

# GOP Still Seeking a Challenger to Cranston

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Worried about Watergate? "Let me put it this way," a Republican senator replied. "I sleep like a baby. That is, I sleep for an hour. Then I wake up and cry for an hour."

Sen. Alan Cranston says a GOP colleague told him that tearful joke in Washington. The California Democrat recounted it to make a point in an interview here as he worked at the task of staying elected.

Cranston turned 59 on Tuesday. And the hard-running lawmaker appeared in excellent condition for what he views as two important events: this weekend's Senior Olympic Track Meet at UCLA — where he has been a winner before — and next year's California political marathon.

## Still Scratching

Republicans are still scratching for an entry to challenge the state's senior senator in the second event.

They aren't likely to produce a winning candidate at today's meeting of directors of the California Republican Assembly in Burlingame.

Those conservative volunteers have not taken part in the grand design of a U.S. Senate victory since 1964, when ex-White House press secretary Pierre Salinger was toppled from his short-term appointive perch in the

upper chamber by George Murphy, former Hollywood song-and-dance man who in turn lost the seat in 1970 to Democrat John V. Tunney.

## Problem Compounded

Watergate has compounded the state GOP's problem, along with Cranston's popularity and his standing on both sides of the aisle as an effective legislator.

Republican State Chairman Gordon Luce doesn't put much stock in any polls indicating Cranston would be hard to beat.

Luce, a San Diego savings and loan association president and a former Reagan Cabinet member, wants to avoid any impression that he or the governor might be playing kingmaker.

## Suggestion

Instead, Luce tossed off a casual suggestion in an interview the other day that Robert H. Finch or Houston I. Flournoy, or both, run for the Senate.

"I don't think Cranston has charisma," Luce says.

"I think either Finch or Flournoy could bring Cranston out of the comfort zone. Both are articulate, young and attractive."

Neither Finch nor Flournoy has yielded to the flattery.

Former White House adviser Finch was still playing Hamlet, agonizing over whether to leave his Los Angeles law office for another political fling.

Finch, a former lieutenant governor, has postponed his end-of-May deadline for a decision on whether to run for governor or senator.

Finch has not been implicated in the Watergate scandal. But some Republicans say his longtime close association with President Nixon might harm his chances at the polls.

Flournoy, a second-term state controller, says he has amassed a \$300,000 campaign fund. He says it will be spent running for governor — an office Reagan insists he will yield next year, despite pleas from some top-drawer Republicans that he run for a third term. Some rate Reagan as their only hope of beating a Democratic challenge.

Cranston, who once thought Reagan would be a 1974 candidate for the Senate, told The Examiner: "I've given up trying to guess who's going to run against me."

"I'll take whoever comes along."

"As for Watergate, it's bound to help my chances."

In Washington the Cranstons, by coincidence, live in a Watergate apartment. It's considered a choice address.