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# Remember What Happens to Nice Guys

Washington

VICE PRESIDENT Gerald Ford keeps saying he is not a candidate for the presidency, but keeps talking like a candidate, and in the process he is stumbling into trouble.

It is the "good guy" quality in Ford that is getting him in trouble. He is an honest and sympathetic character in a tough and almost impossible job. He wants to please the President, who picked him out for an historic role at an awkward time. So he defends the President in public on Watergate, without reading the documents and the evidence.

At the same time, he wants to be faithful to his old buddies in the House and Senate, who are considering the impeachment of his boss, and when they talk to him in the night he tells them about his fears and doubts about how the President is handling the impeachment crisis.



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THE REPUBLICAN party wants him to go around the country reassuring the faithful that everything is going to come out all right and he wears himself out flying all over the Republic. But after his standard speeches, he has to meet the local press, and get back on his plane and travel for hours with the Washington reporters, who are following him to find out what kind of man he is and what kind of president he would make.

So he talks to them too the way he always has in his 25 years in the House. He is not a calculating man. He has always talked freely to reporters. He likes them, and he never had many state secrets to conceal. And they ask him what he would do if by accident he became president, what kind of Cabinet he would have? What about Kissinger at State, Schlesinger at Defense, Ziegler in the White House. And he answers their questions, not taking himself seriously, and not thinking about the consequences.

The consequences, of course, are serious. Next day it is all over the front pages and on the tube that the Vice President was sure that the President was "innocent," that the documents would prove it, though he hadn't read them. Also, that he thought the Republicans would do all right in the November elections despite Watergate, then, the next day, that he was worried about the political effects of Watergate.

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BEYOND THAT, he had tried to get a compromise between the White House and the Congress on the tapes, and avoid a House subpoena and a "confrontation" between the Executive and the Legislature, but had failed. And, still insisting that he would not run for the presidency, that he would keep Kissinger and fire Schlesinger and Ziegler, if by accident he did have to replace Nixon.

Obviously, and for good reasons, the White House was sore, and even Gerry's friends wondered about his judgment, and maybe indiscretions and blunders like this were inevitable for a man like Ford.

In a way, he is the opposite of Nixon. He is a natural and spontaneous character, and he is getting in trouble now, not because of his bad instincts but because of his good instincts.

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IN FAIRNESS to the Vice President, part of his problem, maybe the main part, is that he was chosen to be the second man to the President, to stand in line for the presidency, but was not given the opportunity to prepare for that job.

He was not really brought in on the major questions before the President. The members of the Cabinet did not invite him to share their problems, because, if they did, they might seem to be preparing him to succeed to the presidency. So he was left, like Agnew, to be a propagandist for the President and the party, and he did what he had always done: he gave the old party hurrah, but being more honest than most politicians, he gave honest answers to hard questions after the party rally was over.

This may not be a tribute to Ford's judgment, but it is a tribute to his integrity. There has always been a question around here about whether it was better to have an honest naive man or an intelligent and cunning manipulator; and Ford has demonstrated that he is not very smart but that he is honest.

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