

Pat Buchanan: Man of Spirit

9/26/73
By Jules Witcover

Washington Post Staff Writer

In both time and distance, the trip to the White House's inner circle was a short one for Patrick J. Buchanan, President Nixon's media specialist and house conservative, who testifies before the Senate Watergate Committee today.

Born in Northwest Washington 35 years ago come November, first in his class at Gonzaga High School and third at Georgetown, Pat Buchanan is a classic example of the young man of spirit and determination who knew where he wanted to go and got there fast.

Fresh out of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in 1962, he set out to be an editorial writer and, within 10 years, a syndicated columnist. In only two months on the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, he reached the first goal. He may well have achieved the second by now if he hadn't become impatient and hitched his fortunes to Richard Nixon.

He cornered Mr. Nixon at a cocktail party at the home of Globe-Democrat cartoonist Don Hesse in late 1965 and told him point-blank that if Mr. Nixon was running for President he wanted to get in on the ground floor. Shortly afterward, he became the first full-time staff man in the second Nixon drive for the White House.

Since then he has been at various times researcher, advance man, press secretary, news summary editor, media expert, speechwriter and — in advance of the 1972 campaign—an educated prognosticator about the likely strategies and fortunes of the leading Democratic presidential candidates.

It is about this latter role particularly that the Watergate Committee is expected to interrogate Buchanan today, and about whether he had any special intelligence from inside Democratic ranks on which to base his reports.

Buchanan, in an interview in advance of his Capitol Hill appearance, said he



White House Photo

Pat Buchanan: campaign prognosticator

started writing the "scenarios" on Democratic prospects in the spring of 1971, before any of the possible candidates had geared up their campaign organizations. The scenarios were based entirely on published material of their positions and strategies and on whatever he could pick up in conversations with political reporters, Buchanan said.

He wrote such scenarios on Sens. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) and Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), and two of them are in the hands of the Committee, he said. He did not write a scenario on the eventual nominee, Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.), simply because McGovern was not regarded as a serious possibility then, Buchanan said.

"I did not recommend a policy of infiltration or a strategy of dirty tricks," Buchanan said from behind a broad desk in his Executive Office Building office. "There was nothing in the analyses that was illegal unethical, improper or unprecedented."

"I never saw Chapman's Friends' reports (the code name of spies working for the Nixon re-election committee) for any Democratic candidate's campaign in 1971 or 1972, and I did not know Sy Freidin or Lucy Goldberg (the admitted spies) were out operating for us."

Buchanan said he is confident he can disprove with "strategy memos" in his files any allegations to the contrary.

Buchanan also was a member of the "attack group" that met daily in the office of White House political strategist Charles W. Colson during the general election campaign. It plotted moves to be made against McGovern, including the release of statements and the dispatch of surrogate candidates to challenge and answer the stumping Democratic nominee.

Buchanan has always been regarded as the ideological voice of the nation's con-

servatives in the White House and the President's staff emissary to them. But his status as a hardnosed political analyst and student of the political impact of the mass media has been the real key to his influence.

His strong views on the power of network television have made him an ally of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, with whom he collaborated on the 1969 speeches in Des Moines criticizing TV commentators and in Montgomery attacking multi-media owners and especially The Washington Post and The New York Times.

It was Buchanan who first brought Agnew sharply to Mr. Nixon's attention, in April, 1968. He sent Mr. Nixon newspaper clippings of Agnew's stormy confrontation with black leaders after the Baltimore riots. This performance was instrumental in the changing public perception of Agnew from liberal to conservative.

Probably more than any other single individual in the White House today, Buchanan is regarded as both a Nixon and an Agnew man.

"I don't have any divided loyalty," he said when asked about his position. "The President knows I'm an admirer of the Vice President. I've been loyal to the President for eight years. My first loyalty is to Richard Nixon—no question about it. But I don't see any disloyalty in being loyal to the President and loyal to the guy he picked as his vice president."

Like those other youngmen-in-a-hurry who already have paraded before the Watergate Committee, Buchanan's most conspicuous characteristic is his unswerving loyalty to Richard Nixon. But unlike most of the others, he is loyal as

well to a political ideology that often puts him clearly to the right of the man he calls "The Boss." In more than four years in the White House, he has come to be regarded as an impassioned scrupulously straight-forward True Believer.

He is known, too, for biting and colorful speech, delivered staccato-like. He has the face of an Irish brawler—which he was on at least one occasion in college, when he broke a hand in an altercation with police who stopped him for a traffic violation. That episode resulted in a one-year suspension from Georgetown, a year in which he says he caught up on his political reading and developed his first real appetite for politics.

Buchanan went to Columbia on an economic writing fellowship in 1961. There he was interviewed for a job with The Washington Post but didn't get it "because I got into a political argument on the editorial policy of the paper. That was not the way to go about getting a job."

He then deliberately sought out a conservative, second-circulation newspaper in a large city as one where he would have a better chance to move up quickly.

He wrote editorials for the Globe-Democrat in the daytime and prowled St. Louis and environs with roommate and investigative reporter Denny Walsh, now in the Washington bureau of the New York Times. He arrived by train in debt and left three years later in a Buick convertible, to join Mr. Nixon at his law firm in New York.

In 1966, Buchanan accompanied his boss on much of a 35,000-mile political itinerary, compiling political and

issue briefing books along the way. At the end, Mr. Nixon had been a master force in a 47-seat GOP pick-up in the House and was again Mr. Republican, with a suitcase full of political IOUs.

In 1967, Buchanan toured Africa with Mr. Nixon and in early 1968 served as his press secretary through the presidential primaries—a task he did not relish and gladly turned over to Ronald Ziegler at the Republican convention.

In the 1968 campaign, he prepared a daily news summary for the candidate. On Jan. 21, 1969, the first day of the Nixon presidency, he got a call from the new chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, who said: "The President wants to know where his news summary is today."

For six months afterward, its preparation was Buchanan's prime job, and he still oversees it, though a staff of about five actually turns it out the compilation of late evening network news and stories from about 35 newspapers. The summary is on Mr. Nixon's desk each day by 8 a.m.

Buchanan's work with Agnew in the 1969 media speeches inevitably led to a role for Buchanan in the 1970 elections, in which the Vice President did all of the early stumping for Mr. Nixon. One of Buchanan's most notable contributions, an old Agnew aide says, was the line calling Republican Sen. Charles Goodell of New York "the Christine Jorgenson of the Republican Party."

Buchanan said it as a

joke, but Agnew couldn't resist using it in what he thought was an off-the-record session with editors in New Orleans, this former aide says.

Also supplying Agnew with one-liners in 1970 was fellow speechwriter William Safire, now a columnist with The New York Times. Buchanan acknowledges that at one point the Times also extended him a "feeler" to write a column, but nothing came of it.

In the 1972 campaign, in addition to writing the scenarios of Democratic prospects and participating in the "attack group," Buchanan wrote a daily political and media analysis of 500 to 1,000 words to go with the news summary to the President.

This year, with a new title of Special Consultant to the President, Buchanan has continued as the in-house expert on the media. He personally wrote the 10,000-word briefing book Mr. Nixon studied in advance of his Aug. 22 press conference in San Clemente, and held a post-mortem on it with the President.

But it will be Pat Buchanan the analyst of Democratic candidates more than Pat Buchanan the media adviser the Senate investigators will be interrogating today. Buchanan acknowledges he wrote some pretty smoky memos to "the big man up there" last year, and the committee wants to find out whether more went into them than his own presence.