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Nixon's Solitary Nights Out

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While former President Nixon was campaigning, he would slip away in the middle of the night "to flea-bitten" coffee shops and when tired he would appear to be drunk, H. R. Haldeman, one of Nixon's closest aides, says.

According to excerpts of his book, "The End of Power," Haldeman said Nixon "used to disappear in the middle of the night during campaign trips.

"I would call for him at his hotel room in a small Midwestern city in the morning and find that he was missing. Some time in the early dawn he had gotten out of bed and slipped away, with a nervous Secret Service man tailing him. We'd search all over town until we found the candidate looking haggard and wan in a flea-bitten coffee shop."

Haldeman believes these "post-midnight excursions" were Nixon's way of "letting off steam when things were very tense or he was very tired."

Haldeman recalls that when he

first met Nixon at the Republican National Convention in 1956 "my first thought was that he had been drinking.

"His sentences were almost incoherent; his monologue rambled on circuitously while everyone around him looked at each other wondering."

Haldeman said he later discovered that "these slurred late-at-night monologues were a feature of Nixon's evenings on the campaign trail."

"They were caused not by alcohol, but by the utter fatigue of Long days of campaigning. The fact is that Nixon couldn't drink when he was tired. One beer would transform his normal speech into the rambling elocution of a Bowery wino.

Haldeman said that in all his years with Nixon he never saw him intoxicated. "The problem was he didn't need to drink to excess to start losing his faculties and appear foolish," says Haldeman.

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