other stood. Woods was adamantly opposed; the time for resignation had long since passed, the damage was done. He should go down fighting. Let everyone see what "they" were doing to a great President.

After a time, Buchanan went back to his office. Ronald Ziegler, the President's press secretary and confidant, entered a few steps behind him. "The decision is to fight it through the Senate," he announced.

Buchanan exploded. This was exactly what must be avoided. The President was locking himself into a ruinous position.

After Ziegler left, Buchanan picked up the phone and had the White House operator connect him with Julie. They discussed the President's latest decision very briefly.

"We'll support Father down the line—David too," she told him. David came to the phone and confirmed Julie's statement.

"Okay," Buchanan replied. "That's the decision. Let's support him." He was less than enthusiastic about the prospect.

After lunch, Haig received word that the President wanted to see him. A letter from Senate Republican whip Robert Griffin had arrived, warning Nixon that he would be impeached "unless you choose to resign." When Haig came in, Nixon was throwing a temper tantrum. Such threats only solidified his resolve to fight to the end. It was a cowardly letter. He raged about it at some length.

Haig did not mention that he had called Griffin about the June 23 tape. The general knew very well that the call had triggered the letter. He listened sympathetically as the President railed about weak-hearted legislators. Finally Nixon calmed down.

At 5:13, the family followed the President up the helicopter ramp for the trip to Camp David. David thought the Griffin letter must have been a fierce jolt. The President looked awful.

Despite his weariness, Nixon had had difficulty sleeping. It was a problem that occurred ever more frequently, and it was beginning to cause concern in the family. For years Nixon had maintained the same schedule rigidly, but all through that spring and summer his cycle had become erratic. Staff members who knew or sensed the problem, particularly Haig, Ziegler, and the President's personal aide, Stephen Bull, had constantly to readjust the President's calendar to accommodate his unpredictable hours.

A few days before, he had had an 11 o'clock meeting with Treasury Secretary William Simon and two other officials. It had been his only appointment for the day. When he had not appeared downstairs at 10:30, Ziegler had sent an aide, Judy Johnson, to find out where he was. The one person who was



Ziegler, Price, St. Clair and Buchanan argued at Camp David

certain to know, Manolo Sanchez, Nixon's valet, told her the President was still sleeping. The meeting was postponed until 3 o'clock.

At dinner with the family Saturday evening, the President repeated his decision to stay on. At the least he would give that route a try. He wanted to keep his options open, he told them, and then he polled the family once more. Ed thought it was the right move, there was no reason to be stampeded. Julie was content with the decision. Mrs. Nixon, Tricia and David said very little, either for or against. David was pretty sure resignation was the only way.

**'What if we had ten senators?' Nixon asked the family.
'Would it be worth staying?'**



"What would be your reaction if we had ten senators?" Nixon asked. "If so, would it be worth staying?"

David felt sad. Ten senators? he thought to himself. They had been reduced to ten senators? That meant 90 against. "Think of yourself," he said.

"Well, David, you're just like Al," the President responded. Haig too seemed to be saying, "Think of yourself instead of the country." If Mr. Nixon thought of the country, David knew the answer would be to fight it out; his father-in-law was utterly convinced that the country needed him. By telling him to think of himself, David was trying to soothe him, trying to say, "You can now contemplate resignation; you deserve it." It was a way to tell a proud man he could, one time at least, walk away from his opponents.

The sun was setting. Nixon gazed out the window. He pointed to the putting green and said how much he liked it, how much he would miss it. But he was going to fight it out. Then, abruptly, he left the table, and he did not come back to join the family for the evening's movie.

The days of spring and summer 1974 had been lonely ones for Mrs. Nixon. There was an occasional reception or a tea. Almost invariably, her appearances were short. She

would arrive, shake a few hands, smile, allow a few photographs, and leave.

The few times she lingered were when small children visited the White House. Then she would become animated, the joy in her face evident. Members of her staff marveled at how children always seemed to seek her out, even in a crowded room.

Most of the First Lady's days were spent in her pale yellow bedroom on the second floor of the mansion. A devoted letter writer, she spent hours on her correspondence. And she did a lot of reading, including the thin inspirational volumes on friendship and love which rested on the night table next to her canopied bed. These were her rooms, and she had her privacy.

Around 11 a.m., she would write out her lunch order, often a chef's salad, soup or a sandwich, and coffee, to be served at 1 o'clock. More often than not, these days, the tray came back to the kitchen with the coffee gone and the food untouched.

When she and the President dined alone, there was always a great rush to get the food from the kitchen to the table. Often the Nixons had been seated for only a minute before the butlers started pressing to serve them.

Why the big rush? a member of the kitchen staff had asked.

"A minute is a long time when you're not talking," a butler had explained.

On Camp David weekends, the President and his wife hardly saw each other. When they did, silence usually prevailed. Backstairs their distance was an open secret. Marine Lt. Col. Jack Brennan, the President's military aide, joked that his duties included briefing Nixon on how to kiss his wife.

Mrs. Nixon had always hated being a political wife. Since Nixon had come to Washington as a Congressman, she had yearned to return with her husband and children to California and live like an ordinary American family.

She and her husband had not really been close since the early 1960s, the First Lady confided to one of her White House physicians. She had wanted to divorce him after his 1962 defeat in the California gubernatorial campaign. She tried, and failed, to win his promise not to seek office again. Her rejection of his advances since then had seemed to shut something off inside Nixon. But they had stuck it out.

Watergate, and the tapes particularly, widened the gap. Despite the rein she kept on her emotions, the transcripts had visibly disturbed her. "How foolish to have tapes," she told her few friends and several chosen assistants. She would then smile or laugh nervously. The tapes were like love letters, she said. They should have been burned or destroyed.

The White House physicians were worried about the First Lady. She had returned from a South American trip in April 1973 distraught and even more underweight than usual. She was becoming more and more reclusive, and drinking heavily. On several occasions members of the household staff came upon her in the pantry of the second-floor kitchen, where the liquor was kept, in the early afternoon. Awkwardly, she had tried to hide her tumbler of bourbon on the rocks.

Helen Smith, Mrs. Nixon's press secretary, tried to get the First Lady out to more parties and receptions. But wherever there was a gathering, there were reporters with Watergate questions. "Why bring it up?" Mrs. Nixon asked dejectedly when reporters caught up with her on a trip or on one of the family's dinner outings to Washington restaurants.

Once, in May, House Minority Leader John Rhodes had said at a breakfast with reporters that it might be a good idea for the President to consider resignation as an alternative to impeachment. "If Nixon comes to conclude that he can no longer be effective as President, he will do something about it," Rhodes suggested. "If he should resign, I would accept it." Resignation would "probably be beneficial" to the party.

That evening, at a party on Capitol Hill, Rhodes went through a receiving line in which the First Lady was standing. Approaching her, Rhodes summoned the brightest smile he could manage.

"How are you, Mrs. Nixon?" he asked.

A photographer asked them to pose for a picture. "Oh, yes," Mrs. Nixon said. "Let's smile as if we liked each other." "Mrs. Nixon," Rhodes said, "it isn't the way you heard it." "Yeah," she shot back, "that's what they all say."

Aug. 4: A Day At Camp David

The evidence that the President had chosen a disastrous course was in a speech draft that Ray Price brought to Buchanan's office at 9 o'clock in the morning. It confirmed Buchanan's worst fears. Price had been assigned to write a speech of resignation, but now it had turned into a statement of defiance. The President intended to tell the nation that nothing save conviction by the Senate would cause him to leave the office to which he had been elected.

Buchanan shook his head as he read: "Though I have lost my base of political support, I will fight for the principle . . . I will appear in the Senate in person and will carry this struggle to the final conclusion." The President was committing himself to final devastation, Buchanan told Price. "He can't box himself in like that."

