

Rumsfeld—Second Most Powerful in Capital

First of three articles

By Lou Cannon

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Donald Henry Rumsfeld has a world view, holds three jobs in the White House and has an organized office adorned with a bust of Abraham Lincoln. At 42 Rumsfeld is the most powerful man in Washington next to the President.

Rumsfeld is to the Ford White House what H. R. Haldeman was to the Nixon White House—the faithful executor of presidential directives and the keeper of the gates of access.

Serving his vastly different President with the same fervor and hard work that distinguished Haldeman, Rumsfeld is White House chief of staff at a time when Americans are deeply mistrustful of non-elected, delegated power.

"As the White House is organized, the chief of staff has enormous power, although chiefs of staff always deny it," says, a presidential intimate. "Rumsfeld shares in the power of the President."

Neither Gerald R. Ford nor Rumsfeld is unmindful of the suspicion that the White House chief of staff is a kind of nonelected President. The recent associations connected with the job are so trou-

bling that the staff reorganization plan drawn up by Rumsfeld and approved by Mr. Ford in the early days of his presidency renames the chief of staff as "staff coordinator."

This bland title is far less descriptive of reality than the one it replaces. But though the title is gone, the job remains.

Except for national security affairs adviser and Secretary State Henry A. Kissinger, no individual in the administration is believed to have as much influence on policy as Rumsfeld. No one, including Kissinger, remotely matches Rumsfeld's influence in the day-to-day operation of the White House.

High-ranking White House officials, speaking softly, credit Rumsfeld with having helped nudge the President away from his inherited preoccupation with Southeast Asia to the "Vietnam-era-is-over" posture of his April 23 speech at Tulane University.

"He cannot advertise publicly that he is [just] one more advocate because it would interfere with his ability to administer the White House process," says a high-ranking White House official.

See RUMSFELD, A10, Col. 1



By Matthew Lewis—The Washington Post
Donald H. Rumsfeld: Keeper of the gates of access.

RUMSFELD, From A1

And process, to hear Rumsfeld tell it, is what it's all about.

"Form is substance," Rumsfeld has said. "A properly organized decision-making process does not guarantee decisions of high quality, but you are certain to have uneven decisions without an orderly process."

Rumsfeld dominates the orderly process he has created in the White House. He sees his job as divided into "three segments":

- As White House coordinator, Rumsfeld supervises the President's schedule and work agenda. He makes certain that Mr. Ford is aware of all possible options before a decision is made, and he checks to see that presidential directives are carried out.

- As administrator of the 533-member White House staff, Rumsfeld controls the budget and personnel operations. White House personnel director William N. Walker and Secretary to the Cabinet James E. Connor are long-time Rumsfeld allies and his personal choices for the jobs they hold.

- As Cabinet-level adviser, Rumsfeld participates in the policy as well as the process. He is an omnivorous presence within the administration, possessing more direct access to President Ford than anyone and making his views known on every object from Portugal to politics.

Who is Donald Rumsfeld and where is he going? What are the personal goals of this intense, competitive, athletic man who looks out at the world from behind aviator-like glasses and spends most of his time a short walk away from the President's office? What does he intend to accomplish?

Two months of interviews with his friends, adversaries and past and present colleagues give a picture of a man of extraordinary talent and ambition, a man who is gifted, as one of his congressional friends puts it, with "the most splendid sense of timing."

Rumsfeld is described as bright, tough, honest, competent, demanding, competitive, intense, diligent, self-disciplined and pragmatic. He is an inveterate reader, especially of books on his

tory, government and foreign affairs.

Rumsfeld has traveled a greater distance in a shorter length of time than any other member of the Ford administration or maybe anyone else in public life.

At 30, he was a brash boy-wonder congressman from Chicago's wealthy suburban North Shore and a leader of the ahead-of-its-time congressional reform movement that came to be known as "Rumsfeld's Raiders." At 37 he was named by President Nixon to direct the embattled Office of Economic Opportunity, where he became a controversial success at balancing the often conflicting claims of the poor, the holdover Democratic bureaucracy and the suspicious and sometimes hostile Nixon White House.

He stayed on after OEO as White House counselor, then director of the Cost of Living Council in its "Phase II" price-control period. At 40 he left the Nixon White House to become NATO ambassador in Brussels in December, 1972. He returned less than two years later, untouched by the Watergate scandal that had driven Nixon from office, to become the No. 1 staff man in the Ford White House.

