

Magruder's Hopeful

By Christopher Lydon
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Up the escalator and down, Jeb Stuart Magruder has seemed the classic, almost typical young Nixon assistant.

A California marketing man with a tennis-court tan, aggressive but likable, the father of four handsome children, he had managed the details of President Nixon's landslide campaign and looked destined, before his 38th birthday (last November 5), for a big-league political career of his own.

His downfall was equally steep. In April he muttered, "My whole life is over, I'm ruined," before blurting his Watergate confession to federal prosecutors.

"The walls were coming in on him," a friend said.

Magruder was a visibly, understandably nervous witness before inquiring senators and television cameras in the Watergate hearings yesterday.

Yet among friends for the past several weeks he has seemed once again the boyish go-getter, repentant but insistently upbeat about himself, prepared to go to prison but immersed, meanwhile, in business ventures, and still spouting management jargon even about the most personal aspects of his life.

In conversation the other day he spoke clinically of suicide as "a process" and as "one solution to a problem"—but one that he never considered himself.

MORAL

From his closest friends there have been glimpses of moral reflection on Magruder's part. The Rev. C. Blaney Colmore, an Episcopalian minister who spent hours "commiserating" with Magruder last winter and spring, observed in an interview that Jeb was "very relieved" when he admitted his guilt two months ago.

"I'll tell you the honest-

to-God truth," Colmore said. "I had the feeling from the first moment that he was dying to get caught. He was just miserable. Like so many guys in this administration, Jeb's a pragmatist. But he was unhappy, and that to me is an indication of how much he wanted to believe in his own integrity, how he feared it was coming unglued."

Julian Gillespie, a stockbroker and neighbor of Magruder in the comfortable Washington suburb of Sumner, Md., admires particularly the fact that "Jeb hasn't blamed anybody but himself." His mistake, as Gillespie interprets Magruder's introspection, was "the exercise of bad judgment" — something worse than a bad marketing decision but short of "moral failure."

Magruder's conversation does not dwell on guilt, nor excuses. He remarked earlier this week: "I've made peace with myself — it's corny, but we've all sinned, right? There's more rejoicing over the one lost sheep that is found, et cetera. I think I'll be able to survive and be better for it. I think I've been as down as I've ever been down, but I've never been the kind that stays down."

There was more than a little pragmatism in his decision to confess, Magruder has acknowledged. To have fought the prosecution and appealed a conviction might have taken two years and \$200,000 — money he does not have.

"So you go the other way," he said in explanation of his agreement to plead guilty to one felony count. "You cooperate, and get the decision over with, and then you move ahead."

It is a point of satisfaction, he has said, that of all the famous Watergate conspirators, he is the only one who is working, who has a business and income coming in.

Still, he hopes to move eventually from his one-man marketing consulting firm, called Metropolitan Re-

search, Inc., to a management job in a big company. And even after Watergate, he believes that his experience in the Nixon campaign will someday count in his favor.

"In spite of what's been said about poor old CREP,"

he said recently, pronouncing it "creep" as Democrats did when referring to the Committee for the Re-Election of the President "we did a hell of a good job. We got the message to our people, and we got them out to vote. The substantive work we did in that campaign — the work with computers, telephones, and direct mail — will be used as a model in the future."

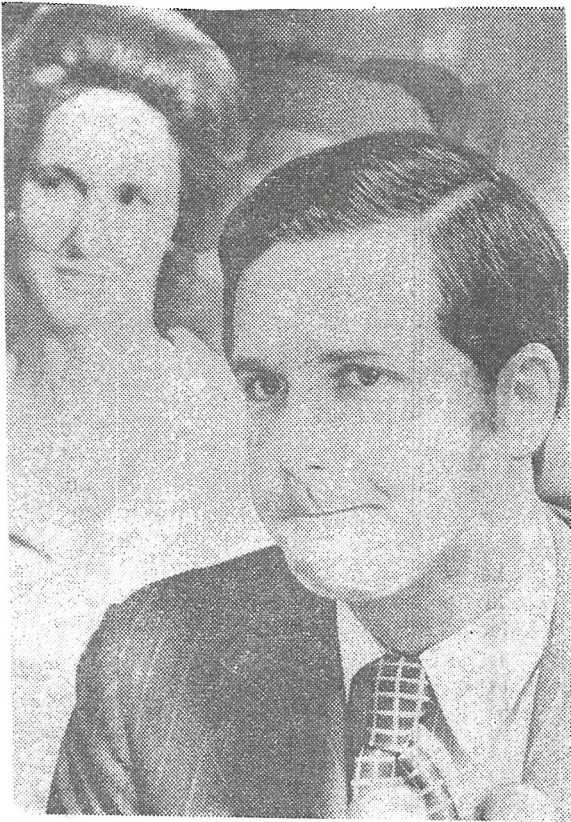
SCION

The scion of an old Maryland family, Magruder grew up on Staten Island in New York City where his father owned a modestly successful print shop. At Williams College (in the class of 1958) he focused on political science and, as he told the Senate committee yesterday, studied ethics with William Sloane Coffin, now the chaplain at Yale.

But even as an undergraduate he was intensely interested in sales, a classmate recalls. He had spent one college summer promoting cough medicines and also sold cosmetics to help pay his way. Married in 1959 to the former Gail Nicholas, a Vassar graduate, and a father in 1961, he worked his way to a business degree at the University of Chicago in 1963 and plunged into a marketing career with the Jewel Tea Co. and later with Broadway-Hale Stores, Inc. of Los Angeles.

By the fall of 1969, when he joined the White House staff, he was the president of two small, apparently promising cosmetic companies in Santa Monica, Calif. But his interest in politics, whetted by staff work in a variety of mostly conservative Republican campaigns, had displaced his business ambitions.

At the White House, where



AP Wirephoto

GAIL AND JEB MAGRUDER
'It's corny, but we've all sinned, right?'

Watergate trial, was that the erratic G. Gordon Liddy had planned the bugging on his own.

"Perhaps that was the key," said Magruder's tennis rival, Julian Gillespie, "simply that he got associat-

ed in that campaign with a lot of able, aggressive people and a situation in which each one was trying to outdo the other's zeal."

With that atmosphere, which Magruder helped to discredit further yesterday,

he was a deputy to Herbert G. Klein, the communications director, and later at the re-election committee, Magruder was clearly marked as a protegee of H. R. Haldeman, the Nixon chief-of-staff whom he had assisted in the 1968 campaign.

Colleagues recall him as — an apt, competitive, unoriginal practitioner of staff politics. Another former denizen of the White House mess remembers him dropping names of his superiors to heighten his own influence.

He was always regarded as a follower. Magruder himself seemed to confirm some of that yesterday, recalling that he had tentatively volunteered to "take the heat" for the Watergate break-in but that others had decided, in effect, that no one would believe Magruder was powerful enough to order the raid officially or eccentric enough to order it unofficially.

The agreed-on coverup story, for which Magruder perjured himself in the first

he was an eager competitor, not an independent voice. Until he saw the cover-up story unravelling late last winter, he said himself yesterday, it never occurred to him to tell the truth.