

Nixon Surviving The Watergate



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PRESIDENT NIXON has come through the Watergate ordeal, so far, with no outward sign of strain. This is the report of aides and visitors whom we have surveyed.

Over the past year, the President's great reelection victory has exploded. One by one, close associates have pleaded guilty to crimes and have accused other trusted aides of crimes. Each day, month after month, has brought news of yet another moral calamity.

The President has been revealed as a tax fudger who would use dubious loopholes to reduce his income tax below that of an ordinary worker, a finagler who would bilk the taxpayers for improvements to his personal property.

When crimes and improprieties have been traced right to his door, he has defended himself by claiming the President of the United States didn't know what was going on inside the White House.

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THE REVELATIONS, piled one upon another, might have broken a man of less grim determination. The terrible weight could still affect his policy decisions and cause repercussions around the world.

Therefore, we have interviewed several people who have been in contact with the President to find out how he is weathering Watergate.

Those closest to the President agree he has gone through agony over Watergate. On occasion, they have heard him erupt

with rage and profanity. But most of the time, he has bottled up his feelings and gone off to agonize alone.

His favorite retreat during the lonely struggle with his seventh and greatest crisis has been Camp David in the Maryland mountains. Sometimes, his close friend, Bebe Rebozo, would join him for a long weekend.

Sources who visited the retreat during these periods say Rebozo would mix a small pitcher of martinis and the two men would sit in deep silence seemingly on the same wavelength.

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THE PRESIDENT emerged from his introspection several weeks ago full of confidence. He told aides that the worst was over, that the case against him had been presented in the worst possible light and that hereafter his side of the story would receive national attention.

He scheduled a series of speeches and question-answer sessions to lay his case before the nation. He sought invitations from Republican candidates to prove he wasn't a political liability. He also sought to show that, despite Watergate, he is still governing the nation.

Those who have been in touch with Mr. Nixon in recent weeks say he is in excellent spirits, showing no signs of fatigue. His voice is strong and decisive and he speaks with calm assurance. His eyes are clear and penetrating. He looks his visitors straight in the eye, his own gaze never wandering. His handshake is firm.