

Nixons Like Privacy in

By Donnie Radcliffe
Washington Post Staff Writer

For many, the image of the public Richard Nixon is that of a decisive, efficient, complex, determined, capable, controlled, formal, reserved, somewhat austere self-made man turned statesman.

Also for many, the public image of Mrs. Nixon is the non-controversial, proper and gracious hostess and reserved, well-groomed and devoted wife and mother.

Mr. Nixon's critics call him a "plastic man," isolated, humorless, manipulative and secretive, more concerned by how tall he will look in tomorrow's history books than by how revealing he is to his contemporaries.

They call his wife "papier-mache Pat," an enigma of tight little smiles, cool detachment, superficial awareness and endless receiving line banalities.

So who are the real Mr. and Mrs. Richard Milhous Nixon? Greatly concerned with presenting to the country what they consider proper images of the President and his lady, they have allowed few glimpses of their private lives.

Are the private Nixons as rigid and colorless as the public Nixons are portrayed?

Only their family and a few intimates can really answer those questions. Still, there have been clues, some offered by the Nixons themselves—intentionally at times, unwittingly at others.

From them can be fleshed a man and woman whose oft-voiced identity with Middle America may not be far wrong.

Pat Nixon has called her husband "the easiest man in the world to live with," describing a spouse and father whose domestic moods are never "bad," whose needs for solitude are solved when "we simply move off for a time."

For Mr. Nixon, it's usually off to the Lincoln Sitting Room where his substantial tape and record collection reveals an eclectic taste in music: classical, semi-classical and popular, ranging from martial airs, big bands and Broadway show tunes to symphonies, piano concertos and operas.

THE WASHINGTON POST

an 'Extrovert's'

Saturday, Jan. 20, 1973

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Job

A sampling of titles: "Victory at Sea," "The 1812 Overture," "The World's Great Piano Music," "The Big Band Era 1936-44."

"He likes his opera full force," according to his wife. "That's the way he relaxes."

Music may well be important to the "private" Mr. Nixon. He was second violinist in high school and credits the "discipline" of practice, rehearsal and memorization as aids to his political career.

A sometime composer whose works remain unpublished and undiscovered by Tin Pan Alley, Mr. Nixon sight reads and plays by ear. "Sometimes when I'm in my room I'll hear this burst of music and come out to find Dick at the piano," says Mrs. Nixon.

In art, he is less accomplished though possessed of what Mrs. Nixon calls "a wonderful eye for everything—he can go in, see something and know whether it's good even though he's never really studied it."

She says he "loves" color and prefers her to wear vibrant ones. He maintains a suntan, tucks his reading glasses out of sight. When it comes to sartorial selection, he sticks to the dark-suited

"straight" look Middle America knows, relieved only by frequent changes in small print ties. "I can only wear them once or twice," he said on his 60th birthday.

