

A peek at Agnew novel's opening lines and style

By Maxine Cheshire
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"Steve Galdari put down the newspaper and looked out the window. The brightness of the blue sky struck his eyes with a near physical impact. Far off to the west, the Sierra Nevadas made the horizon a jagged blue-gray pencil line. It reminded Galdari of a sales graph, with Mount Whitney being a very good week."

"Porter Newton Canfield" is the name of the chief character in the suspense novel former Vice President Agnew is writing.

He is described in Agnew's plot outline as a future vice president of the United States who is a "wealthy and aristocratic Ivy League politician."

In his first book, a fictional account of how Canfield is "seduced" by foreign agents into committing acts of villainy, Agnew seems to be taking pains to ensure that readers do not think the novel's protagonist is patterned on Agnew himself.

There are traces in the opening chapter — all that has been shown to publishers so far — of Agnew's personal philosophy and frustrations as vice president.

But the plot outline stresses the fictional Canfield's aristocratic origins: "Old English stock . . . one of America's first families" who dwell in a 24-room mansion on Philadelphia's Main Line.

The character bears virtually no autobiographical resemblance to Agnew, who grew up in modest circumstances as the son of a Greek immigrant restaurant operator, worked as an insurance claims adjuster and food store personnel manager, went to law school at night and rose from suburban county politics to the governorship of Maryland.

If Porter Newton Canfield reminds readers of anyone in politics at the moment, it is more apt to be former Attorney General Elliot Richardson, the man who brought about Agnew's resignation.

Canfield, according to the book outline which Agnew's literary agent was circulating to publishers in New York last week, "had the best of everything from the start . . . prepped at Hadston, graduated cum laude from Princeton . . . University of Virginia law school. Ensign U.S. Navy . . . mar-

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ried Philadelphia socialite Amy Devrees."

The outline describes the fictional vice president as moderately liberal politically, pragmatic and ambitious, handsome and self-assured, impeccably dressed.

Canfield is not overly bright, however, the outline says, "despite the cum laude which some say came more from heavy Canfield endowments than from his ability."

Before going into politics, Canfield was a member of the "society" law firm of Canfield, Redeman, Adams and Preller which, the outline notes, offered an "acronym of some delight to struggling young attorneys without connections."

Canfield also "cultivates the press," something few would accuse Agnew of doing.

Agnew's choice of a central character is the most intriguing aspect of the 26 pages of outline, notes and actual manuscript which his literary agent, Scott Meredith, submitted to a half dozen top publishing houses last week.

The book, unwritten except for a 12-page opening scene aboard the vice presidential plane, has become a "hot property" since it was turned down initially by Random House two weeks ago.

The Ladies' Home Journal has indicated its willingness to pay somewhere between \$50,000 and \$100,000 for serialization rights and sweetened its offer with a pledge to accompany the first installment with a story and color pictures on Agnew's new career as author.

The book, when sold, is expected to bring Agnew an advance of some \$250,000, five times what he originally asked from Random House.

Of course, he still has to write it.

The project is in a very preliminary stage, according to the material which was shown to publishers. There are detailed notes on some main characters, but only one sentence descriptions of most. The plot is sketchily outlined.

The story takes place in 1983 and 1984. Agnew's vice president is appointed in 1979 to replace a predecessor who died of a stroke while presiding over the Senate.

If Agnew seems to identify with anyone, it is this recently-deceased vice president, a "pragmatic and considerate man," a former governor of Montana who is mourned by his Secret Service agents as someone who kept the press in their place and "wasn't always kissing their butts."

Other characters include:

Secret Service agent Steven Mark Galdari.

The Vice President's secretary, Katherine Ann Dryden.

HEW Secretary Meredith Pamela Lord. (She runs her department with "an iron hand," is on the verge of an affair with the vice presi-

dent and is described as "beautiful, intelligent, hard as nails, with a Ph.D. in psychology.")

TV anchorman Bradley K. Barton.

Counselor to the President Josh Devers.

California Sen. Stanley Kroner.

Senate Majority Leader Ridgewell Gray.

The editor of "Twice-week" magazine and the publisher of "Dime."

Since most don't appear in Agnew's first chapter, it is too early to start guessing whether or not any of them are based on real people.

The plot concerns a "secret society of militant Ir-

anian nations called the Persian Protective League which is hostile to the Shah." The PPL "misinterprets" a spy report that falls into its hands and mistakenly thinks the Soviet Union is planning to take Afghanistan as a base to attack Iran.

So it decides the only way to prevent this is to provoke a crisis between the United States and the Soviet Union over Israel and sets about inflaming pro-Israel sentiments in this country.

They make a vulnerability study of U.S. officials who can be duped into helping them and decide Canfield is their man. "Through a variety of devices" not spelled out in Agnew's outline, they succeed in subverting the vice president.