

Nixon Used His Expert On 'Thoughtful' Speeches

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 15— Raymond K. Price Jr.'s fascination with words became clear at the age of seven years when he acquired a copying machine and published a weekly neighborhood paper in Setauket, Long Island. Its peak circulation was 80.

The man who says he hates to plan anything never seriously considered any career other than writing. He toyed once with the idea of being a lawyer, and tossed around notion of being a stockbroker like his father, who is with the New York firm of Adams & Peck. But writing has been the driving force in his life.

Tonight his words were heard by millions around the country when the President spoke on the Watergate scandal. It was Mr. Price who wrote the first draft and numerous other drafts of the President's speech.

As Mr. Nixon's chief speech writer, Mr. Price was the President's logical choice to help him write one of the most sensitive speeches of his career. He is known at the White House as the man the President picks for his "thoughtful" speeches, while Patrick Buchanan writes the "tough" speeches, on law and order, for example.

Neither Mr. Price nor any other speech writer can be considered a ghost writer for the President.

Notes in the Margin

Mr. Nixon is known to be a careful editor, fussing over each word. On the average, he returns a speech to the writer eight times with notes scribbled around the margins — always clockwise — and with long inserts before a final version is reached.

Mr. Price began writing the Watergate speech more than a week ago, after having considered the substance for many weeks.

Both he and Mr. Buchanan were secluded with the President at his mountaintop retreat at Camp David for five days last week developing the speech.

Mr. Price and the President would sometimes churn over

the material for a couple of hours, creating yet another version of the speech.

The fine-featured, trim (although he never exercises) writer joined the Nixon team in 1967 after he had lunch with Mr. Nixon on Washington's Birthday. Mr. Price, who is considered a liberal among the Nixon cast, pondered the invitation for a week, and then accepted.

At the time, Mr. Price was attempting to write a novel that was to "take a serious look at the city as a human institution," and a number of his colleagues at The New York Herald Tribune, which had just folded, were quite surprised.

The friends pointed out that, as an editorial writer, Mr. Price had endorsed President Lyndon B. Johnson over Senator Barry Goldwater in 1964.

Once Mr. Price decided that he saw "eye-to-eye" with Mr. Nixon, he went on to write the majority of the candidate's speeches in the 1968 campaign and was praised by Mr. Nixon for his "grace notes."

His lofty phrases are often noted, particularly in Mr. Nixon's first 1968 primary speech at Concord, N. H., when he called for new leadership to provide "the lift of a driving dream," and in a radio address proposing new ways to bring blacks to the economic mainland, when he talked of "bridges to human dignity."

The native New Yorker, born on May 6, 1930, began his professional writing career with Collier's magazine after he graduated from Yale in 1951 and served three years in the Navy.

When the magazine ceased publication in 1956, he became a reporter for Life magazine, and then went to work for the Herald Tribune, serving as chief editorial writer, Sunday editor and assistant to the publisher. He is a bachelor.

For all his years as a writer, Mr. Price refuses—at least publicly—to name any writer, living or dead, as great.