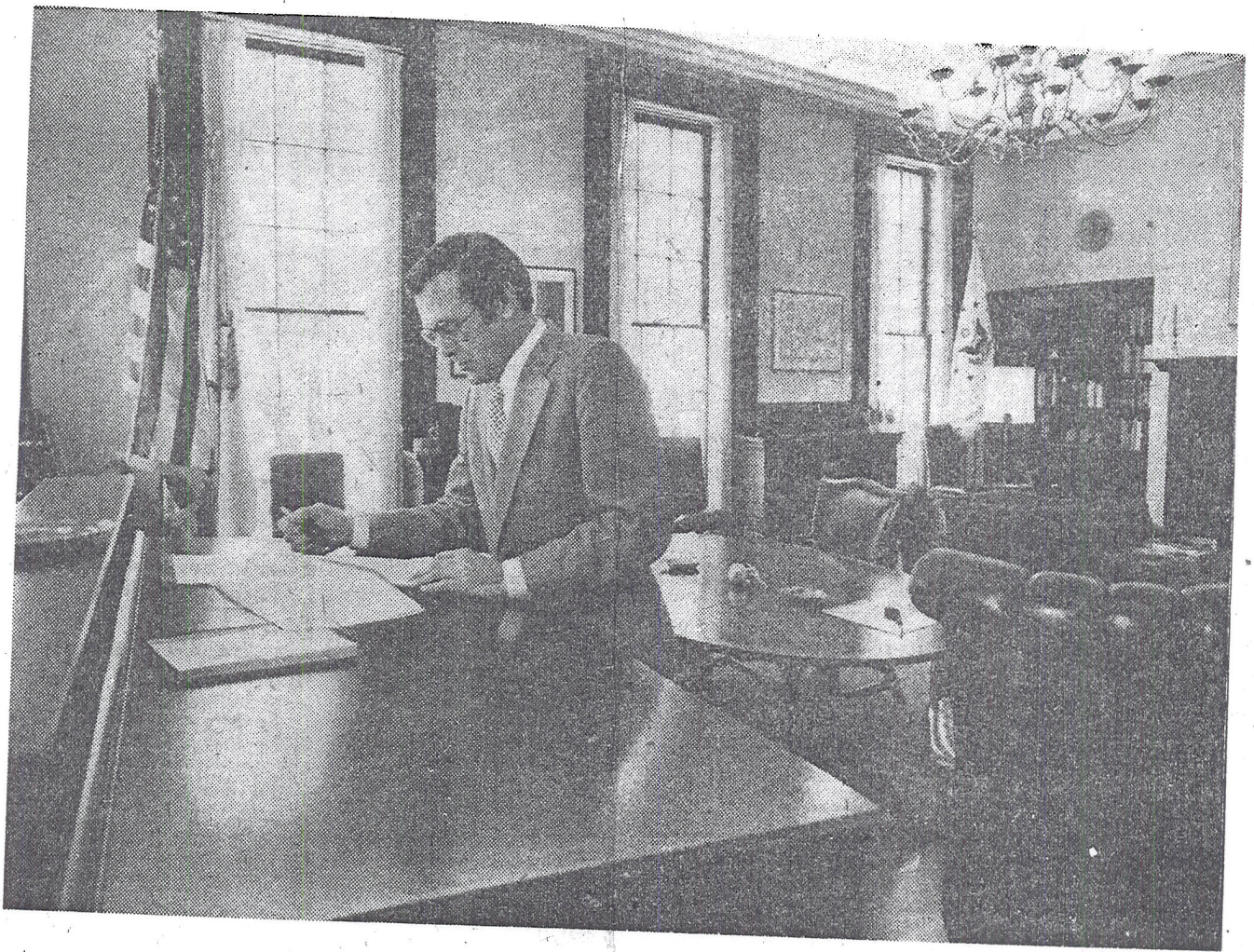
Rumsfeld came back to a White House that badly needed, in the words of one of President's close friends, "a competent S.O.B." This intimate believes that Mr. Ford's open, gregarious honesty was exactly what the country required after a decade of Johnson and Nixon and the interlocking traumas of the Vietnam war and Watergate.

He also thinks that Mr. Ford, who doesn't like to fire anyone, needed a proven manager who could help budget his time, ration his access and manage the White House staff.

This need was made to order for Rumsfeld, a resourceful administrator who quickly established himself as first among the nine supposed equals of the White House senior staff.