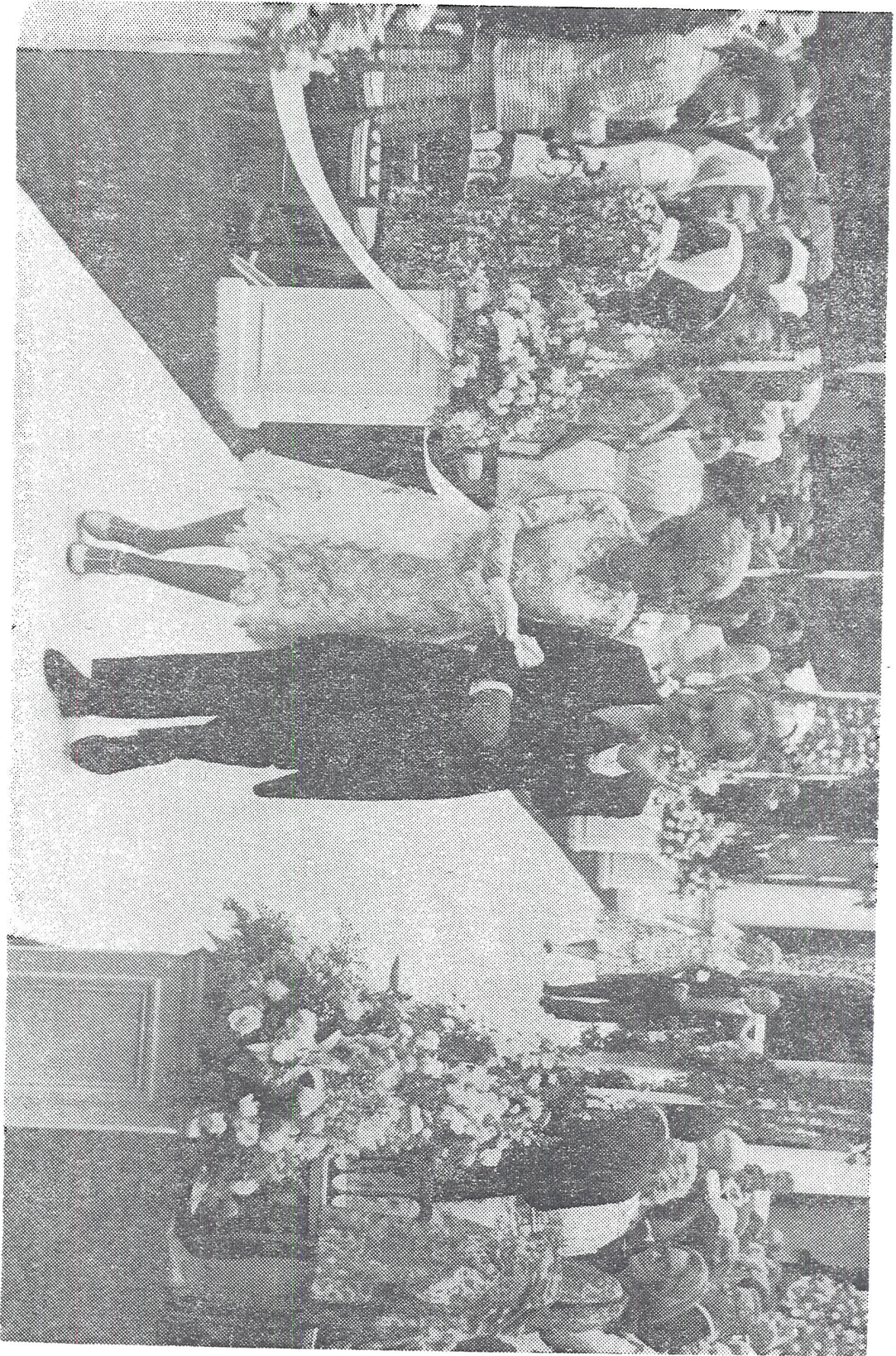
Unlike Harry Truman and his splashy Hawaiian sport shirts, LBJ in his 10-gallon cowboy duds or John Kennedy as the rumpled beach-comber, Mr. Nixon turns up at Key Biscayne or San Clemente band-box crisp and pointedly presidential. The seal of that office is neatly stitched to his conservative blue windbreakers (and "The President" is prominently stenciled on his pool-side director's chair).

Mr. Nixon, the sportsman, is also widely known as Mr. Nixon, the football nut who was such a loyal bench-warmer as a Whittier College scrub that a Whittier coach years later gave Mr. Nixon the bench itself.

His addiction for telephone congratulations and advice to coaches and players failed to help Don Shula. When Shula's Miami Dolphins lost the 1972 Super Bowl, all he would say was the razzle-dazzle (down and in) play Mr. Nixon had suggested cost his team yardage.

