

A Nixon Lieutenant Since 1946

Murray M (for 'Absolutely Nothing') Chotiner

By RICHARD L. MADDEN
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WASHINGTON, Oct. 11— It was only about half an hour before he was to go to the studio to make his television speech in 1952 explaining a political fund that had been set up by his supporters, Richard M. Nixon wrote in his book "Six Crises." Suddenly, Gov. Thomas E. Dewey of New York called to say that the top Eisenhower advisers thought Mr. Nixon should resign as the Republican candidate for Vice President.

Man
in the
News

A shaken Mr. Nixon, collecting his thoughts and his notes on what to say on the broadcast, recalled in his book that a few minutes later he was irritated when Murray M. Chotiner, his campaign manager, interrupted him.

"Bluntly, he plunged right in," Mr. Nixon said of Mr. Chotiner. "'Dick,' he said, 'a good campaign manager must never be seen or heard. But if you're kicked off this ticket, I'm going to break that rule. I'm going to call the biggest damn press conference that's ever been held. I'm going to have television present. And I'm going to tell everybody who called who, what was said — names and everything.'

"Would you really do that?" I asked.

"Sure I'd do it," he answered. "Hell, we'd be through with politics anyway. It wouldn't make any difference then."

Mr. Nixon went on to say that Mr. Chotiner's "develop-care attitude, so uncharacteristic of him, had broken the tension and given me a needed lift."

That was 18 years ago and neither Mr. Nixon nor Mr. Chotiner can be said today to be through with politics.

Political Liaison Man

Sitting in his office in the east wing of the White House, the 61-year-old Mr. Chotiner, now a special counsel to President Nixon, is the White House political liaison man with Republicans in 31 states, including New York, in this fall's election.

It was Mr. Chotiner's let-



Associated Press

Controversial confidant

ters to New Yorkers who sought guidance on the Senate race that have been interpreted, as a subtle endorsement of James L. Buckley, the Conservative party candidate, over Senator Charles E. Goodell, the Republican incumbent. Mr. Chotiner's letters said Mr. Nixon was neutral in the race but expressed confidence that the voters would elect a Senator "who will work in harmony with the Nixon Administration."

Taking More Visible Role

While he is not known for making personal appearances, Mr. Chotiner seems to have become slightly more visible recently.

After Vice President Agnew opened his recent attack on Senator Goodell and there was speculation whether Mr. Agnew was speaking for himself or for the White House:

"I don't know how any man who is the Vice President of the United States could be said to be merely speaking for himself. He is the Vice President of the United States, next to the Chief Executive, and obviously what he says is significant."

Over breakfast with a group of reporters recently,

Mr. Chotiner also made a rather startling comment for a Republican political agent. Asked about the Senate race in Wyoming in which Representative John I. Wold, a Republican, is running against Senator Gale W. McGee, a Democrat. "I would rather not comment on that one because Senator McGee has been very cooperative with the Administration," Mr. Chotiner said.

Technician or Hatchet Man?

Mr. Chotiner, a stocky man whose straight black hair is beginning to gray, has been described by his friends as "the perfect political technician" and by his enemies as "the complete political hatchet man."

He once made a speech on campaign tactics to a Republican workshop in 1955 that the Democrats thought so good they mailed it to their workers. The speech said in part: "I believe in all sincerity that if you do not deflate the opposition candidate before your own campaign gets started, the odds are you are doomed to defeat."

And as for the difference between "deflating" and "smearing," he continued: "I believe it is a smear to attack an individual on matters that have no relationship whatsoever to the campaign . . . but it is not a smear if you point out the record of your opponent."

Mr. Chotiner was one of Mr. Nixon's earliest, closest and most controversial political advisers.

Born in Pittsburgh Oct. 4, 1909, Mr. Chotiner has lived in California almost continuously since 1921 and received his law degree in 1929 from Southwestern University in Los Angeles.

He says that his middle initial, M, stands for "absolutely nothing." He acquired it in grammar school when he was asked for his middle name or initial and he decided to put down "M," since that was the first letter of his first name.

His home is in Newport Beach, Calif. He is married to the former Mimi Nemeth and they have three children. Until he underwent a back operation, he was a golfer and tennis player.

He now describes his hobbies as "civic endeavors."