Rumsfeld's ascendancy was no surprise to his former colleagues in the House who had seen him work. One of his closest friends, Rep. William A. Steiger (R-Wis.), offers this evaluation:

"He has a steel-trap mind. is highly organized and knows which questions to ask. He has a good sense of



Rumsfeld at his stand-up desk in the White House. He stresses an "orderly process" to avoid "uneven decisions."

Photos by Matthew Lewis—The Washington Post

humor about himself and others... and an incredible stamina, which means he works harder and longer than he should."

Despite these sterling qualities, Rumsfeld seems an enigma to many people, even to some of his friends.

"Rumsfeld has a very curious inner integrity to me," one friend says. "He's not really a loner but he is a loner. He's gregarious and he has political empathy, but he keeps his own counsel."

Robert A. Goldwin, the White House intellectual who worked with Rumsfeld in his Illinois campaigns and served as his deputy at NATO, says that Rumsfeld "just does not share his thinking except as it's necessary for those who work with him to do their work well."

Goldwin believes that Rumsfeld is motivated by "a powerful devotion to serving the country" and by "a scrupulous morality."

"This combines with a kind of toughness that's the

kind of thing people mean when they speak of a young man as street-wise," says Goldwin. "He's tough and combative, but it has to be understood in combination with the patriotism and the morality. That adds up to a kind of puzzle. He's an enigmatic man."

Traces of this idea run like an unbroken thread through the comments of those who find this picture of Rumsfeld as selfless patriot more than a little too good to be true.

Some of Rumsfeld's non-admirers describe him as slick, manipulative, cunning, too ambitious, standoffish and mechanical. Others who like him all enough wish they knew what Rumsfeld really stood for.

"He has a kind of pragmatism that doesn't relate to any clear set of principles," says a member of Congress who views Rumsfeld as chiefly a tactician. "I don't think Don could list the five principles that mean the most to him. He's a kind of mechanical, upward-mobile

guy but I don't know what it all springs from. I'm not clear what makes Rummy run."

A White House staff side who frequently is allied with Rumsfeld says of him: "He's very ambitious and he's an expert at covering his own ass. He has a habit of pretending not to know something that he does know and of using this to embarrass his in-house rivals."

Rumsfeld demonstrated this trait at a meeting described by John Hersey in his New York Times Magazine article on the President. During a staff meeting attended by Rumsfeld and Robert T. Hartmann, the Ford intimate whom Rumsfeld had reduced in authority and access, a question is raised about a news story quoting an unnamed "White House source."

The story, not identified by Hersey, was a wire-service dispatch quoting the source on Mr. Ford's political plans. But Rumsfeld, as Hersey tells it, "sharply

pointed out to Mr. Ford that Hartmann also was quoted in the story, a barbed attempt to suggest that Hartmann was the source.

Hartmann, who frequently has been suspected by the Rumsfeld shop of talking too freely to the press, reddened in embarrassment but the President intervened to dispell the tension created by Rumsfeld.

In his own dealings with the press, Rumsfeld rarely talks too freely. He is generous with his time but guarded in discussing White House operations on grounds it would create "static," distracting from the views of the President.

Some who know Rumsfeld think that his reluctance to be forthcoming was shaped by his experiences in the Nixon administration, where the news media usually were viewed with extreme suspicion. Others believe it is a natural extension of his desire to preserve all possible options as long as possible, by not talking about them.

"He has a basic caution, which comes through," says a former aide in describing Rumsfeld's press relations. "He sees you because he wants you to know that he is running a good, clean, honest shop. But that's where it ends. He won't give a background opinion on anybody unless it helps him to do his job. He has a clear demarcation in his own mind as to what is Caesar's and what is Ford's. And he honestly believes that Gerald Ford does not have to decide things in a public way."

Beneath this outward caution lurks a daredevil streak.

When Rumsfeld was in Congress, during a time his wife and children were in Illinois he stayed with Martin Hoffman, a friend from Princeton days who is now general counsel for the Department of Defense.

One weekend Rumsfeld suggested to Hoffman, a former Army parachutist, that they go parachute jumping. Hoffman agreed.

"He stood me up on the back ramp of a station wagon and said, 'Jump off,'" Rumsfeld recalls. "I jumped off and he said, 'You're ready, Rummy.' So we got in the plane and went."