Price did not need convincing, he reminded Buchanan. He was only doing his job, following instructions.

They agreed that Buchanan should write a memo to Haig, and they drafted it together. It was directed to the immediate problem—keeping the President from making a public vow to fight to the finish.

Buchanan scrawled a draft of the final paragraph on a note pad: "Don't lock him into any statement going all the way. We've been unable to convince him to resign, but events will. Drop the tape and let the tape and the consequences convince him of what we can't."

"It's for the Old Man's sake," Buchanan told Price. "For the future, it would be a terrible thing if we were to talk him into something he doesn't think he ought to do. For the rest of his life he would say, 'I was talked into it by advisers and I could have made it.' We should step back and let the thing blow; the President should feel the force of the blast himself. Let him see reality himself."

Price left to get ready to go to Camp David that afternoon. Buchanan was not scheduled to go, but now he wanted to be there. He called Haig's office to tell the general that he was available if wanted.

While he was waiting for Haig's call, Buchanan changed into a pair of jogging trunks. Haig's office called just as he had laced up his new blue-and-white track shoes. Buchanan would go to Camp David. He phoned Shelley and asked her to bring a jacket and tie to the office. Then he went out of the Executive Office Building through the basement and jogged down Seventeenth Street to Constitution Avenue, west to the Lincoln Memorial, then east to the Jefferson Memorial. He jogged past the Washington Monument onto the Ellipse with its view of the White House south portico. He slowed down only at the guard post between the White House and the EOB as he went back through the iron gates.

Alexander Haig had for months regarded himself as a surrogate President. Every damn thing landed on his desk, not Nixon's. As chief of staff to a preoccupied President, it was he who held the ship together. He decided what to take to the President and which Presidential decisions to make himself, in the name of the office. It was too much for a staff

man. The burden was unfair, the general sometimes said.

But something else weighed heavily on Haig in these days. Once the tape became public, Nixon would no longer be able to govern effectively. Nixon had become increasingly unstable, obsessed, exhausted. Until now, at least the appearance of orderly government had been maintained. The Presidency *seemed* to function. If the President clung to office after the tape was released, any semblance of moral authority would vanish. A Senate trial would be a nightmare. The very legitimacy of the government would be called into question.

What about Haig himself? He had propped it all up. He had made prolonged concealment possible. He might tell himself that he hadn't known. He had been careful not to participate. But there had been hints and signs everywhere, all along the way. Still, he hadn't known of a specific tape or document. Not until the day of the Supreme Court decision. He had never been sure. "What did he know and when did he know it?"

As always, Haig turned to the practical problems. He did not linger over moral questions.

The secretary in Haig's office this Sunday, Diana Gwin, thought the general looked unusually strained when he and his aide, Maj. George Joulwan, arrived around 9:30. Haig fussed and fretted over one more problem—the weather. It was raining, making it doubtful that they could helicopter to Camp David.

Another aide, Charles Wardell, made alternate plans to drive. He knew the real source of Haig's agitation. On Wednesday Haig had told him about the tape. "I'm not sure I can justify my actions," the general had said.

As the noon hour approached, the weather broke. The passengers were hurriedly assembled for the drive to the Pentagon helipad: Ziegler, Pat and Shelley Buchanan, Price, Joulwan, lawyer James St. Clair and his wife, Haig and his wife. Climbing into the limousine, Haig looked up at the bright sky and threw a disgusted look at Wardell before shutting the door.

Ziegler and the speechwriters shared the second car. These days lay heavily on Ziegler, too. His talks with the lawyers had profoundly depressed him. The President's choices were narrowing. Haig seemed convinced that the lawyers were right, that the President would be forced to resign or face conviction in the Senate.

But when Ziegler had tried to convey this to the President one night earlier in the week, Nixon refused to see it that way. Ziegler found himself then in the role he most disliked, identifying bleak alternatives which the President refused to face, isolating grim choices, pointing out unfortunate facts. The drastic alternatives now before the President were not the work of his enemies, Ziegler had said. This time it was the lawyers, Haig, maybe even himself, who could see no easy way out.

To the President, Ziegler had seemed to be saying things that should not be uttered by those who believed in him. Ziegler was exasperated. He had only wanted the President to understand how dire things were. But the President would not even accept the meaning of the words on the tapes and refused to believe that his lawyers were acting in his interest.

Finally, Nixon had risen and told Ziegler to get out.

Ziegler had been incredulous. Nixon had been so angry, so consumed by rage, that Ziegler had thought the President might never speak to him again.

"Out!"

Nixon had still been shouting as Ziegler retreated toward the doorway.

And now, in the car to the helipad, Buchanan handed Ziegler a copy of the memo. He said Price was in agreement with it. Glumly, Ziegler nodded his assent to each of the points up to the final one, that resignation was inevitable. Buchanan was used to Ziegler's habit of never revealing whether his words

**'The President
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The President insisted that some of the wives come to Camp David. There was almost a picnic atmosphere.

reflected his own thoughts or the President's. At least he was now on board against a public pledge to fight it out.

Inside the helicopter, Buchanan handed the memo to Haig. Haig read it quickly. The "two step" strategy, releasing the tape and then letting events convince the President, appealed to Haig. "I agree with you," he said, passing the page back over his shoulder to Buchanan. Buchanan gave it to St. Clair, seated beside him. He hoped that the wait-and-see approach would appeal to the lawyer's natural caution and dampen some of St. Clair's recent enthusiasm for a Senate battle.

St. Clair, however, made another of his sharp turns. He rejected the recommendations and proceeded to outline his latest position: "He's got to resign tomorrow." Those who counseled otherwise were no longer serving the interests of the nation.

They all argued with him, shouting to be heard over the noise of the helicopter's engines.

When they arrived at Camp David, Haig went immediately to Aspen Cabin to join the President. Buchanan, Price, St. Clair and Ziegler went to Birch Cabin and resumed their rancorous discussion. As the argument grew more heated, Buchanan concluded that St. Clair's latest turnabout was based largely on a personal concern for his professional reputation.

Ziegler was terribly excited. Resignation the next day was out of the question. An attempt to force the President's hand would fail and might even end in disaster. The President, he said, was not convinced that the June 23 tape was fatal.

Buchanan believed that the way to Nixon was through Ziegler, and he wanted to maneuver himself into a more moderate position between St. Clair's "resignation now" and those willing to fight. To this end, he stepped up his attack on St. Clair. "Drop the tape and he'll come around in a week or ten days. And the country will be a hell of a lot better off that way." The country would need time for the tape to sink in and bring most people around to the same conclusion Nixon would have to reach. Resignation would be inevitable.

St. Clair was not convinced. "How much punishment can one person take? How much can the country take? We're not serving the President if we let him go through with this."

"But, Jim, I told him to resign three ways," Buchanan said. "Through Al, Bebe and the family."

In half an hour, Haig came back from Aspen.

"Al, did the message get through?" Buchanan asked. "Does the President know where I stand?"

"Yes," Haig replied.

St. Clair started to argue, but Haig cut him off. The President had agreed to scuttle any televised address at all in favor of a written statement that would be issued the next day along with the June 23 transcript.

Ziegler went to see the President, and Price went off to work on the written statement. It didn't take him long to figure out what to do. One section of the discarded address was an explanation of the tape. Price picked up his scissors, cut that section out, and redid it more vaguely. The statement would mention neither resignation nor any all-out, last-ditch fight.

The entourage came together shortly after 2 for lunch in Laurel Lodge. The President had insisted that some of the wives come to Camp David that afternoon, and Patricia Haig and Billie St. Clair had spent the past few hours picking wild strawberries. There was almost a picnic atmosphere, and their husbands were determined that, during lunch at least, it stay that way. Prime minute steaks, a frequent item on the Camp David menu, were served with fresh vegetables. The conversation was purposefully light.

