

The High Price of Just Going Along

JEB STUART MAGRUDER had it all figured out. After serving as acting director of the Committee for the Re-election of the President, he would move on to a high White House post in Nixon's second term. From there he would run for secretary of state in California. After that, who knows? Senator? Governor? No limits seemed to dim the vision of a highflying political com-er of 38 who charmed wherever he went, who scarcely had an enemy anywhere to say a spiteful word about him.

Then came Watergate, its grimy details surfacing bit by bit, first tainting Magruder, then destroying his hopes of high office and honors. It was a cruel fate for a man who had developed almost everything except the kind of character to withstand the temptations of power at the highest levels.

As far back as any one can remember, Magruder was a popular, even irresistible figure: outgoing, unpretentious, effervescent. A member of one of Maryland's oldest families, he grew up on Staten Island in New York City. As a teen-ager, he became a star tennis player. He graduated from Williams College with honors and married a Vassar beauty, Gail Nicholas, who shared his conservative political views. While

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working in a management-consultant firm in Chicago, he earned a master's degree in business administration.

In his free time, Magruder helped out in G.O.P. political campaigns. He worked for Barry Goldwater in 1964, served as Nixon's Southern California coordinator in 1968. After the election, he joined H.R. Haldeman's White House staff where he was considered to be so loyal that he was picked to check up on the loyalty of other staffers. A first-rate organizer, he was named deputy director of C.R.P. by John Mitchell. Occasionally, friends recall, a streak of zealotry marred his surface charm. Nixon, he used to say, must be re-elected "at all costs."

When the Watergate seven were arrested, Magruder reacted visibly. He became dispirited and lost weight. Obviously, political corruption was a strain on Magruder. "He confused party interest with national interest," says a Washington neighbor. "When you get in the circles he was in, that's easy to do. The pressures are positively unbelievable." Adds a former White House aide: "If you are conformist-oriented, you go along. Jeb didn't like to be a pain in the ass."

By late summer, when Watergate proved to have little impact on the campaign and the President's re-election was assured, Magruder recovered his aplomb. Even so, he had been compro-

mised. Because his name had cropped up in connection with the break-in, Haldeman told him that no big White House job was available. If he faced Senate confirmation, he was sure to be grilled about G.O.P. campaign tactics. A special post was created for him at the Commerce Department. From there it was all downhill, as the Watergate investigation gathered momentum and revealed that Magruder had been lying when he said he had no advance knowledge of the break-in. Last week Ma-

gruder gave up his Commerce job. He may well go to jail for perjury.

Magruder got the fame he sought—though hardly the kind he expected or perhaps deserved. His ranch-style house in Sumner, Md., is staked out by television crews and reporters; passers-by stop to gawk. The once ebullient family is not often on view. There are no more supper parties, bicycling trips, tennis matches. Rarely does anyone answer the doorbell or the telephone. An American political career has ended.

JEB & GAIL MAGRUDER WITH THEIR FOUR CHILDREN AT THEIR MARYLAND HOME



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