On another occasion, during Rumsfeld's White House counselor days, he was in Spain with his family and fellow counselor Robert H. Finch and went to watch the running of the bulls at Pamplona. He also went to Cordoba and, at the invitation of the famous bullfighter El Cordobes, climbed into a ring with a 3-year-old bull.

Rumsfeld, attired in a suit, was laughing as he inexpertly tried to maneuver the bull away with his borrowed cape. Eventually, with Finch and others in the party watching from a safe distance, he grabbed the bull by a horn and pushed it away.

After, Rumsfeld remembers, he was exhausted and gasping from fear. The picture of the "bullfight" wound up in a Rumsfeld scrapbook, with the quoted caption, "He kept thinking that it would go away."

Rumsfeld's qualities of competitiveness and leadership were apparent at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Ill., described by a contemporary as "the No. 1

high school academically and really big on social events, really big on weekends, very cliquish, very white, very achievement-oriented, very much into sports."

Joyce Pierson, now Joyce Rumsfeld, was a classmate. She remembers Rumsfeld as "a leader whom everybody had confidence in and always was fun to be around." Rumsfeld, the son of a German-born real-estate broker, made good marks in school and became the state high school wrestling champ.

He advanced to Provincetown, where he majored in political science and was helped by a Naval ROTC scholarship. Six months after graduation, in 1954, he married Joyce Pierson, who had attended the University of Colorado as an art major.

Then he went on to 3 years of Naval service as a flight instructor in Pensacola, Fla., Corpus Christi, Tex., and Norfolk, Va., surviving a crash landing along the way. The Rumsfelds' daughter, Valerie, eldest of three children, was born in Norfolk.

Rumsfeld came to Washington after leaving the Navy. He landed an intern job with Rep. David Dennis (R-Ohio), another former wrestler, and after that became staff assistant to Bob Griffin of Michigan, then a young Republican congressman and now the Senate minority whip.

Even at 27 Rumsfeld was thinking of a congressional career, but then Rep. Peter H. B. Freylinghusen (R-N.J.) and other friendly members of Congress bluntly told him that he couldn't launch it from Washington. So Rumsfeld returned to Illinois and his only experience in private industry, working a few months for the investment banking firm of A.G. Becker and Co. Then, in 1961, Rumsfeld received the first in a series of political breaks when an entrenched Republican member of Congress, Marguerite Stitt Church, abruptly decided to retire.

Rumsfeld was then 29 and a political unknown facing experienced opposition. He formed around him a group of friends from Princeton and New Trier days and set out to pull an upset.

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"Optimistically, he was a 100-to-1 shot," recalls Chin. See RUMSFELD, A11, Col. 1

RUMSFELD, From A10

Chicago investment banker Ned Janotta, a Princeton classmate and close friend. "We put together a completely volunteer campaign. Rummy would start at 6 a.m. at the train stations and go to bed at midnight. He quit his job and borrowed money from his father to live on. He was intense, competitive. He doesn't like to come in second."

In an effort to make certain that he came in first, Rumsfeld tried to convince one of the supposed favorites in the race, the late Robert A. Dwyer, that he should withdraw.

"While Dwyer was concentrating on setting up a grass-roots organization," recalls a former Rumsfeld campaign aide, "Rumsfeld was using the rifle approach and lining up people of influence—Marshall Field, Charles Percy, Milton Eisenhower, and people like this. When it came time to convince Dwyer to withdraw, Don was able to bring the influence he needed."

Percy, then a wealthy businessman who was about to launch his own political career, recalls that Rumsfeld came to him early in the primary and asked him for support. In response Percy interviewed all of the prospective candidates and became convinced that there were "negative aspects" to everyone except Rumsfeld. He gave Rumsfeld the endorsement and a contribution, launching a friendship that has persisted to this day.

Rumsfeld won the primary, beating state Rep. Marion Burks after Dwyer dropped out, and went on to the first of four easy victories in what was a secure Republican district.

As a 30-year-old congressman, Rumsfeld found that his Capital Hill experience and his habits of energetic, hard work gave him a leg up on many colleagues.

He moved quickly in the Congress, supporting an all-volunteer Army and greater congressional review of foreign policy at a time when these views were not common. But his greatest passion was congressional reform.

Allied with such Republicans as Edward G. (Pete) Biester of Pennsylvania, Barber B. Conable Jr. of New York and George Bush of Texas, Rumsfeld in 1968 headed a group of 12 GOP rebels who announced they planned to "alter the normal proceedings" of the House in an effort to bring a congressional reorganization bill to the floor. They failed, but not before keeping the House in continuous session for 32 hours and 17 minutes, the longest session in 93 years.