After the stewards had served apple pie à la mode and coffee, the men moved to the Cabinet Room in Laurel and went over Price's work. He had outlined the basic elements of the next day's statement. It began by saying that the President, while reviewing tapes to be turned over in compliance with the Supreme Court decision, had discovered a serious omission in his previous statements about Watergate. His review disclosed that, on June 23, 1972, he had ordered the FBI's investigation to stop not only for national-security reasons but for political reasons as well.

Price was pleased with his draft, and Buchanan was satisfied that the President was not committing himself to wage all-out war. But Haig was not satisfied. The draft wasn't accurate, for one. It implied that Nixon hadn't listened to the tape until after the Supreme Court decision. The fact was that he had heard it sometime during May. *

Price and Buchanan were confused. Why had he listened to it in May?

Haig explained. The President was, at that time, responding to a compromise offer by special prosecutor Leon Jaworski to settle for some of the tapes. Nixon lawyer Fred Buzhardt, St. Clair and he had all been involved in the May thing. The statement must make it clear that they were not aware that the President had turned down Jaworski's offer as a consequence of listening to the June 23 tape.

Buchanan and Price were outraged. They, and a lot of other people, had put their own reputations on the line defending the President and saying things that Nixon knew were false.

Ziegler defended the President. Nixon had not listened until after the Supreme Court decision. They were wrong. He rushed off to check with his boss.

Haig decided to do his own checking. He had his office consult his log for May 5 to be certain that that was the day St. Clair and he had heard Jaworski outline his proposal. Major Joulwan returned a few minutes later: affirmative.

Next, Haig picked up the phone to find the aides who could pinpoint the date the President listened to the tape. When Ziegler returned, they fit together the pieces they had already found: Jaworski, Haig and St. Clair met on May 5. The President listened to the tape on May 6. The next day the President instructed St. Clair to turn down the offer.

Ziegler shouted that they were wrong. "The President says he didn't listen to it then. It was late in May."

"Look, Ron," Buchanan said, his voice rising. "We've got the records. The only date they were checked out was on May 6. Here's the Jaworski thing at the same time. There's no other conclusion."

"I don't believe that," Ziegler said shrilly. "The President says it was the other way."

Haig didn't bother to dispute him. He called Buzhardt at the White House. At Haig's request, Buzhardt checked his own notes. They indicated that the President listened to the tape on May 6, he said.

Haig told him about the argument they were having and what Ziegler was claiming.

Buzhardt said that there was one other piece of information of crucial significance. Only twelve days ago, on July 24, the President had specifically asked Buzhardt to listen to the June 23, 1973, tape. There could be no doubt that the President had already heard the tape; otherwise he could not have singled it out as a potential problem.

Ziegler persisted. He needed to be absolutely certain, to verify their thesis personally. Although Haig thought it was a waste of time, he agreed to a meeting with Buzhardt and Bull, Nixon's personal aide, that evening at the White House.

Haig called Bull. As Bull got ready to go to the White House, he received another call, this time from the President. How sure was Bull that he, Nixon, had listened to the tape on May 6?

Quite certain.
"Are you sure?" the President demanded. "I thought it was later."

Impossible, Bull said. It was in the notes.
Was it possible that Bull had cued that tape but that the President had not listened to it?

"No, Mr. President, I remember the day well." The tape counter indicated that the President had actually listened to the tape, not just that the machine had been set up. There was no question, Bull assured him.

The party from Camp David returned and gathered at 8 in Haig's office.

Haig asked Jerry Jones, who was responsible for record-keeping on the tapes, when the President had received the June 23 recording.

It had been checked out to Bull on May 6.
Haig turned to Bull. "When did he listen to it?"
As Bull was rechecking his notes, Price said to him, "It's very important."

"It might be fatal," Haig added.
Bull looked at his interrogators. "My notes show that the President heard it on May 6."

"Who knows about it?" Haig asked.
Bull had told it to the grand jury when he testified on June 6. He had also turned over his notes. Bull expected Haig to be angry with him. He was not.

Haig paused. Everybody waited. "Okay, that's it," he said. "An act probably fatal." His tone was resigned. There was nothing more to discuss. Ziegler had stopped arguing.

After Bull and Jones had left, the group worked toward

Aug. 6: 'With My Head High'

With events closing in, Haig realized that he could easily get mousetrapped. A basic element of the scenario seemed to be failing. Each time the President heard that somebody on the Hill was calling for his resignation, he became more resolved to fight to the finish. His tirades were always the same: he would not be forced out by some legislative coup; if they wanted him out of office, let them vote to impeach and convict. Nixon was still not certain that he would lose in the Senate.

Haig and Buzhardt agreed that it was crucial that no more Republican leaders call for the President's resignation. At the same time, the leaders had to make clear to Nixon that they regarded his impeachment and conviction as a foregone conclusion. Then Nixon might begin to see that resignation was the most attractive way out.

Haig was perplexed about the family. He had been left with the strong impression that at least David saw the wisdom of resignation. But the President was describing the family as united behind his decision to fight on. Haig called David and asked what the hell was going on.

David, still confident that the President would come around, suggested that Haig stay cool. If the family were not supportive, it could make it tougher for the President to resign. "We have to show him that he doesn't have to prove anything to us," David said. Any encouragement to resign on their part would imply a devastating moral judgment. He thought that his father-in-law was resisting that moral judgment more than resignation. The family had to show the

Julie was so wound up in her father's defense that it was straining her marriage with David.

what they hoped would be an acceptable compromise statement. Price could write that the President reviewed the tapes in May, but would not say precisely when. That might be enough. It would skirt the issue. For Haig and St. Clair, though, that was not enough. They insisted that the President say that he had not told them at that time what was on the tape. St. Clair was determined that the President also take responsibility for withholding the tape from the special prosecutor and the House Judiciary Committee.

They were talking to the President through Ziegler: the President had to stop denying facts that were already on record, and he had to clarify their situation once and for all.

Haig began making calls right after the meeting. He reached Treasury Secretary Simon and told him, "I've got bad news—it may be fatal to the President." He described the transcript. There would also be a statement by the President offering his explanation, but that was still in the works.

Haig's frustration boiled over as he told Simon what had to be included in the statement. Buzhardt, St. Clair and he were all resigning "if the President doesn't lay it on the line."

[On Monday, Aug. 5, Haig and the lawyers continued spreading the word of the June 23 tape—to the Republican leaders in Congress; to Nixon's advocates in the Judiciary Committee; to the White House staff. Then the transcript itself was made public, and the President's last remaining support began swiftly to crumble.]

President that they still loved him no matter what. Haig was skeptical.

"Trust me," David said. "I know what I'm doing." Mr. Nixon could accept political defeat, but he would not allow himself to be condemned morally.

David Eisenhower liked to play games. During the first Nixon term, he and the President had frequently played a game of pocket billiards they called Golf. Balls were set before each of the six pockets and one on the cue spot, and the object was to sink all seven balls in as few shots as possible. Once the President had done it in three. But he had stopped playing in 1971.

As the second Nixon term progressed, David played games more and more. He would get a whiffle-ball game going on the White House tennis court with some of the staffers. The object of the game, called Home Run Derby, was to hit the ball over the fence. Sometimes he could persuade Julie to play. David and Julie also played a lot of bridge. And David loved the board game Diplomacy, which he always won.

But his favorite game was the American Professional Baseball Association game, a computer-designed contest in which the participants served as the team managers. Complicated sets of cards listed the hitting, fielding and pitching averages for players of every American and National League team dating back to the 1950s. David often played it alone or with his law-school classmate, Brooks Harrington, a 6-foot-2 former

college football player who was a political liberal. By the late spring and early summer of 1974, David was spending up to three or four hours a day playing APBA baseball.

