

Ehrlichman Focus Of a Coast Dispute

NYTimes By STEVEN V. ROBERTS MAY 21 1973
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SANTA MONICA, Calif., May 20—Several years ago John D. Ehrlichman, class of 1942, was selected for the Hall of Fame at Santa Monica High School, and his picture was placed on a wall of the history building alongside such luminaries as Glenn Ford, the actor, of 1934, and Ernest C. Arbuckle, a banking executive, class of 1929.

At the time, Mr. Ehrlichman was President Nixon's chief adviser for domestic affairs. Last month he resigned that post after being accused of taking a major role in covering up the Watergate scandal.

A group of students, outraged at daily reports of lying and deception coming out of Washington, brought the matter before the cabinet of the Associated Student

on the Western edge of Los Angeles.

The incident, perhaps small in itself, illustrates how Watergate, after being ignored for so long, is now intruding into the public consciousness. Yesterday the Gallup Poll reported that, for the first time since the early nineteen-fifties, "corruption in government" had become a "major issue" in the country.

One segment of the Santa Monica community termed the students' action "premature." Porter Leach, the vice principal of "Samohi," the local acronym for the school, commented, "It shouldn't even be considered until charges are brought against him and tried in court."

The local newspaper, The Evening Outlook, published an editorial titled "McCarthyism at Samohi?" Mike Stephenson, the school yelling king, charged, "We're convicting him before he was convicted."

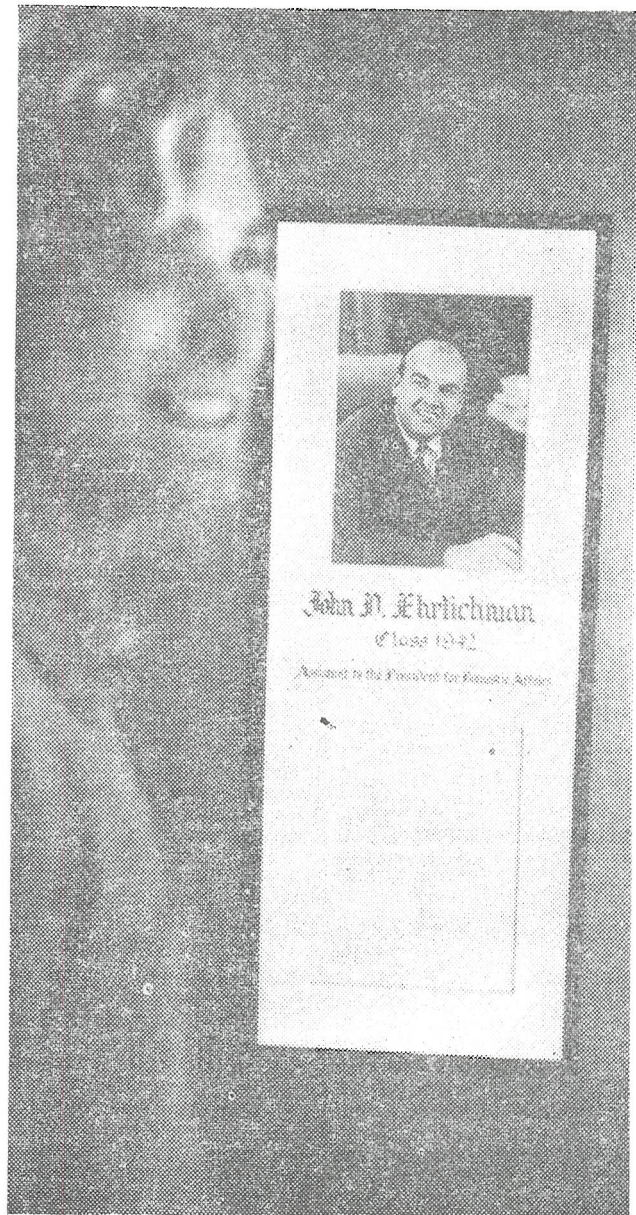
"We're not convicting anybody of anything," retorted Karen Searles, the secretary of the student government. "But Mr. Ehrlichman has not lived up to what he said he would. He's taken advantage of his position to do things others are not allowed to do, and I don't feel he's someone who should represent us."