Rumsfeld made the right alliances in the House, as he had back home. Politically, his wisest choice was to join the coalition that in 1965 toppled Charles W. Halleck of Indiana as minority leader in favor of Gerald R. Ford.

"Rumsfeld was a very effective, aggressive guy," says Rep. Elford A. Cederberg (R.-Mich.), a friend of Rumsfeld and of Mr. Ford. "Ford formed a high opinion of him. He trusts him."

But Rumsfeld found his path blocked in the House. His brashness and unwillingness to wait his turn in the seniority system irritated some of his senior colleagues; early in 1969 he was defeated by Robert Taft Jr. of Ohio for chairmanship of the House Republican Research Committee.

In his early years in Congress, Rumsfeld had told Steiger that he wanted to get out of the House before the institution took him over. He was given his opportunity a few months after his defeat by Taft when President Nixon, casting around for a trustworthy Republican who was willing to manage the suspect Office of Economic Opportu-

nity, offered Rumsfeld the job of director.

Rumsfeld had begun his congressional career as an orthodox Republican conservative. Over the years his conservatism, as measured by Congressional Quarterly, changed gradually from an 80 per cent support of the House conservative coalition in 1963 to 61 per cent in 1968. His support of social measures advocated by President Johnson gradually increased over the same period with his presidential support figure reaching a high of 53 per cent in 1968.

Rumsfeld had voted against OEO and he was not regarded as a supporter of the agency. Joyce Rumsfeld recalls that he was sounded out four times by the Nixon administration before he agreed to take the job.

The anti-poverty agency was at the height of its budgeted appropriations when Rumsfeld became director. But it was riven by inner conflicts and reports of mismanagement. The holdover Democratic bureaucracy was suspicious of the administration's intentions.

Democrat Terry Lenzner, the OEO legal services director whom Rumsfeld would at first support and ultimately fire, gives this picture: "Rumsfeld made a hell of an effort to create order out of the administrative chaos he found when he took over. There were 2,000 lawyers in legal services and we didn't know what they were doing, what programs they were in. Grants were four to six months behind in refunding."

This chaos and disorder, and the complaints of local officials who were prodded by OEO community action programs, impressed the Nixon White House far more than the stated goals of the anti-poverty agency. Rumsfeld was in the middle.

"He was under pressure at OEO, which had become a symbol for the Democrats

and for the poor," recalls White House personnel director Walker, a Chicago attorney whom Rumsfeld brought in to help in the OEO legal counsel's office. "He tried to change the focus of OEO from grantsman to social science research laboratory. It was Rumsfeld's view that the OEO programs, if properly directed, could reflect the best interests of the American people. We felt the White House was not taking adequate account of that. We were playing both ends—that's why we kept being caught in crunches."

The OEO experience, perhaps more than any other, reveals Rumsfeld's ambivalent pragmatism and his fundamental conviction that honest administration of the process can resolve basic differences.

Looking back on his days as OEO director, Rumsfeld says: ". . . One of the very things that was inherent in the design of the OEO programs, namely the targeting of the poor, tended to harden the crust and separated the poor from the nonpoor, rather than making the crust more porous so that there was an opportunity for mobility and inclusion of people who were somewhat separate from society.

"It's unfortunate that the effort did not produce more good for the country and that it didn't evolve in a way that was more acceptable to enough people that it could be sustained."

Others who were involved in the OEO struggles suggest that the missing ingredient was neither program design nor popular acceptance but Nixon's unwillingness to sustain the anti-poverty program.

Lenzner recalls a White House prayer breakfast that he and his wife attended where Nixon, with Rumsfeld looking on, said to him, "You're the guy who is causing all the problems over

there. Well, Rumsfeld is protecting your ass."

Soon thereafter, Rumsfeld fired Lenzner.

And Walker, who thinks that Lenzner should have been fired and that Rumsfeld demonstrated toughness and integrity at OEO, wonders if Rumsfeld and those around him were not naive about the intentions of the White House.

"I don't think any of us realized in that period that there was a conscious, planned and deliberate effort to dismantle OEO," Walker says.

When that dismantlement came, Rumsfeld was long gone and serving as NATO ambassador in Brussels.

Next: reshaping the White House