

DREW PEARSON

HHH and Warren Suffer in Silence

WASHINGTON—Richard Nixon, minutes before he took the oath to become president of the United States, was in the White House paying a courtesy call on President Johnson before the two drove to the capitol together. Vice President Humphrey, minutes before he was to leave office, stood nearby.



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"How about delivering my speech for me, Hubert?" asked Mr. Nixon.

"How long is it?" asked the vice president.

"It's exactly 2,025 words and it takes about 20 minutes to deliver," replied Mr. Nixon.

Vice President Humphrey pretended to study the matter. "I think it'll take longer than that," he said.

"Mr. President," he finally concluded, "it was my intention to deliver that speech, but you got in the way."

THE PUBLIC didn't realize it, but two men who stood beside Richard Nixon when he took the oath of president must have said inwardly: "There but for the grace of God might stand I."

One was Chief Justice Earl Warren, who administered the oath. The other was Vice President Hubert Humphrey, whom Nixon defeated.

No one ever would have suspected from the firm voice of the chief justice as he gave the oath that the man who repeated it after him had once done his best to ouster Warren out of the presidency.

The two leading contenders in 1952 were Sen. Robert A. Taft of Ohio and Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, running neck and neck and both arriving at Chicago with about the same number of delegates.

Warren, then a very popular governor of California, had run for vice president on the Dewey ticket in 1948. He had served his party faithfully, and was in an excellent position to be a compromise candidate in case of a continuing deadlock between Taft and Eisenhower.

This was the strategy when the Warren special train left California. Delegates were all sworn to support the governor until he released them and almost all were confident of victory.

However, there was one young senator who flew out to meet the train in Denver and who, riding the balance of the way to Chicago, began to spend discord. He was Richard Nixon. He also had sworn to support Warren until released, but despite that fact he began to talk up the idea of supporting Eisenhower. Warren, he whispered, could not be nominated.

NIXON'S MAN, Murray Chotiner, and Eisenhower-banned buses met the Warren train when it arrived in Chicago. Warren supporters ripped off the banners, but it was obvious that forces from within were working against the governor. Nixon continued to work against him—in return for the promise that he, Nixon, would be Eisenhower's vice presidential running mate.

Eventually he succeeded. Eisenhower and Nixon were nominated and elected. Warren went back to California, defeated.

Chief Justice Warren has a long memory. But in the tradition of American good sportsmanship, he gave no inkling of his thoughts as he administered the oath to President Nixon.

Nor did Hubert Humphrey, as he stood beside Nixon, give any inkling of his disappointment. Hubert's close friends say he was crushed and heartbroken over his defeat. If President Johnson had come out for him earlier; if the political polls had not made it so difficult for him to raise money; if the Democratic convention had not been held in Chicago—probably he could have won.

All these "ifs" come back to haunt him during the sleepless hours after election. They must have haunted him as he stood at the Capitol watching Richard Nixon become the 37th president of the United States.

THE GOVERNORS of the 50 states said they got much better treatment from the Republicans during the inaugural parade than previously from the Democrats. They rode down Pennsylvania Avenue together near the forefront of the parade rather than straggling along, some of them toward the end . . . J. Willard Marriott, the GOP inaugural boss, took pains to see that each governor had an aide from his home state. Gov. William Guy of North Dakota found himself with Col. George Watkins of Carrington, N. D., as his military aide. Mrs. Watkins comes from Velva, N. D., where Eric Sevareid was born. The governor's driver was Staff Sgt. P. F. Kobilansky from Glen Ullin, N. D.