

New Key Aide

Nixon's Man On the Clarinet

By Lawrence Meyer
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It is perhaps a mark of the relative obscurity of Leonard Garment — the clarinet-playing White House aide named by President Nixon yesterday to replace White House Counsel John W. Dean III temporarily—that his name does not even appear in the current *Who's Who in America*.

Garment — variously described as the "house liberal" in the Nixon administration, the president's contact to the Black, Jewish and other minority communities, a "nice guy" the philosopher in the White House, a contemplative man — is also something of a Cinderella in the corridors of Washington power.

The 48-year-old Garment was one of the few advisers to whom the president turned for advice on handling the Watergate affair in recent days. He also had been one of a tiny handful of men with whom Richard Nixon spoke during his political exile in the mid-1960s, even though Garment openly supported John F. Kennedy in 1960. Garment was then head of the litigation section of the law firm of Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie and Alexander.

FRIENDS

"They became friends," Theodore White wrote in the "Making of the President in 1968." "Nixon would go to Garment's home in Brooklyn and as Garment played the clarinet, Nixon would thump on the piano."

They seemed so different — Nixon, the Quaker from Southern California who seemed somehow uncomfortable in the big cities of the east, and Garment, a Brooklyn Jew who found the cultural and intellectual life of New York exhilarating.

On the other hand, they had much in common.

Nixon the candidate in 1968, Garment worked on the campaign.

After the campaign, Garment worked on transition problems as part of the task force that plotted the future course of the Nixon Administration from the Pierre Hotel in New York.

Garment, according to one Republican who met him in early 1968 and has become friendly, "wanted very much to go into the government and there were people who didn't want him there." Among those "people," according to this source, were H. R. (Bob) Haldeman and John R. Ehrlichman.

ACTION

Garment found himself on the outside looking in, wanted to be part of the action and, finally, asked the president for a job inside the White House.

Garment was named special consultant to the president, a title that in no way describes the variety of jobs he has undertaken.

In broad form, Garment's role in the White House has been to handle minority and civil rights problems and to be a good shepherd for the performing arts.

In announcing yesterday that Garment "will represent the White House in all matters relating to the Watergate investigation and will report directly to me," the president made official what has been a reality during the turmoil of the past two weeks.

The president has been consulting regularly with Garment on the Watergate affair.

And Garment, one of the White House aides whose name was never mentioned in connection with the scandal, has been advocating the sort of general housecleaning that Mr. Nixon undertook yesterday, according to reliable sources.

But if Garment,

had a liberal intent, he was not always as effective as civil rights groups wanted him to be.

One white Civil Rights leader put it this way:

"What his role really has been is to defuse the liberal community, a place to go without really being effective. Len Garment was there to take care of them. He lost a fantastic amount of credibility, frankly. On the other hand, he was very useful. We got lots of results out of him. He's had a kind of mixed life."

Both came from relatively poor families. Mr. Nixon worked his way through Whittier College and Duke University Law School. Garment played his clarinet in jazz bands, including Woody Herman's, to pay his way through Brooklyn College and Brooklyn Law School.

Both were lawyers with an appreciation for the precision of the law.

According to a wide variety of sources, they established a close rapport.

When Nixon the lawyer decided again to become