

See also "The Nixon Charisma,"
by Guy Wright, SFX 13 Jan 74,
filed Watergate.

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"Writer on Nixon Says He's Harassed."

cover story:

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Richard Nixon Through the Eyes
of a Young Psychiatrist
by Lloyd Shearer

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Psychiatrist Eli Chesen, above, author of new book, says President Nixon's mental health is fairly good, that he can endure much stress, but that an "obsession for control" made him tape his conversations.

Richard Nixon Through the Eyes of a Young Psychiatrist

by Lloyd Shearer

PHOENIX, ARIZ.

Richard Nixon is an obsessive-compulsive personality.

What is an obsessive-compulsive personality?

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association: "This behavior pattern is characterized by excessive concern with conformity and adherence to standards of conscience. Con-

sequently, individuals in this group may be rigid, overinhibited, overconscientious, overdutiful, and unable to relax easily."

The above information is just a starter on what's available in a perhaps oversimplified but nevertheless provocative and stimulating book, *President Nixon's Psychiatric Profile*, written by a brilliant, 29-year-old psychiatrist, Dr. Eli Chesen, who is currently en route to the Nellis

Air Force Base outside Las Vegas, Nev., to pull two years of military service.

Dr. Chesen, a tall, wavy-haired, brown-eyed Iowan from Sioux City, has never met Nixon. "But I've read most of the books written about him. I've read his own *Six Crises* three times. I've watched the Watergate hearings day and night. I've observed and studied him carefully in his television appearances. I would classify myself as a well-

read Nixon-watcher. And I think that what I've written about him is valid and reasonably accurate.

"I am no Nixon-hater," Chesen declares, "I've voted for him and against him, and I also voted for Barry Goldwater. I wrote this book because I became tremendously frustrated during the Watergate hearings, watching and listening to TV commentators ask so many rhetorical questions beginning with the word 'why' and then not answering them."

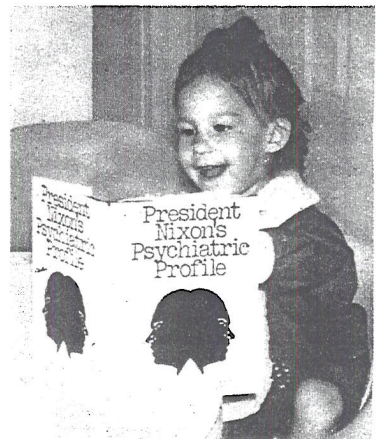
Chesen concedes that there are some aspects of his book which are necessarily speculative. After all, Richard Nixon was never his patient. "But I think," he adds, "that my margin of error is small. Nixon's personality is not one of openness and candor and in my judgment if Nixon did go to a psychiatrist, he wouldn't reveal very much of himself in the short term of, say, a year.

'The ultimate mechanism'

"The ultimate mechanism for Nixon is to maintain absolute control of himself and his environment. Did you see him on TV at the Associated Press Managing Editors' convention in Disney World? He wanted so badly to discuss the milk deal that when the newsmen in the audience refused to ask him about it before their time was up, he insisted upon continuing the program anyway and bringing it up himself.

"This obsession for control is not necessarily bad," Chesen explains. "In fact, it's probably accounted for much of his success. One very positive way Nixon has gained control of himself and his environment is by his striving for omniscience, which the dictionary defines as all-knowing.

"If you know everything about everything then there's no uncertainty in it for you. Nixon has always believed in thorough preparation. It's this striving



"My Daddy the psychiatrist." Daughter Chelsea, 2, seems to enjoy the book.

for omniscience which pushed him towards excellence. He's a man of very high raw intelligence, a bright man who thinks quickly on his feet . . . almost everything Nixon does, he does very well.

"He believes in leaving no stone unturned. He cannot afford to lose a detail. This, again, goes towards omniscience. He wants history, his memoirs, or whatever, to be perfectly accurate. But he also wants to contrive history, to make sure history presents him in good light, so he has his offices bugged.

'Make yourself sound good'

"If you know you're being taped and your visitors do not, there's no question but that this alters your approach to your visitors. You make yourself sound good or wise or prudent.

"Nixon's office guests didn't know it, but they were literally on 'Candid Mike,' while Nixon, aware that everything was being taped, could always show his best side. Thus, in recording his own history, Nixon occupied the position of control and contrivance—not only of his past and present, but of his future as well.