His fascination with baseball was regarded with derision by many on the White House staff. Seeing him walk through the mansion in the late afternoon with a stack of law books under his arm, Tom DeCair of the press office joked, "David's home from Little League practice." Some of the others called him Jughead.

But whatever the cost in esteem, the long hours over the baseball game or Diplomacy seemed to help keep the President's son-in-law at a certain distance from the problems of Watergate, which was what David wanted. David told Harrington, an ex-marine, that he was thinking about going back into the Navy. He wanted to get away. He also mentioned it to his grandmother Mamie Eisenhower. "She almost leaped out of bed, she was so happy," David said.

But that was really no better an escape than the hours playing games, he decided. David was coming to grips with something he hadn't fully realized when he married Julie: that he had become not only a member of the Nixon family but a member of the Nixon Administration. Now that the Administration was coming apart, so was everything else.

Julie was so wound up in her father's defense that it was straining their marriage. Her devotion to her father was uncomplicated. Each damaging development was a technicality in her eyes and she would tell David not to bore her with the facts. The President turned increasingly to Julie for her love and devotion and sustenance.

David resented the situation. He wanted his wife back. He thought her illness earlier in the year, a tubal pregnancy, was psychosomatic; it had happened because she had gotten herself so worked up over what was happening to her father, David told Harrington.

Mrs. Nixon was unhappy with David. "Why aren't you giving Julie support?" she wanted to know. Julie was out in the front lines defending her father, Pat said, while David was in the library stacks or off somewhere playing Diplomacy. There had been shouting once, and David had stormed out of the room.

There had also been a painful family night out on the Presidential yacht Sequoia in May. David had just finished an exam and they were out to celebrate. It was a warm, pleasant evening. The breeze was refreshing. The four of them—the Nixons, David and Julie—went topside and, sitting in wicker chairs, sipped drinks.

There had been another Bebe story in the papers that day. It said that Rebozo was under investigation for an unreported \$50,000 political contribution he had collected in cash.

Such stories almost always altered the President's mood and made him even more withdrawn than usual. Nothing seemed to sting the President as much as watching his friends being consumed by the scandal. As the yacht cruised downriver, a military aide approached the President. Photographers were waiting on the pier for the Sequoia to return, he said. More were lined up on the Potomac bridges in the hope of getting a picture as the boat passed underneath.

Nixon left his chair abruptly and started pacing. Then he exploded. They were trying to get a picture of his face, goddammit. They were attempting to discover how he was handling the pressure. They wanted to read his face.

He picked up the ship-to-shore telephone. "Crown, get me Ziegler."

Crown was the code name for the White House switchboard. Ziegler came on the line.

Goddammit, Nixon shouted into the phone, why was the press always hounding him? Why couldn't he get a few private moments? How had it leaked out that he was aboard the Sequoia? Goddammit, he hadn't wanted it discovered. Why

Nixon exploded. They were trying to get a picture of his face.

couldn't Ziegler control the press? Goddammit, goddammit, oh goddammit.

David had noticed a strange, wavering quality in the President's voice all that week. He had been looking for signs of collapse in his father-in-law. He concluded there was no way to calm Mr. Nixon with words. Quickly he climbed up to the bridge to talk to Lt. Comdr. Andrew Coombs, the skipper. Something had to be done. There was no way of knowing who would

be waiting at the Navy Yard to witness the President's anger. They must outfox the press and dock elsewhere.

There were only two alternatives, the skipper told David: to cruise to Mount Vernon and order a helicopter back to the White House, or to dock at the old Anacostia pier. But two Navy tugs were berthed at Anacostia and it might be difficult to get them cleared out of the way.

David went back to check on the President. He was talking quietly to the others now, and he seemed calmer. In just a few minutes the fit of anger seemed to have subsided. David went topside again. He told Coombs that it would be all right to dock at the usual location. Half an hour later, the boat slid into its berth at the Navy Yard and Nixon rushed into the waiting limousine before photographers could get a glimpse of him.

Later, in June, the President had wanted David to go on his summit trip to Russia and assist in briefing the press. But David had declined. Instead he took six weeks off after the spring semester to see if he and Julie could have a life of their own.

He felt strongly that Watergate was going to have an unhappy ending, but he could not get the message through to Julie. Her stubbornness was difficult to contend with. At times he imagined her as the heroine of a movie, the devoted daughter defending her embattled, innocent father. David, part of him at least, wanted to help prove her right.

"We're innocent," the President told him many times. And David was sympathetic to Mr. Nixon, as he always called him. He thought he could relate to the President's problems through an experience of his own, when he was in the Navy. As a lieutenant junior grade aboard the U.S.S. Albany, he himself had once covered up a matter.

One of David's collateral assignments on the ship had been to act as intelligence officer. When he took the job he had signed for hundreds of classified publications; his signature attested that he had received the documents from the officer he relieved. There had been no time to check and see if they were all aboard.

When David had less than a month left on board, his immediate superior insisted that a full accounting of the 400-odd publications be made. On his first check, David was missing 30 of them. After a full search of the ship, there were still ten missing. It was the worst three weeks of his life, he told his friends—filled with haunting visions of Portsmouth Prison as he searched and searched. Finally he found all but one. It was a secret publication about Russian infra-red devices. He had signed for four mimeographed copies and could find only three. Desperate, David and another officer devised a complicated scheme to deceive the authorities. They burned an extra onionskin copy of the publication and said it had been one of the originals. Then they witnessed the proper report, saying that the missing copy had been routinely burned according to regulations for disposing of extra classified material.

Since David never knew what he had signed for—never knew if there were in fact four copies originally—he persuaded himself that it was possible he had done nothing wrong. Neither, perhaps, had his father-in-law.

The Cabinet meeting, scheduled for 10 o'clock that morning, had been postponed to 11 because the President was not up at 10.

On the hour, Nixon walked into the room and took his seat at the center of the oval table. There wasn't the usual applause. The President's high-backed brown leather chair was slightly taller than the others. Directly in front of him, under the lip of the table, were two spaces for buttons. One button had summoned Haldeman. The other had been marked "Butterfield," for Haldeman's aide Alexander Butterfield, and had activated the taping system in the Cabinet room. Now both Haldeman and the taping system were gone.

Stewards served coffee.

"I would like to discuss the most important issue confronting this nation," the President began, "and confronting us internationally too—inflation."

Cabinet members looked about in mild astonishment.

But Nixon quickly shifted to what was on everybody's mind. He described Watergate as "one of the most asinine things that was ever done. I'll take whatever lumps are involved." He had consulted expert lawyers and they had told him there was no obstruction of justice and no impeachable offense.

"If there were," he said, "I wouldn't stay in this office one minute. I simply was not tending the store on the domestic side . . ."

"The Cabinet has been splendid in standing up. I have been very moved by it. Some, including some good friends, believe it would be best to resign and not go through the ordeal of a Senate trial. Not go through this step, which would relieve me of great personal pressure and change the Constitution, that

fense, and therefore resignation is not an acceptable course.

"I don't ask any of you to do anything that would be embarrassing to you, your personal interest. All I ask is that you run this government well . . . You don't have to talk about Watergate. I suggest that you talk about the good things the Administration has done. Watergate will be brought to an end by the constitutional process."

He went on. "If I knew there was an impeachable offense,

David watched anxiously as the President flew into a rage against the press



would allow other Presidents to be forced out of office. I've considered that, as a matter of fact. It should be considered, but I have had to make a decision.