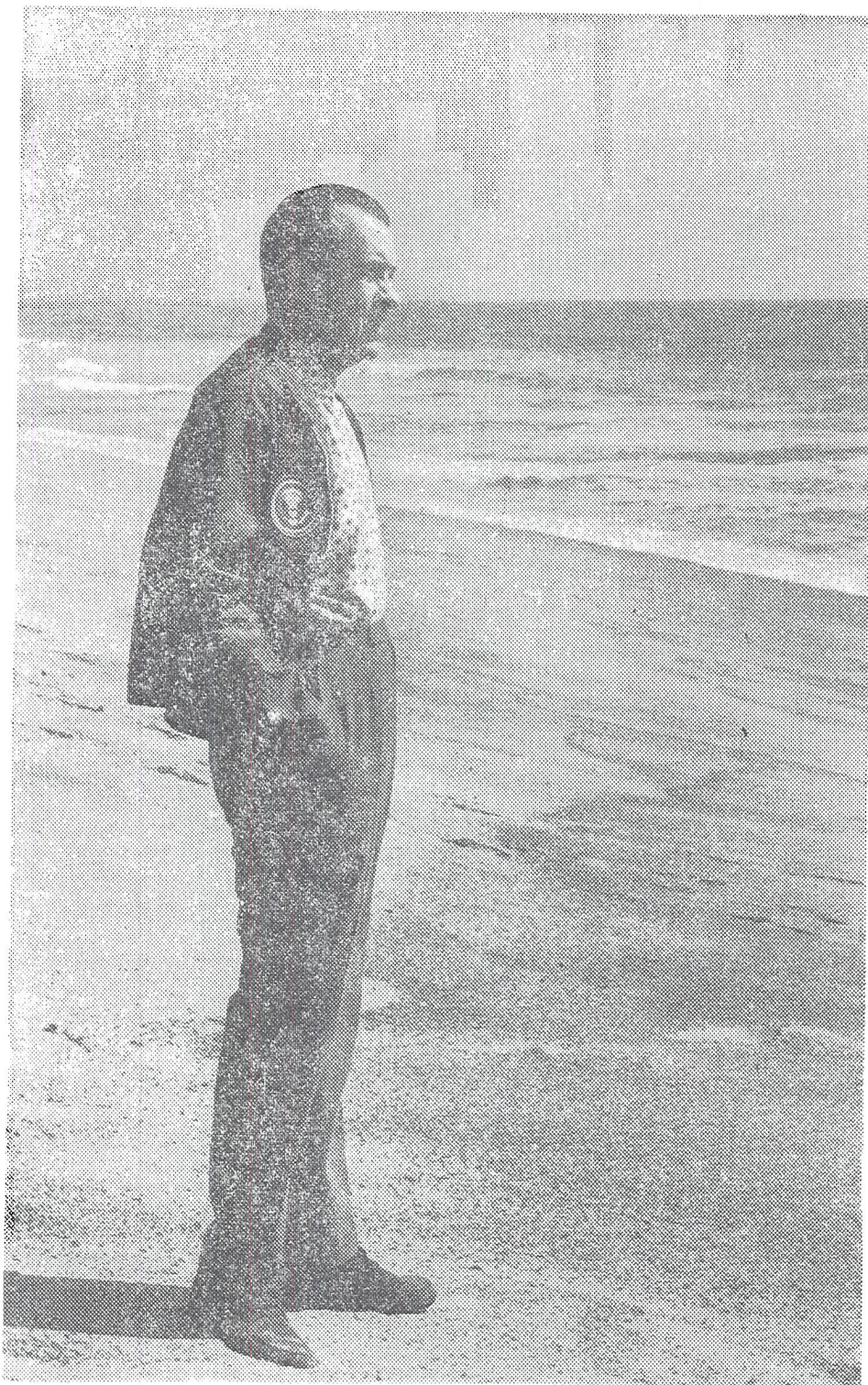
Mr. Nixon rooted for his hometown Redskins in last Sunday's Super Bowl (instead of his hometown Dolphins). Shula's pre-game comment: "I'm sure glad he's on the other side this year."

Just as conservative an athlete as he is a clothes horse, Mr. Nixon has dropped bowling and golf ("a



The First Family walks down the aisle at the White House Rose Garden during wedding of daughter Tricia and Edward Finch Cox.

