



“Those who have known him a long time praise his competitiveness, but they speak even more of a considerate nature and of the loyalty he shows his friends.”

*The Forces That Forged the Future:
‘He Didn’t Want to Stay in Yorba Linda’*



"... Perhaps my major liability is—and this may sound incongruous—that I am essentially shy,er than the usually extrovert politician ought to be. This seems to be an inborn trait which I cannot change or alter. I have a great liking for the plain people, but I feel ill at ease with the prominent."

—Richard Nixon, 1968

By Lou Cannon

RICHARD MILHOUS NIXON has occupied a prominent place in our public life and in our consciousness longer than any other American politician, and yet his essential nature remains a mystery.

For middle-aged Americans he exists as a series of stereotypes extending back into our childhoods. Durable Dick and Tricky Dick. The relentless pursuer of Alger Hiss and the ruthless campaign scourge of the Democrats. The man who debated Khrushchev in a kitchen and who made peace with the Chinese Communists at a banquet table. The Nixon of Checkers, the Hughes loan and "I am not a crook." The Nixon who lost to John F. Kennedy in 1960 after a self-destructive television debate. The Nixon "You Won't Have to Kick Around Anymore." The resurrected Nixon of 1968 defeating the only Democrat who had lasted as long as he had. The Nixon of Watergate.

These and a hundred other Nixons torment our memories. Each is a separate portrait; none combines to form a composite picture of the man. After all these years Nixon remains, in the human sense, an enigma to his fellow Americans. But it is a different Nixon—or more properly, a whole Nixon—who is remembered by his friends of yesteryear and by a few close aides in the White House. These friends, like most Americans, are deeply troubled by Watergate and the Nixon taxes and all the rest, although perhaps more ready than most to blame the media for what they regard as magnification of the Nixon scandals. These friends retain a regard and even an affection for Nixon and a desire to explain him to others and to themselves. What follows is an attempt to understand Richard Nixon from the perspective of those who care about him.

Nixon is 61 years old now. Many who knew him as a young man are dead, and others are afflicted with failing memories. Some of those who are alive and robust have had their personal views of Nixon colored, for better or for worse, by the dramatic events of his long public career. Still, there is a common portrait of Nixon which emerges from the recollections of his friends and classmates. All speak of Nixon's shyness, of his quick intellect, of his capacity for hard work. Many also remember his poverty and his consciousness of it.

In American mythology, politicians in general and Presidents in particular tend to exalt the log-cabin aspects of their boyhood. It is commonplace for famous men, in a country that celebrates humbleness of origin, to glorify poverty they never knew. But Nixon's history defies the mythology, on this key point as on so many others.

UNLIKE MOST Presidents, Nixon was poorer than he seems. It is true that the Nixons were relatively well-off, in middle-class terms, when the biographers discovered them in the mid-50s. But the Nixons were dirt poor at the most critical times of Richard Nixon's boyhood. His father, Frank, was unemployed and trying to start a lemon-growing business when Richard was born in 1913. The business failed, and the first five years of Dick Nixon's life were hard scrabble times for the family. Nixon once recalled that in the five years preceding his older brother

Harold's death of tuberculosis in 1933—a period embracing Dick Nixon's entire high school attendance—his mother never bought a new dress because of the medical bills. Nixon has never forgotten those years. People who came to know Nixon after he left Whittier rarely knew of his anxieties about material success, partly because they were hidden by his greater and growing concern for the acquisition of power and partly because he displayed a frequently generous spirit to his friends. Robert Finch recalls that Nixon was almost totally oblivious to the financial arrangements when he was trying to associate with a Southern California law firm after his 1960 defeat. Stephen Hess, a former White House aide in both the Eisenhower and Nixon administrations, learned never to set a fee for speechwriting or other services because Nixon always set a higher one when it was left to him.

But this real generosity of which Nixon often was capable obscured his preoccupation with money and the men who made it. "Get to know the big finance men, that's the key," Rep. John Rousselot of California remembers Nixon telling him in the late '50s at the time when Rousselot was a young conservative aspiring to Congress. And one of the early Nixon supporters, a man who helped draft him to run in 1946, recalls:

"Dick didn't have any money. He lived in a lousy cottage which Herman Perry (the Whittier Bank of America

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manager) had got for him. On the one hand, Dick never gave a damn about money and was generous with what he had. . . . On the other hand he was the child both of a poor family and the Depression, and he was drawn to people who made a lot of money. He's impressed by them. Money was important to him, not as something to have, but as security. . . . That was important to Dick. This is what San Clemente is all about."