"A President is really not in the position of an ordinary citizen on this kind of matter. My view is that I should not take the step that changes the Constitution and sets a precedent for the future . . . I will accept whatever verdict the Senate hands down, recognizing the possibility that the outcome may not be favorable."

The President didn't look at anyone as he spoke.

"I have analyzed the best that I can," the President continued, "the best memory that I can, buttressed by miles and miles of tape, and I have not found an impeachable of-

I would not make the Senate go through the agony of trying to prove it. I've got a hell of a good Cabinet. I will go through this with my head high—right up to the end, if it comes."

Treasury Secretary Simon, sitting across from the President, felt that the President was beseeching his Cabinet to stand up and cheer. But it wasn't going to happen. The silence, Simon thought, was telling the President what he already knew. There would be no clamor that he stay on the job.

The President turned to Vice President Ford and waited.

"I'm in a difficult position," Ford said. "I share your view that the whole episode is a real tragedy. Nobody has more admiration and affection for you. I made a decision yesterday that because of commitments to Congress and the public, I

will have no further comments on the issue, because I am a party in interest.

"Sure, there will be impeachment," Ford said, perhaps too frankly. "I can't predict the Senate outcome. I will make no comment concerning this. You have given us the finest foreign policy this country has ever had, a super job, and the people appreciate it. I support without hesitation your policies on inflation."

"I think your position is exactly correct," the President responded.

To Ford, the meeting and the President's speech seemed off-key. He thought Nixon was handling the moment badly.

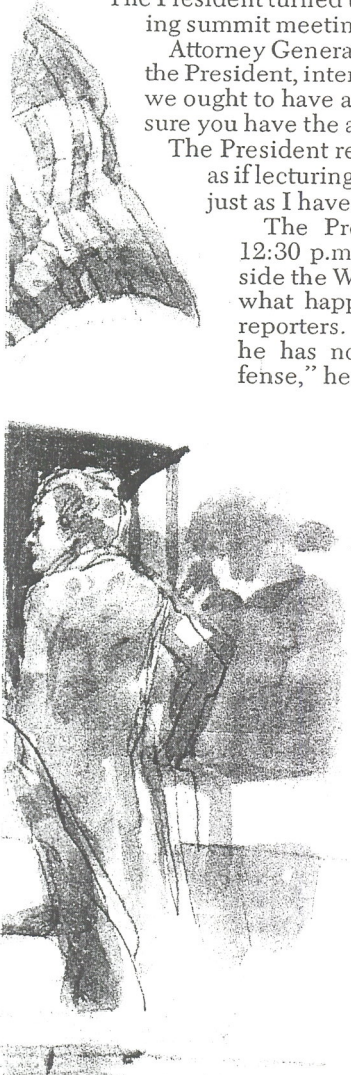
"If you have to run for office again," the President said to Ford, "you're going to have to run your own campaign. I had very decent people, but it doesn't excuse their actions."

The President turned to the budget, and then to a forthcoming summit meeting on the economy.

Attorney General William Saxbe, directly across from the President, interrupted. "Mr. President, I don't think we ought to have a summit conference. We ought to be sure you have the ability to govern."

The President replied quietly and condescendingly, as if lecturing a schoolboy. "Bill, I have the ability, just as I have had for the last five years."

The President adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m. Large crowds were gathering outside the White House gates, shouting, "Tell us what happened." Simon was surrounded by reporters. "The President sincerely believes he has not committed any impeachable offense," he said. "He intends to stay."



Barry Goldwater had driven to his office early. After having spent a brooding evening, he was angry. He blamed himself in part for the current nightmare. He should have pushed Nixon harder to be open and frank. His concern had been the office and the party, not Nixon, but he had been overly protective nonetheless. It had taken him too long to apply his stern, no-nonsense judgment. Christ, Goldwater was thinking, he had never really had a conversation with Nixon, he had never gotten through to him. Now Goldwater realized that he didn't even like the man. Nixon had an obsession with the outward signs of power—trumpets, dressing up the White House guards, ceremonies. To Goldwater, this was, in one of his favorite expressions, "a bucket of shit."

Goldwater thought Nixon was not a man's man, someone with whom he could drink or joke or

have a frank heart-to-heart discussion. He was thinking of the contrast with John F. Kennedy. At a particularly tense moment during the Bay of Pigs invasion period, President Kennedy had said to him, "So you want this f---ing job."

Goldwater now concluded that Nixon was off his head and had been for quite a while, and that he had probably known about the Watergate break-in in advance.

Shortly after Goldwater arrived at his office, George Bush, the Republican national chairman, called to tell him that the emergency Cabinet meeting was scheduled. The senator was snappish. "I don't think the President can get fifteen votes in the Senate," he told Bush, "and I'm not going to protect him any more."

Before the Cabinet meeting, Bush spread the word of Goldwater's gloomy assessment to others, including Dean Burch, a Goldwater man who headed the White House Watergate strategy group. Goldwater was at a Senate space-committee hearing later when he received a message to call Burch or Haig. Interrupting a witness to whom he had addressed a question, he apologized and went out to return the call.

He reached Burch. "[Nixon has] between thirteen and seventeen Senate votes," Goldwater told him. "And that is all. I have talked to enough people on the floor to know that he has lost."

Burch informed Haig. This was what Haig had needed. He planned to use it to help tip the scales, and it would not have to come out of his own mouth.

Haig found Goldwater by phone that afternoon at a Senate GOP policy luncheon. Goldwater had exploded on hearing of the President's determination to fight through to the Senate. "We can't support this any longer. We can be lied to only so many times. The best thing that he can do for the country is to get the hell out of the White House and get out this afternoon." Goldwater's well-tanned face was red.

He was called out of the room to take Haig's call. When he picked up the line, the operator said that General Haig was calling from the Oval Office. Goldwater heard a click on the line and guessed that the President was listening on an extension.

"Barry," Haig said, "what is your gut feeling about what the Senate will do?" Haig knew from Burch that Goldwater was in a message-sending mood.

Goldwater was now convinced that the President was listening. This was his chance to get his message across forcefully.

"Al," Goldwater said angrily, "the President has only twelve votes in the Senate. He has lied to me for the last time and lied to my colleagues for the last time."

In his office that afternoon, Senator Griffin was notified that Ed Cox was on the phone. He had met Cox only casually. He picked up the phone and found a very disturbed young man on the other end of the line. Cox didn't know where to turn. He wanted to speak with someone in a leadership position in the Senate. The conversation was to be strictly confidential.

As the President's son-in-law, Cox felt some responsibility for what was happening. As a member of the family he had access to some disturbing information. It had to happen, the President had to resign. David Eisenhower agreed, Cox said, but they had not been able to persuade their wives. The President's daughters had closed their minds on the subject, and they had tremendous influence on their father. Cox couldn't even talk to his wife about it.

On a Sequoia trip the night before, Cox said, the President had made it clear he was not going to quit. Cox asked what was happening in the Senate.

At least one of the members, Griffin told him, was going to go down and tell the President how desperate the situation had become.

That was good, Cox said, but he repeated his belief that the President was going to hang on. Cox sounded distraught. He was worried about the President's mental health. The President was not sleeping, and he had been drinking. The man couldn't take it much longer, Cox said. The President had been acting irrationally.

"The President . . .," Cox began. His voice rose momentarily. "The President was up walking the halls last night, talking to pictures of former Presidents—giving speeches and talking to the pictures on the wall."

Griffin braced himself.

Cox was worried about Mrs. Nixon, too. She was the only one near the President late at night, and her strength was gone, her depression too deep to cope with anything that might happen. Cox tried to explain. He hated to raise it, but he was worried about what the President might do to himself. "The President might take his own life."

Griffin asked about the Secret Service. They could help Mrs. Nixon.

Yes, Cox said, that was a good idea. He would see about getting the Secret Service to stay in the family quarters.

