

'I Read You Loud and Clear'

A Commentary

By Nicholas von Hoffman

President Truthful's reputation for veracity is so enfeebled that, upon the announcement that he was going to the hospital, some people diagnosed his illness as yet another attack of the chronic Watergate from which he suffers. The relapse seemed to coincide with Senator Sam's calling up for an appointment, and the lucky hit by one of the Committee's lawyers that resulted in Alexander Butterfield revealing that the President is a self-bugger.

Here we had thought that the Loud family was a little peculiar because they let themselves be bugged for a few months. Presumably you get used to it after a while, but there must have come an afternoon when Pat came to the Oval Office door and said, "Dick, I want to talk to you."

"So talk."

"Either step into the hall or turn the goddamn machine off."

"Pat," says our President in a voice of strained tolerance, "I'm busy. I'm trying to decide if we'll have to ration bread and if I should invite Brezhnev back to explain. If I've told you once, I've told you a hundred times, I'm bugging myself for posterity."

Pat looks at him for a minute, taps her foot and then answers, "Posterity's beginning to bug me."

"Pat, I'm the President."

"Okay, you tell Posterity you're about to be a grandfather."

The news of this happy event so surprised our leader that he jumped out of his chair and landed on his posterity.

While there is no doubt that Senator Sam is the most dangerous political opponent that Mr. Nixon has ever had to face, it still seems certain that President Truthful's trip to the hospital was completely bona fide. To fake it, he would have needed forged X-rays and a corps of lying doctors. Of late his luck with

See COMMENTARY, B2, Col. 1

COMMENTARY, From B1

forgeries and prevarication has been so bad he probably wouldn't have chanced it.

Just the other day he forged an entire air war in Cambodia out of existence. There is even a rumor that in addition to falsifying the records to obliterate 1,400 bombing raids he sent in an army of bulldozers to fill in the craters. If a man has just had a whopper that size exposed, it stands to reason that he'd wait a couple of days before telling another one.

In any event, if President Munchausen is cranking Ziggelfritz up to tell another one of his beauts, it ought to be concerning the tapes. They're going to have to give Senator Sam and his North Carolina Jug Band a copy of all those tape-recorded conversations with Dean, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, et al, but if they do, they're either going to have to doctor them or be hoisted on their own reels.

Who's he going to get to do it? So many of the White House Horribles have been turning state's evidence and ratting on him, he'll have to be very careful about whom he asks. Maybe he could get

Charles Colson, the former White House aide who modestly declines to take credit for the forgeries of the Kennedy State Department cables.

Technically, it's a tough job, but maybe it can be done. Look at the miracle of John Dean. Personal presidential lawyer Kalmbach, ex-Attorney General Mitchell and who knows how many more to come say they just took orders from office boy Dean—who

was such a power he worked a year in the White House without ever talking to the boss. Dean may be the first man in history to be given three promotions after he's been fired. At this rate, by the time the two German Shepherds take the witness stand, they're going to testify that Dean hired them.

While we watch John Dean's spectacular post-humous career advancement, we can guess whether

they bugged the hospital room. If they did, we'll either have the dialogue of the leader telling Gen. Haig to kite the thermometer a degree or we'll have the first tape recording ever of a presidential sneeze. These could be sold for a dollar apiece with the proceeds going to the Republican National Committee and the gesundheits to the President.