United Press International



White House Photo

The President relaxes on the beach near San Clemente, Calif., vacation house.

waster of time," he once said), has cut in half his daily in-place running (to 200 times) and gets all the exercise he wants from occasional dips in Biscayne Bay or the pool of his Catoctin mountain retreat, Camp David.

The private Nixons are insatiable movie fans. Among recent favorites have been "Young Winston," "Nicholas and Alexandra," "Sounder" and "Patton," whose countless White House screenings included one only a few days before the 1970 Cambodian invasion.

They stick to non-controversial re-runs of the past—"Three Coins in a Fountain," "The Hanging Tree," "San Francisco" and just last week, at Mr. Nixon's family birthday party, "The Maltese Falcon." As Mr. Nixon told a Hollywood crowd last fall, "We've shown an hour of an R-rated movie and that's as far as we're going to go." He did not elaborate.

The private Nixons are loners. He seeks what palship he needs from a few close friends, among them real estate investor Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo; Robert Abplanalp, New York industrialist and inventor of the spray-can valve; Hobart Lewis, Readers Digest editor-in-chief. They team up in front of a Camp David television set, aboard Rebozo's Biscayne Bay houseboat or on Abplanalp's Bahamian island.

Mrs. Nixon's friends are even less visible. Her closest

confidante, Mrs. Jack Drown of Rolling Hills, Calif., wife of a lawyer turned businessman, slips in and out of the White House. They and their husbands have a comfortable friendship going back to less affluent days when Mrs. Drown taught social studies and Mrs. Nixon taught commercial subjects at Whittier High School.

Mrs. Nixon's closest Washington friend is Louise Johnson, wife of former presidential special assistant Roger E. Johnson, one-time oil company representative and lawyer who first met Mr. Nixon when he was still in college at Whittier.

Another Nixon family friend, retired millionaire Elmer Bobst, has described their private evenings together: "I may have two or three drinks . . . to his one. We discuss serious matters, the state of the United States and the world."

The public Mr. Nixon's "official" friends for unofficial functions are legion. For golf, until he gave it up: personalities like Bob Hope, James Stewart, Fred MacMurray and on one occasion last summer, AFL-CIO President George Meaney; for football talk: Redskins coach George Allen in Washington and Dolphins coach Don Shula in Florida; for politics: Sammy Davis, Jr.; for spiritual events: the Rev. Norman Vincent Peale and the Rev. Billy Graham, probably the one person, in 1969, who made the smoothest White House transition of all—he was houseguest

on LBJ's last night in residence and stayed on for RMN's first night there.

In the public White House social limelight, the Nixons have emerged as gracious hosts who do their homework, recalling information about their guests that even they had forgotten. At their first reception for Washington's diplomatic corps, the Ambassador from Ceylon reminded the President they had met in 1955. Mr. Nixon politely but firmly corrected him; it had been two years earlier.

An example of Mr. Nixon's intentness on doing things right came on Inauguration Day in 1969.

As Lyndon Johnson strode out of a small but powerful bipartisan congressional group drinking coffee in the Red Room, Richard Nixon hurried to catch up. Stealing a glance at the President's feet, Mr. Nixon shuffled into step and after a moment of uncertainty, moved to Mr. Johnson's left.

Once in position, the "public" Mr. Nixon, smiling and audibly relieved that "I've got my protocol right this time," observed to himself, but loud enough for a reporter to hear, "The President is on the right."

Programmed protocol and propriety have characterized the Nixon's official entertaining. And conversational ingredients have been added by others. Sometimes they were what someone wore (Joan Kennedy in see-through blouse or the Australian Prime Minister's wife in revealing thigh-high slit evening gown). And sometimes by what someone did (the singer who pulled a "Stop the Bombing" banner from her plunging neckline).

Socially ill-at-ease and wary of small talk, the public Mr. Nixon's attempts at light banter sometimes misfire.

In 1969 at San Clemente, the President jokingly warned newsmen not to filch ashtrays when he invited them out for a tour of his then-new home overlooking the Pacific.

The night of the party, the White House press corps arrived bearing a gift (an antique ashtray) and ceremoniously made a poolside presentation. The laughter was polite but a bit ragged when the public Mr. Nixon held up the package, shook it and quipped: "You can tell it's expensive because it's so light."

