

Mary McGrory

A Hero Emerges From the Hearings

Washington

ONCE AGAIN, salvation has come with a southern accent.

The liberals are getting used to it. A year ago, they were worshipping at the feet of Senator Sam Ervin of North Carolina, blotting out his civil rights record as they watched him hurl the constitution in the face of the impervious Nixon men.

The older ones remember that it was Senator John Stennis of Mississippi who finally put them out of their misery over Joe McCarthy.

Now they are acclaiming a representative of the confederacy whose name was unknown to them a week ago. Yankee mail is pouring into the office of Representative James Mann of South Carolina.

His voting record on the liberal scale of ADA is zero. As a conservative, he scores 90. He was born in South Carolina. He was educated entirely in South Carolina.

His performance on the committee, both public and off stage, taught the country once again that when a guardian of the constitution is required, and a master of the process by which things get done, it is necessary to go below the Mason-Dixon line.

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MANN IS PRECISE in his language and rejects "middleman," "ambassador," "liaison" and similar terms to describe what he did behind the scenes. Although most sparing in his public utterance, he reverts to native circumlocution when speaking of his central role.

"We were seeking to find a consensus among those we felt were most reasonable, talking over the evidence, sorting out those allegations on which we agreed," he says.

Walter Flowers, (Dem-Ala.), Mann's closest friend on the committee, puts it another way. "We wanted to talk — we were sick of listening to people whose minds were made up."

Lonely men on the Republican side had similar aspirations. William S. Cohen of Maine, M. Caldwell Butler of Virginia, Hamilton Fish Jr. of New York, Tom Railsback of Illinois wanted also to discuss the evidence with members whose minds were not made up.

On July 18, after the last witness had been called, Cohen met Mann and Flowers in the hall and suggested they "get together."

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OUT OF THOSE endless meetings, joined occasionally by other nervous, shifting Republicans, evolved the first two articles of impeachment. Mann is rated by his fellow drafters as a superb legal technician. He also contributed his special, colonial quality of calm and purpose. The men writing those articles knew they were doing something dangerous. But in the company of Mann who looks powerfully like one of the framers of the constitution, they were sure, at least, they were not doing anything un-American.

Mann, Flowers and their southern Compatriot, Ray Thornton of Arkansas, had insisted with the Republicans on the last full measure of fairness. They demanded witnesses, even the mischievous and erratic Charles Colson.

What Mann thinks of Colson is between him and his maker. But in the opening remarks that reverberated through the nation, he gravely quoted Colson's praise of the committee as proof of its impartiality.

Mann was, perhaps, like the king-maker. The articles were the candidate, and Mann's endorsement assured their acceptance.

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