"You see, when you're recording somebody without his knowledge, you're exercising power over that person. I think that's one of the basic, underlying mechanisms of Nixon's personality—knowledge plus intelligence equals power. If one had to oversimplify the entire Watergate scandal, the formula which led to it, one would find that the men behind it believed that information equals power. Find out what the Democratic Party is doing, and you can de-fuse the opposition."

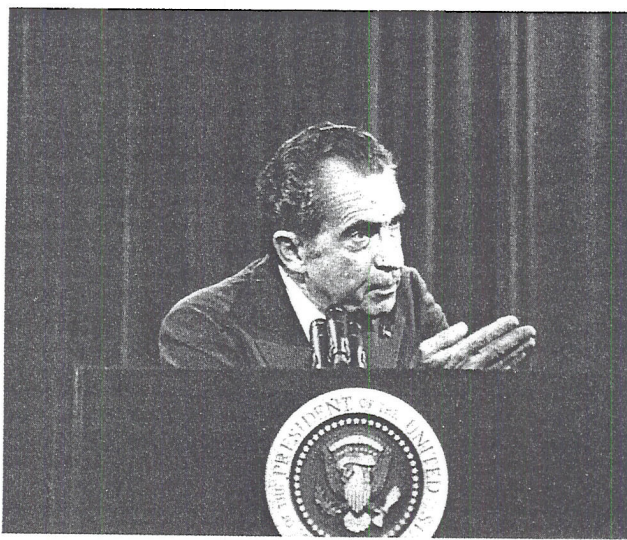
Chesen believes that Nixon's major weaknesses are his rigidity and his strong fear of losing control of himself in any interpersonal relationship.

'Tremendously insecure'

"Nixon, in my judgment," he maintains, "cannot afford to let anyone get too close to him. He regards that as a threat, which is why he so viscerally dislikes the press and the TV newsmen. These are the people who probe and dig and research and investigate. The true Nixon is tremendously insecure. He shows it almost every time he speaks.

"When the reporters ask about his income tax or why he had his brother wiretapped by the Secret Service, he becomes flustered. Questions about his San Clemente estate, his friendship with Bebe Rebozo, these threaten the image of his personal integrity which is exceedingly fragile to begin with. That's when he begins to lose some of his control.

"When it comes to affairs of state, however, the Vietnam war, China or the Soviet Union—his control is almost absolute. He can quickly identify the



Richard Nixon has been a debater and orator ever since his days at Whittier High School in California. Inhibitive by nature, he finds it difficult to be open, candid, warm and friendly with his audience. He handles prepared talks masterfully, but sometimes blows at personal inquiries.



enemy and attach his aggressions onto an enemy and in a sweep of patriotism call upon the nation to back him. That's why international crises serve him so well.

"But personal crises comprise another story. They find him fearful and insecure. As to the origins of that insecurity, I'm sure they have something to do with his childhood. He was born into a family of economic insecurity. He almost died of pneumonia at age 3 or 4 and in a buggy accident as well. Two of his brothers died. He was separated from his mother for long periods of time when she was trying to nurse his sick brother in Arizona back to health.

"Economically Nixon's father Frank was a failure, and I'm sure this bothers

Nixon. It may explain his gravitation towards Bebe Rebozo and Bob Abplanalp. The Nixon relationship with these two wealthy men may well be a father-son relationship. They've helped him financially. That's one of the things a father does for his son. Nixon's own father couldn't do that, and I think that Nixon always had a great fear of turning out like his father. Much of his striving and industry may be related to avoiding that possibility.

"Nixon hired a man like H. R. Haldeman as his chief of staff because Haldeman has personality aspects which complement certain Nixon deficits. Haldeman protected Nixon's shell of secrecy.

"Ehrlichman in his own way per-

formed a similar function. While Haldeman augmented Nixon's control of himself and his obsession with secrecy, Ehrlichman seemed to augment Nixon's feeling of grandiosity. The Ehrlichman quote which still amazes me is one which says the effect that Nixon is the government. People like Ehrlichman, Haldeman, Billy Graham, all these people have an undeniable symbiosis with Nixon's personality.

Loss of aides hurts

"I think much of Nixon's great strength in the past few months is the result of losing Haldeman and Ehrlichman.

"But Nixon is capable of bearing tremendous strain, and I would be surprised if under the current pressure he'll resign.

"If he feels he can ride out the next three years he will ride them out. I do not think he will resign.