His remarks drew a wry footnote from the private Mrs. Nixon, standing apart near a reporter: "My, how grateful."

Never quite one of "the girls," which she calls her



United Press International

Nation's first fan pays surprise visit to favorite team during practice session.



Associated Press

Sammy Davis Jr. admires his presidential candidate after Nixon renomination.

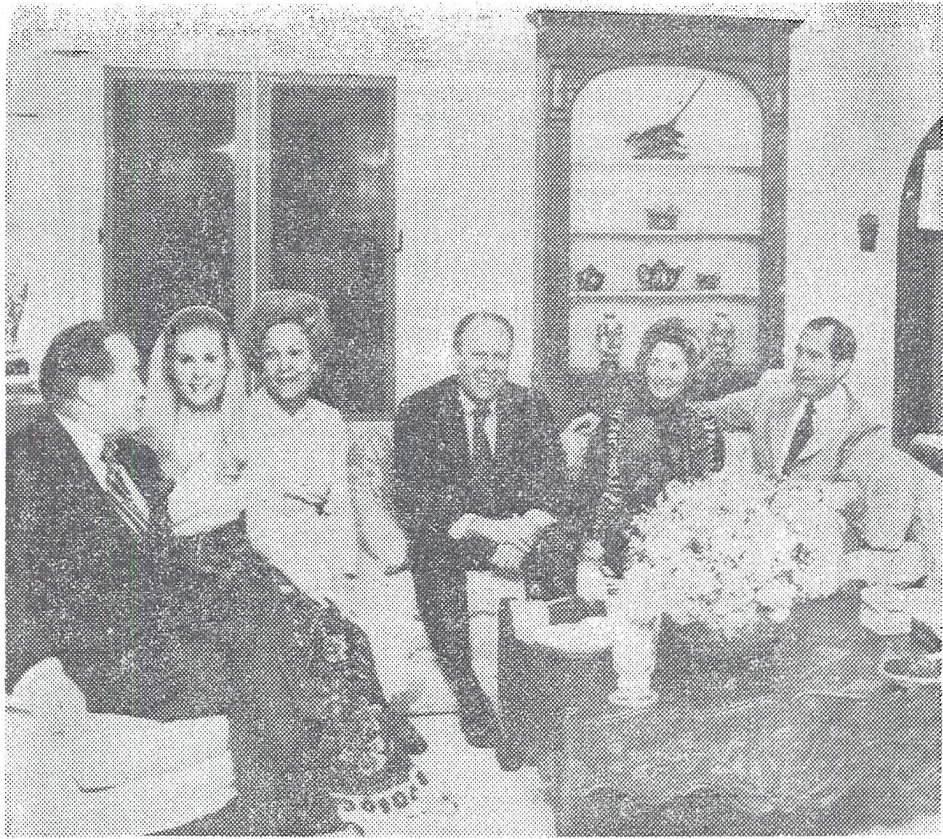
own White House press corps, and almost school-marmish on occasions when she presides, Mrs. Nixon nevertheless laughs easily, often resorts to slang and is approachable.

A "toucher" whose hugs and hand holds come spontaneously, she can communicate a unique personal warmth that the public is likely to see most often in her contacts with children.

She is companion and confidante of her daughters Julie Nixon Eisenhower and Tricia Nixon Cox. And on nights at home, may whistle up an aide to fill out an "en famille" Swiss steak dinner and evening of monopoly where protocol is forgotten.

She guards her privacy as zealously as her husband does his.

Mr. Nixon once described his wife as "a very shy person" who "steels herself for her public duties" by putting up a bold front. And in Garry Wills' book, "Nixon Agonistes," Mr. Nixon is quoted as describing himself as "an introvert in an extrovert's profession."



United Press International

Visiting President and family are Bob Hope and Rep. and Mrs. Gerald Ford (R-Mich.).



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Nixons return to Andrews Air Force Base from 12,000-mile trip of European countries.