Candy Arnold, a junior, commented, "He lied to the people, he disgraced the name of Samohi."

Anger and Cynicism

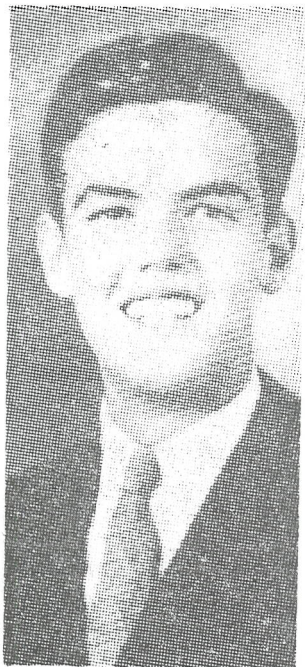
Beyond the issue of Mr. Ehrlichman's reputation, the students at Samohi and residents throughout the community are discussing the deeper issues raised by Watergate. The major reaction is a curious mixture of anger and cynicism. Many are surprised the scandal was uncovered. A few say that the press is maligning the Nixon Administration unfairly, but that is definitely a minority view.

"I'm thoroughly disgusted with the entire hierarchy of the Administration, and I'm a Republican—I voted for Dick Nixon every time he ran," said Mr. Leach, the stern, gray-haired vice principal. "If all we read in the papers is true, the people surrounding him have made a great error of judgment.



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Photograph of former Presidential adviser, John D. Ehrlichman, together with a letter from him on White House stationery, thanking Santa Monica High School for electing him to their Hall of Fame.



John D. Ehrlichman in the 1942 yearbook of Santa Monica High School.

Body. By a vote of 18 to 3, the cabinet urged the school to remove Mr. Ehrlichman's name from its Hall of Fame.

The request was reported by television stations and the news agencies and it stirred a controversy in this quiet, conservative community, which is perched on a bluff overlooking the Pacific

To think they had to get into this type of tactic to get an advantage on the Democrats; I think the whole thing has hurt the Republican party tremendously."

"Who Can You Trust"

Betty Greene, a senior, remarked, "I think its scary to think something like this can happen. People can just take over and do anything, make payoffs, sneak around, and we don't ever know. I think our reputation with other countries is totally ruined. They thought we stood for democracy and honesty, and now they find out about this."

Confusion and sadness

touched many of the comments. "If you can't trust the Government, who can you trust?" a shoe salesman asked.

"I think the man should be impeached," Larry Jackson a black Air Force pilot, said. "We have to get to the bottom of this, and the only way is to put Nixon on the stand."

Yet the outrage here is tempered with cynicism. "It's been like this all the time: politics is crooked," Dominic Rosso, a shoemaker, commented. "It just finally broke loose. Politicians start out honest, but once they get in, they have to follow the crowd."

To some, the corruption of politics exonerates the Republicans. "It's not that big a deal," said Kathy Russo, an airline stewardess. "I just think it's all the Democrats. Now that Vietnam is over they have to have something to undermine the President."

A receptionist in an optometrist's office added, "The press has too much to say too soon. I don't think the public needs to know everything."

Back at Samohi, Mrs. Margery Posner, a teacher of government, and Thomas Wood, whose specialty is American history, were discussing what their students might learn from Watergate.

"This scanday is different from what we've had before," said Mrs. Posner, an outspoken Democrat. "In the past people have wanted financial gain, but this time I don't know what they're after. They already had power."

Mr. Wood, a staunch Republican, replied, "Who has enough power? Did Hitler have enough power? I think we should wait until Ehrlichman's found guilty before doing anything, but I'm glad the kids are thinking about the issue. I think it will make them realize how valuable checks and balances and freedom of the press can be. Even with those we can run into trouble."