



JERRY VOORHIS
A 1939 photo

The No. 1 Nixon Hater

By Don Bacon
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SAN CLEMENTE—(NNS) —For nearly 30 years, a number of Americans have followed with strange fascination the amazing career of Richard Nixon. United by the one overall interest, they have been lubbed "The Nixon Haters."

Nixon has been aware of their existence since the budding of his political dream. For most of his political life, he has been compelled to glance over his shoulder to see who might be creeping up on him. It became, as the startling testimony of John W. Dean has laid out, an obsession.

Sitting in a Methodist retirement home near here is perhaps the nation's No. 1 "Nixon Hater," at least in terms of longevity. He is 72 year old Jerry Voorhis. Once a promising liberal Democratic congressman whose political hopes ended abruptly in 1946 when he lost his seat in Congress to a hard-slugging, largely unknown ex-Navy man, Richard Nixon.

The Nixon-Voorhis race has since found its way into political science textbooks — along with the Nixon-Helen Gahagan Douglas race for the Senate four years later — as an American classic in dirty politics.

Voorhis has not nursed his wounds quietly. He has described in books and articles his own encounter with Richard Nixon, and his own feelings toward the man, based on that singular encounter.

"The thing that is bringing Nixon down off his high horse is the same kind of unethical campaign tactics that he's used throughout his career," Voorhis told an interviewer recently.

His latest treatise on the subject was published in June, 1973 — a few days before the Watergate burglars were caught in the act of bugging the Democratic National Headquarters. Voorhis' book, "The Strange Case of Richard Nixon," was largely overlooked; it was, said most reviewers who bothered to glance through it, the diatribes and prejudices of a bitter old man.

It is interesting in light of well-known recent revela-

tions to go back and re-read Voorhis' book. Although it was loaded with bias and not a few factual inaccuracies, the book was an uncannily accurate assessment of conditions and predictions of events to come.

In one chapter — "The Coming of the Garrison State?" — Voorhis captured the essence of the Nixon White House and saw, clearer than anybody else at the time, what its narrow philosophical attitude and outright paranoia meant for the nation.

More than a year ago, Voorhis reached these conclusions:

"... The strange case of Richard Milhous Nixon is that of a man who started out to end 'control of people's lives by a handful of people in Washington' but who, as he climbed to personal power for himself, created the conditions and the climate for the destruction of the very freedoms he had once said he wanted to preserve.

"... The question is whether the people care — whether enough people care enough — to stop the process before it is too late."

Then came Watergate.