Then Cox and Griffin agreed that it was amazing that the President had been able to stand up at all under this pressure. Griffin wanted to calm Cox, who was rambling and sounding slightly unstable himself.

"I can't talk to my wife," Cox said. "She is determined that her father shall not resign."

Griffin was most concerned about Mrs. Nixon. Who were her close friends?

Mamie Eisenhower, but she was not that close, Cox said.

How about the Rev. Billy Graham?

Cox agreed that that was a good idea, and Griffin promised to contact Graham to see if he would talk to the Nixons.

Griffin was shaken. Ed Cox, a young lawyer, was not given to hysterics. Griffin had rarely heard an adult so disturbed. The possibilities of catastrophe seemed endless. Macabre visions flashed. There was no way to let this slide by. Griffin walked over to Ford's office in the Senate and told his worries to the Vice President.

Ford was not upset or worried, though he expressed sympathy for the Nixon family. President Nixon was expected to resign, Ford said, and he was going to become President. That was to be kept very quiet. Ford seemed matter-of-fact and somewhat removed.

When Griffin finally talked to Graham later, he told him that the Nixon family needed help. The President was terribly depressed, and it would be helpful if Dr. Graham could get to him and reach him spiritually. As an old friend, he was one of the few who could help. It was serious.

Graham didn't want to seem to be forcing himself on Richard Nixon, certainly not at this moment. He called the White House and left word that he was available. Then he flew to New York so that he would be in the East. If he went to Washington, it might be interpreted as another signal. Once in New York, he called the White House again and left his phone number. He was nearby and could get a plane at a moment's notice.

At 4:30 p.m., eight members of the Senate GOP leadership met to decide who should carry a message to the White House. Goldwater was finally chosen to go alone. Goldwater reached Burch by phone at the White House later. "I know what you want," Burch said. He suggested that Goldwater come to lunch at his house the next day before he saw the President. Goldwater agreed.

Haig was concerned about a meeting between the President and Goldwater. It must not be initiated by Goldwater. Also, Goldwater was apt to fly off the handle. A confrontation would be disastrous and could serve only to buttress the President's resistance. The President couldn't resign because of Congressional pressure any more than because of pressure from his own staff. Haig sat in his office considering the next move. "The next few days will be full of tragedy," he told his staff. "You just can't believe what these last weeks have been like."

Haig had been through enough Nixon decisions to sense that the President had just about decided to quit. Nixon's statements on the matter had by no means been consistent, but they pointed that way. That was the best he could expect at that moment. Nixon's support had crumbled or had at least been neutralized. The news from the Hill—Goldwater, John Rhodes, the Judiciary committee loyalists, Nixon's favorite Southern Democrats—was all negative. Ford wasn't knocking on any

doors to urge a fight. The Cabinet had been muted.

Haig was working for a resignation announcement on Thursday night. There was a problem. The President had acted almost smug about the reaction to the June 23 transcripts. He had said he would *consider* a Thursday-night resignation announcement. Consider it. The decision was far from final. So Haig had to take some steps. He told Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Ford that Thursday would be the day.

Aug. 7: 'Your Father Has Decided'

Bob Haldeman stepped briskly along the pavement a few blocks from the White House. He went into the Bowen Building and took the elevator to the sixth floor. He was worried and wanted to review the situation with one of his attorneys, Frank Strickler. If Nixon was going to quit, Haldeman had told his former aide Lawrence Higby a couple of days before, he ought to grant pardons to everyone. He could also give pardons to the Vietnam deserters. That would make amnesty more acceptable to the anti-Nixon, antiwar crowd.

Haldeman had reached the President by phone, but the question of pardons, though implicit, had not been directly discussed. Strickler came to the point. If Haldeman wanted a pardon, he had better get a specific request to the President quickly. A direct personal appeal might be the only way.

For ten days, both Haldeman and Strickler had known that a new crisis was building. Now, Haldeman told Strickler, he was sure the end was imminent. Haig and the lawyers were panicking. The importance of those transcripts was being vastly overplayed. The President had revealed worse and had withstood it. Nixon was the victim of a putsch in his own White House, Haldeman thought.

Strickler suggested that Haldeman get his justifications for a pardon down on paper. Haldeman agreed. He needed to collect his own thoughts, and he knew that the President preferred to deal with formal proposals.

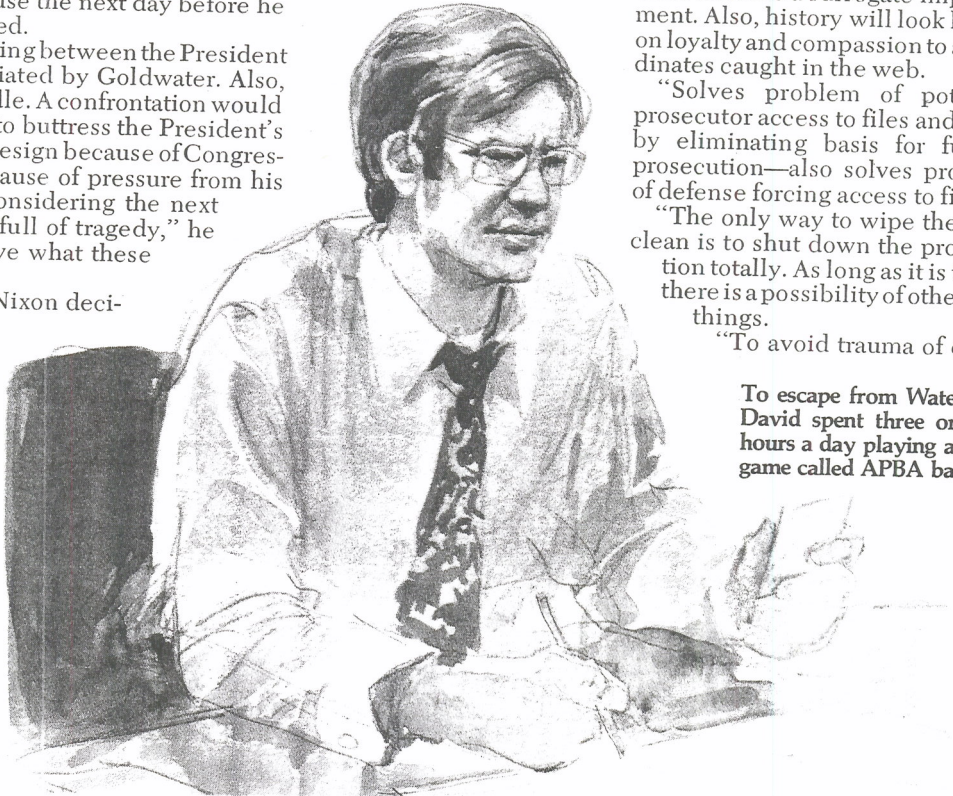
"On a personal basis," he began writing, "better to close the chapter now than to have to sit by helplessly for the next several years and watch trials and appeals.

"Historically—would be far better to grant the pardon and close the door to such process than to let it run and have the trials become a surrogate impeachment. Also, history will look kindly on loyalty and compassion to subordinates caught in the web.

"Solves problem of potential prosecutor access to files and tapes by eliminating basis for further prosecution—also solves problem of defense forcing access to files.

"The only way to wipe the slate clean is to shut down the prosecution totally. As long as it is there, there is a possibility of other new things.

"To avoid trauma of coun-



To escape from Watergate, David spent three or four hours a day playing a table game called APBA baseball

'The President,' Cox told Griffin, 'was up walking the halls last night talking to the pictures on the wall.'

try, injustice to defendants, personal problems RN, adverse historical effects—all point to necessity of over-all pardon."

