

Scandalous Souvenir

The stunning secret memorandum that brought the ITT affair to the door of the Oval Office was given to Senate investigators by Charles W. Colson's former confidential assistant who now performs similar duties for Secretary of Labor Peter Brennan.

Sen. Sam Ervin's Watergate investigating committee has kept secret the name of the unidentified secretary who turned over the explosive 1972 memo on ITT by then presidential aide Colson. In fact, it was Joan Hall, Colson's skilled private secretary until he left the White House this year—a shocker that will send a shiver through the administration.

Joan Hall knows more about Chuck Colson than he knows himself, one White House aide told us. She kept his financial records and had full access to the torrent of memos that flowed from his office. Thus, the unanswered mystery: Is the ITT memo just the beginning?

Near the end of 1972, Mrs. Hall complained to friends about long hours and vocal abuse that went with being Colson's secretary. But there was no sign of a break between them. Indeed, Colson secured a \$17,794 job for Mrs. Hall as administrative assistant to his friend Brennan—partly, some at the White House felt, to make sure she did not talk too much to investigators and grand juries.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Hall was interviewed by Ervin committee investigators the evening of Aug. 1. Contrary to usual practice, no Republican staffers were present. At that time, Mrs. Hall turned over the March 30, 1972, Colson memo warning that other secret internal memos would "directly involve" President Nixon in the favorable anti-trust ruling for the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. She also turned over other unspecified documents.

Her motives are a mystery. Contending that "I don't have to talk to you about this," Mrs. Hall told us nothing. The Senate investigators are also mute. Colson told us Mrs. Hall had taken the ITT memo home as a "souvenir" of her days in the White House but felt compelled to hand it over when a Senate subpoena asked for any pertinent documents in her possession.

However, former associates of Mrs. Hall describe her as a battle-seasoned veteran of the bureaucratic wars who would not dream of taking home an explosive document for sentimental reasons. Their questions: Why did she turn over the ITT memo? Are there any more explosive "souvenirs" at home?

George Beall, who as U.S. attorney

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in Baltimore supervises the wide-ranging investigation that includes Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, would never have been appointed to that post by President Nixon if Agnew had been given his way.

Although Agnew told his Wednesday press conference that "I know (Beall) very casually," there has been an undercurrent of tension between the two Maryland Republicans for five years.

As a 30-year-old delegate to the 1968 Republican National Convention, Beall resisted then Gov. Agnew's attempt to swing the entire Maryland delegation to Richard M. Nixon and voted instead for Gov. Nelson Rockefeller of New York—which intensely irritated Agnew.

When Beall's name came up in 1970 for the U.S. attorney's post, there was quiet but unmistakable opposition from the Vice President's office. Mr. Nixon named him anyway, following an endorsement from Sen. Charles Mathias and, much more important, vigorous support from his brother—Nixon-booster J. Glenn Beall, then a representative who was elected that year to the Senate seat once held by their father.

Maryland political figures regard George Beall as a prosecutor of the highest integrity who would not let

past political differences influence decisions.

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Even before Vice President Agnew became the target of federal investigators, his reluctance to commit himself privately as a 1976 presidential candidate had caused severe problems for pro-Agnew political operatives being wooed by Gov. Ronald Reagan of California.

One such operative is Ernst Minor, the ace scheduler who left the Vice President's office in 1971 to take a top job with the Environmental Protection Agency in Cincinnati.

Reagan wants to sign the expert-enclosed Minor for his own heavy scheduling work late this year and next, a job that will grow as the 1976 campaign nears. Minor, an Agnewite of unimpeachable loyalty, had not said yes or no before the federal investigation was revealed. He is convinced Agnew will be fully cleared of all charges, but his dilemma remains: whether Agnew, like Reagan, definitely plans to run for the presidential nomination.

A footnote: another Reagan-wooed operative is Paul Russo, former advance man at the Republican National Committee. Reagan wants Russo, an ex-aide of Sen. Robert Taft of Ohio, as his chief advance man.