"On the other hand, if it appears that impeachment and consequent trial by the Senate is imminent, my belief is that he will resign before he lets that happen. Not to save the country from anguish. The country's already undergoing anguish, but rather to maintain control to the very end. He is not going to have somebody force him out of office. He may attribute a resignation to physical illness which would impair his control mechanism. But the man is stubborn, tenacious fighter."

The overall view

Unlike some psychiatrists, Chesen does not believe Nixon is paranoid or highly pathological man. He believes his mental health is fairly good.

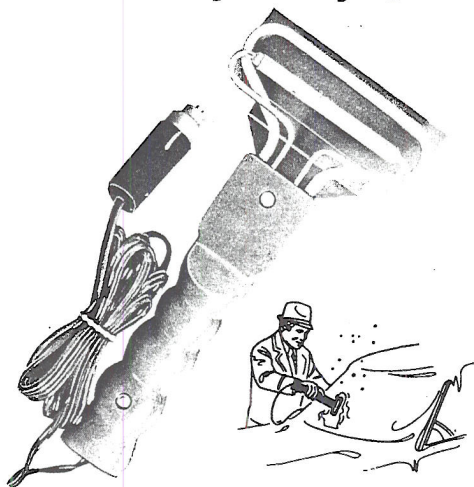
"In researching him," he says, "I didn't find him a highly interesting man, just a highly insecure one. It's difficult for me to believe that Nixon would ever consult a psychiatrist. He would find tremendous danger in having his mind read. To him that constitutes the ultimate threat. I've dealt with patients like Nixon, not anybody of his high office, but I've treated patients who have his obsessive-compulsive personality, and you have to be very open and patient with them. It will be most interesting to see what he does when he leaves office. Most probably he will write his memoirs. But I don't think his will be nearly as fascinating as Ehrlichman's.

"Of all the men Nixon had in the White House, John Ehrlichman, in my opinion, is the most clever. Just watching him in the Watergate hearings convinced me that he is the most clever, evasive person I've ever seen. Haldeman did an unbelievable job in claiming amnesia, 'I don't remember . . . can't recall, etc.," but Ehrlichman in no

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Recent family portrait: Dr. Chesen with wife Peggy and Chelsea shortly before he left for Nellis Air Force base outside Las Vegas to put in two years' military service.

PSYCHIATRIST CONTINUED

answering questions was a positive genius.

"Nixon knew what he was doing all right in surrounding himself with those two loyalists."

Eli Chesen was born and reared in Sioux City—"I'm just an Iowa farm boy," the third child of four born to a Russian immigrant and a local Iowa girl, Edith Skalowsky.

The family

Chesen was educated in the local schools, received his degrees from the University of Nebraska, then served his residency at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Phoenix. He has been married for six years to the former Peggy Blue of Tecumseh, Nebr. They have one daughter, Chelsea, 2, and another infant on the way.

This is his second book. His first, *Religion May Be Hazardous to Your Health*, sold 6000 copies in the hard-back edition, is now out in paperback.

It took Chesen six weeks to write *President Nixon's Psychiatric Profile*, but "that was after I spent years researching the man. I really don't consider myself a writer. I'm one of these people who does all the research and everything first, then I just pour it out."

Chesen, like his colleague, Dr. Louis I. Bruno, who's written an epilogue to the book, believes that a mental health report should be part of a candidate's public biography. Not that anyone

should accept such reports as gospel. They simply should be added to a candidate's total profile.

For example, the two most important statements in Chesen's book are probably these:

1. "A great deal of Nixon's psychological security as a competent person depends heavily on his ability to maintain control of all situations affecting him.

2. "Nixon has a tremendous revulsion to submission and fear of authority—traceable to childhood dealings with his father and other figures of authority."

How accurate are they?

Whether such opinions are valid is immaterial; at least they should be made available. Psychiatric profiles, of course, have been used by the intelligence branches of the U.S. government since World War II. The most recently and widely publicized one is the CIA psychiatric profile of Daniel Ellsberg which was so flattering that Nixon's plumbers squad refused to accept it and instead broke into the Beverly Hills office of Dr. Lewis Fielding, Ellsberg's psychiatrist, in a bungled effort to find more critical and damaging material.

In Phoenix, at the Good Samaritan Hospital where Dr. Chesen until recently was hard at work, a colleague commented half-humorously:

"If Nixon reads Eli's book, I can see Eli spending the next two years up at Sitka, Alaska, or Thule airbase in Greenland."