Haldeman tried to get through by phone to Nixon, failed and finally reached Haig. He quickly stated his request and outlined his reasons.

Haig was appalled. He knew a threat when he heard one. Haldeman was talking about "loyalty," about avoiding a "trauma," "personal problems" for the President, and "adverse historical effects." To Haig, it sounded as if Haldeman was warning that he would send Nixon to jail if he didn't get a pardon.

Haig suppressed his anger and was again merely unencouraging. He didn't want to think about it, and he didn't want the President to have to think about it. Nonetheless, Haig promised Haldeman that the request would get full consideration.

The general was sensitive about Watergate conspirators asking for Executive clemency. A crucial element in the first Watergate cover-up had been E. Howard Hunt's demands for clemency in exchange for silence. Now someone was trying to blackmail the White House again. Nightmare visions of new cover-ups presented themselves, and he saw himself getting tangled up in them this time.

Later, Haig did brief the President about Haldeman's request and his reasons. Nixon wanted more time to think about it and asked Haig to consult the lawyers.

As Haig left, he ran into Leonard Garment, the staff counsel who had dropped off the Watergate defense team. "Len, walk along with me," he said.

Garment fell into step.

"I'm going to see Fred or Jim," Haig said, and asked if Garment knew where they were. Buzhardt was at the dentist and St. Clair was in court, Garment said.

Haig motioned Garment into St. Clair's empty office. The two men sat down. Garment thought Haig looked emaciated. The general was clutching his lighter and cigarettes nervously in one hand.

Things had to be brought to a conclusion, Haig said. The President was probably going to resign and it was best that he go on his own steam. One final snag had developed. Haldeman was urging the President to grant pardons for everyone involved in Watergate. The pressure was tremendous, Haig said. What was the legal judgment? Could the President do it?

"Totally out of the question," Garment said. "It would be grotesque. It would be saying to hell with the system, with justice. It would bring the roof down." The President might have the technical power, but he didn't have enough political strength to exercise it. Imagine, Garment said, Nixon's last act being pardons for all his old cronies. That would insure that Watergate could never be put into perspective.

Haig said the President felt that pardons would allow him to assume the entire burden of Watergate. He felt responsible for the plight of his old friends.

All the guilt and responsibility and the public outrage falling on Nixon: Garment knew how that would appeal to him. They just couldn't let him do it, Garment told Haig.

Buzhardt and then St. Clair returned. Haig and Garment met them in Buzhardt's office. Buzhardt was also opposed. He had already taken steps to block any pardon requests that might come through the Justice Department—the normal route.

Haig told them that he had been negative on the subject with the President and that he was supposed to be checking with the lawyers. Haldeman was really pushing and had tried to get through directly to the President, but Haig had intercepted the call. He was afraid that Haldeman would find a way to get through to Nixon. "That criminal has asked for a

pardon," he said. He expressed disbelief; the arrogance was incredible, it was blackmail, it had to be stopped.

"Well," said St. Clair at last, "maybe pardons should be considered." It was worthwhile to explore the possibility before leaping to conclusions.

Haig and Garment pounced on him.

"If the President grants this pardon," Garment said, "he will be insuring his own trial. He will be forcing it. The public has to have a head, and if the President takes the heads away, the public will have his. And that would be the Monkey Trial of all time. The President has to take his chances."

St. Clair was soon persuaded that they should urge the President to reject the request.

Later, Haig called the three lawyers into his office. He wanted them all there as witnesses in case any improper suggestions were made. Then he phoned Haldeman. St. Clair listened to the conversation on an extension.

"Bob, the matter has been seriously considered," Haig said. "It just can't be done."

Haldeman asked for an opportunity to put his request and his thoughts in writing. It was already being worked on, he said.

"Sure, make the presentation," Haig said, glad for another opportunity to stall.

[Some of Haldeman's draft language ultimately found its way into Nixon's resignation speech. The pardons did not.]

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David and Ed thanked Buchanan. Then they walked over to the President's EOB office. The President was sitting alone. David was glad they were in the EOB office. He felt that this room, unlike the Oval Office with its ceremonial trappings, invited conversation on a human scale.

Ed explained that he and David had been canvassing people to get recommendations. There were arguments for and against staying. If he stayed and didn't resign, Cox said, the Administration still had vast resources to make a defense in a Senate trial. It would be heroic, and a vigorous defense might narrow the charges. Whatever the result, the full airing would lend perspective to Watergate and show that it was a small matter.

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"Do you think they're going to give us a hard time on the papers and tapes?" Nixon asked.

'The President,' Cox told Griffin, 'was up walking the halls last night talking to the pictures on the wall.'

try, injustice to defendants, personal problems RN, adverse historical effects—all point to necessity of over-all pardon."

Haldeman tried to get through by phone to Nixon, failed and finally reached Haig. He quickly stated his request and outlined his reasons.

Haig was appalled. He knew a threat when he heard one. Haldeman was talking about "loyalty," about avoiding a "trauma," "personal problems" for the President, and "adverse historical effects." To Haig, it sounded as if Haldeman was warning that he would send Nixon to jail if he didn't get a pardon.

Haig suppressed his anger and was again merely unencouraging. He didn't want to think about it, and he didn't want the President to have to think about it. Nonetheless, Haig promised Haldeman that the request would get full consideration.

The general was sensitive about Watergate conspirators asking for Executive clemency. A crucial element in the first Watergate cover-up had been E. Howard Hunt's demands for clemency in exchange for silence. Now someone was trying to blackmail the White House again. Nightmare visions of new cover-ups presented themselves, and he saw himself getting tangled up in them this time.

Later, Haig did brief the President about Haldeman's request and his reasons. Nixon wanted more time to think about it and asked Haig to consult the lawyers.

As Haig left, he ran into Leonard Garment, the staff counsel who had dropped off the Watergate defense team. "Len, walk along with me," he said.

Garment fell into step.

"I'm going to see Fred or Jim," Haig said, and asked if Garment knew where they were. Buzhardt was at the dentist and St. Clair was in court, Garment said.

Haig motioned Garment into St. Clair's empty office. The two men sat down. Garment thought Haig looked emaciated. The general was clutching his lighter and cigarettes nervously in one hand.

Things had to be brought to a conclusion, Haig said. The President was probably going to resign and it was best that he go on his own steam. One final snag had developed. Haldeman was urging the President to grant pardons for everyone involved in Watergate. The pressure was tremendous, Haig said. What was the legal judgment? Could the President do it?

"Totally out of the question," Garment said. "It would be grotesque. It would be saying to hell with the system, with justice. It would bring the roof down." The President might have the technical power, but he didn't have enough political strength to exercise it. Imagine, Garment said, Nixon's last act being pardons for all his old cronies. That would insure that Watergate could never be put into perspective.

Haig said the President felt that pardons would allow him to assume the entire burden of Watergate. He felt responsible for the plight of his old friends.

All the guilt and responsibility and the public outrage falling on Nixon: Garment knew how that would appeal to him. They just couldn't let him do it, Garment told Haig.

Buzhardt and then St. Clair returned. Haig and Garment met them in Buzhardt's office. Buzhardt was also opposed. He had already taken steps to block any pardon requests that might come through the Justice Department—the normal route.

Haig told them that he had been negative on the subject with the President and that he was supposed to be checking with the lawyers. Haldeman was really pushing and had tried to get through directly to the President, but Haig had intercepted the call. He was afraid that Haldeman would find a way to get through to Nixon. "That criminal has asked for a

pardon," he said. He expressed disbelief; the arrogance was incredible, it was blackmail, it had to be stopped.

"Well," said St. Clair at last, "maybe pardons should be considered." It was worthwhile to explore the possibility before leaping to conclusions.

Haig and Garment pounced on him.

"If the President grants this pardon," Garment said, "he will be insuring his own trial. He will be forcing it. The public has to have a head, and if the President takes the heads away, the public will have his. And that would be the Monkey Trial of all time. The President has to take his chances."

St. Clair was soon persuaded that they should urge the President to reject the request.

Later, Haig called the three lawyers into his office. He wanted them all there as witnesses in case any improper suggestions were made. Then he phoned Haldeman. St. Clair listened to the conversation on an extension.

"Bob, the matter has been seriously considered," Haig said. "It just can't be done."

Haldeman asked for an opportunity to put his request and his thoughts in writing. It was already being worked on, he said.

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"Do you think they're going to give us a hard time on the papers and tapes?" Nixon asked.

"Go ahead, Barry," the President said, staring straight ahead at Goldwater.

"Mr. President, this isn't pleasant, but you want to know the situation and it isn't good."

"Pretty bad, huh?"

"Yes, sir," Goldwater answered.

"How many would you say would be with me—a half dozen?" the President asked. Was there sarcasm in his voice?

"More than that," Goldwater said, "maybe sixteen to eighteen."

"Hugh," the President said, "do you agree with that?"

"I'd say maybe fifteen," Scott said. "But it's grim," he added, "and they're not very firm."

"Damn grim," the President shot back.

Goldwater said, "We've discussed the thing a lot and just about all of the guys have spoken up and there aren't many who would support you if it comes to that." Goldwater decided to ram it home. "I took a kind of a nose count today, and I couldn't find more than four very firm votes, and those would be from older Southerners. Some are very worried about what's been going on, and are undecided, and I'm one of them."

That final kick had delivered, Goldwater hoped.

The President turned to Rhodes. "John, I know how you feel, what you've said, I respect it, but what's your estimate?"

Rhodes was thinking there might still be some support for the President in the House, but he wanted the message to be stern. "About the same, Mr. President," he said.

"Well, that's about the way I thought it was," Nixon said. "I've got a very difficult decision to make, but I want you to know I'm going to make it for the best interests of the country."

There were nods around three sides of the desk.

"I'm not interested in pensions," the President continued. "I'm not interested in pardons or amnesty. I'm going to make this decision for the best interests of the country."

Goldwater could feel tears in his eyes. He could see that the others were emotional, too.

"Mr. President," Scott said, "we are all very saddened, but we have to tell you the facts."

"Never mind," the President replied, almost jerking out the words, watching the eyes of his visitors. "There'll be no tears. I haven't cried since Eisenhower died. My family has been fine. I'm going to be all right."

He talked about how much he had loved President Eisenhower. It had been a long time in politics, the President said. Goldwater and he had been campaigning for about twenty years. He started to muse again about things he had done for some of the people who now wanted him out of office, then stopped himself short. "But this is water over the dam," he said, "it's beside the point."

He leaned toward Rhodes. "Do I have any other options?"

"Mr. President," Rhodes answered, "when I leave this room I want to tell the people who are waiting outside that we never discussed any options."

"Oh, I do, too," the President said hastily. "I didn't mean that." He paused. "I'm going to make the decision," he said flatly.

All the points in the script had been covered. The President stood up from behind his desk. "Well, thank you very much," he said.

"Thank you," Rhodes replied, "you're a great friend."

The President didn't reply. He shook their hands, but he seemed locked in thought as they walked out.

The meeting had not taken very long. It was 5:42 when they walked to the cameras. "Whatever decision he makes, it will be in the best interest of our country," Goldwater said. "There has been no decision made."

Goldwater, Rhodes and Scott bore the bad news



The President stayed awhile in the Oval Office after his meeting with Goldwater, Scott and Rhodes. Then he had his picture taken in the Rose Garden, and then went to the solarium.

The family had gathered there. Late that afternoon, Cox had put in another call to Senator Griffin. He said he wasn't at all sure the President was going to resign. David and he had just met with Nixon and had received no assurances. There were hints, but nothing firm. The President had talked about being out of office and going back to California. It seemed to Cox that he was thinking about being impeached and convicted. That would take months. More alarming, Cox said, his mother-in-law had told him: "Dick is not talking about resigning!"

Griffin had tried to calm Cox down. Cox again sounded distraught and mixed up. Cox told him once more that the family was deeply worried about the Presi-

dent's mental condition, the lack of sleep, the pressure.

But now, Rose Mary Woods came into the solarium a few minutes ahead of Nixon. "Your father has decided to resign," she said, looking at the President's two daughters.

David had been telling Julie for days it would all be over soon. Now she heard it, stunned, relieved, and consumed with sadness and a sense of unfairness.

The President stepped into the room. "We're going back to California," he said, and indicated that there would be no discussion.

His daughters broke down. Mrs. Nixon did not cry.

There was a knock on the door, and photographer Ollie Atkins

Nixon and Julie fell into a teary embrace



came in. Ziegler had instructed him that morning to photograph absolutely everything.

"Ollie," Mrs. Nixon said, "we're always glad to see you, but I don't think we need any pictures now."

"Oh, come on, Ollie," the President said. "Take a few shots."

The President directed everyone to stand between a bookcase and the yellow print drapes. The daughters were weeping and Atkins had to take shot after shot to get a picture with everyone smiling. The family stood in a line, their arms about each other or holding hands. Atkins finally thought he had

some shots with no one crying. But as he backed out the doorway, still snapping, Julie and the President fell weeping into each other's arms. Standing next to them, Tricia broke down, her face contorted, arms dangling.

The weight lifted only slightly during dinner. The President talked about life in California. He hoped the girls and their husbands would be able to visit often. Dinner lasted about 45 minutes. Then the President left, saying he was going down to work on his speech.

At 7 p.m. he was in the Oval Office. He had a message from Haig. The general was waiting in his office with the lawyers when the President telephoned back.

Haldeman had been told that pardons could not be granted, Haig reported. The President seemed to indicate that he had overcome the biggest barrier, his family. They had been informed. They didn't like the decision, the President said, but he could handle them. Nixon asked Haig if he had lingering doubts.

"It is absolutely the right course," Haig replied.

David and Julie went back to their apartment at the Columbia Plaza. Julie called some old friends on the staff. The White House switchboard phoned to say that John Ehrlichman was on the line. She told David.

"I'll get on the extension," he said. "Don't make any promises." He knew about the Haldeman pardon request and he wanted Julie to stay clear of such matters.

Ehrlichman bantered briefly. "You know," he finally said, "I was thinking one solution to the problems would be pardons. It would save a lot of embarrassment to the President."

Julie put him off politely.

David was infuriated. It was blackmail. How appropriate, he thought, that it came from the man Hunt had been blackmailing in the Watergate cover-up. Ehrlichman sounded like Hunt. No wonder the President had gotten into so much trouble.

David took a call from Buchanan. Buchanan remained convinced that the President had to resign, but some questions could be raised about timing. As David listened he was thinking that the pressure was unbearable, that neither the President nor Julie could take any more. He hoped Buchanan wasn't shifting ground.

"Let the death watch go away first," Buchanan advised. Wait a few days so that the President could leave office more under his own control. Why hurry him?

David said he'd exchange a little dignity for a little relief.

At midnight, the President was still working on his resignation speech. He phoned Ziegler twice before 2 a.m. and again at 3:58.

Between 4:15 and 5:07 the President talked with Price four times to offer suggestions and additions to the speech. His last call to Ziegler was at 5:14 in the morning.

[That night, Nixon, who had been drinking, had summoned Henry Kissinger to the Lincoln Sitting Room. Together, they had sunk to their knees and prayed; then the President had wept on the floor while Kissinger tried to comfort him. On Thursday, Aug. 8, Nixon announced his decision to resign. On Friday, Aug. 9, he was gone.]