WHITTIER WAS KNOWN as "ye friendly town," but there was more tension than friendliness in the Nixon home. Nixon's least critical biographer, Bela Kornitzer, describes his father, Frank Nixon, as "tough, opinionated, capricious, argumentative and unpredictable." To people who remember him, this seems an understatement. Orphaned and uneducated at 9, Frank Nixon became a carpenter and a handyman and he was a rough disciplinarian with the Nixon boys. Richard learned to avoid the beatings that his brothers frequently received but at the cost of further repressing an already inward nature. "Dad was very strict and expected to be obeyed under all circumstances," Nixon told Kornitzer. "If he wanted something, he wanted it at once. He had a hot temper, and I learned early that the only way to deal with him was to abide by the rules he laid down. Otherwise, I would probably have felt the touch of a ruler or the strap as my brothers did." Frank, a Quaker by marriage to Nixon's mother Hannah and a sometime Sunday school teacher, also was gifted in profanity, and Nixon did not have to wait until his Navy service to learn the expletive-deleted language of the Watergate transcripts.

However, Nixon also was taught what was customary for his day, which was never to swear around women. And for a long time, there was scant danger of that. The young Richard Nixon was extraordinarily shy and stayed away from girls. Roy Day, the Republican campaign manager when Nixon first ran against Democrat Jerry Voorhis, recalled that at 33 Nixon was so shy that he had to be advised to look women in the eye when he spoke to them.

Nevertheless, Nixon was well re-

garded by his friends, most of whom thought he would make a career as a lawyer, not a politician. Those who have known him a long time praise his competitiveness, but they speak even more of a considerate nature and of the loyalty he shows his friends. "I never found anybody who knew him who didn't like him," says Hubert Perry, a classmate in high school and Whittier College and the son of the banker who recruited Nixon to run against Voorhis. Already, however, Nixon's remote manner and his tendency to compartmentalize repelled those who never came to know him well.

ON THE EVE of his inauguration Perry was quoted in his hometown newspaper as saying that Nixon would be admired as President but added, "I don't think he is ever going to be loved."

This was apparent from Nixon's earliest days. Nixon was the sort of young man who impressed relatives and various teachers by his ability to produce the "right" answers and by his bright, hard-working ways. Nixon's classmates also had high regard for his diligence and capability, but most of them were not drawn to him as a person, and his circle of friends was small even then. Within this circle, Nixon gave and received the kind of loyalty that would become a hallmark of his political existence. Outside his circle, however, his reserve appeared as arrogance, and his aloofness, coldness. He always commanded respect. Rarely did he inspire the human affection that Americans often associate with their Presidents.

This young Nixon, whatever else he may have been or would become, was something of a dreamer. His dreams led him to the world outside. The Santa Fe Railway symbolized Nixon's link between Whittier and the world, and the grownup Nixon would remember how the boyhood Nixon had dreamed of leaving on those trains.

"I see another child," Nixon said in his 1968 acceptance speech. "He hears the train go by at night and dreams of far away places he would like to go." One of Nixon's former law partners, Earl C. Adams of Los Angeles, believes this speech to be among the most personally revealing speeches that Nixon ever made. "He wanted to follow that train," says Adams. "It's not a contrivance at all. He laid in bed and he heard that Santa Fe train go by and he wanted to get on it. He didn't want to stay in Yorba Linda. He wanted to go where he is."

Adams is the senior partner in one of Los Angeles' most prestigious law firms and one of the small group of San Marino and Whittier attorneys and businessmen who recruited Nixon to politics in 1945. He also is the executor of Hannah Nixon's estate and a longtime admirer of Richard Nixon's Quaker mother, whom he regards as the source of Nixon's drive. "A great high ambition is what makes Nixon go," says Adams. "It derives from his mother."

The early recollections make it clear that Richard Nixon, the second son in a family of five, must have been the

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favorite of his mother, who liked to predict great things for him. "He was thoughtful and serious," she told Kornitzer. "He always carried such a weight. That's an expression we Quakers use for a person who doesn't take his responsibilities lightly."

DESPITE HIS brightness, Nixon was never regarded as an intellectual. He preferred games and athletic contests, where his competitiveness ran a constantly losing race with his poor physical coordination. "The sports stuff that Dick always spouts is for real," says one of his friends. "I think there were times he would have chucked everything else if he could have played foot-

ball well." Instead of playing football, Nixon turned his mental talents to competition. He was not drawn to philosophy or even to its stepchild, ideology, but to the winning of argument and debate. Indeed, his Whittier football coach, an admirer of Nixon, believes he had no thought about whether he was Democrat or Republican until he was recruited for the Voorhis race. Nixon himself always has cited debate as the arena of his first achievements, and his autobiography compresses the mistakes of the 1960 campaign into an agony of second-guessing about his "lost" debate with John F. Kennedy.

"I'd always liked to debate," said Nixon in a 1968 interview with Kenneth Harris of the London Observer. "Even when I was a very small boy, I liked to talk to people, discuss things, make points, cross swords in language, and I came to regard the lawyer as the social functionary who most deployed the art of debate." Debate provided Dick Nixon with the outlet for his competitive spirit and for the verbal display of independence denied him in

his home. It pleased his mother who wanted him to make something of himself, and it also pleased his difficult father, who regarded rhetorical skill as a demonstration of superior education. Frank Nixon was uneducated and his grammar was poor. "But he always admired educated people," Dick Nixon told Harris. "He was more interested in my education than my career."

Debate developed both Dick Nixon's education and his career, but it broadened him rather than deepening him. He developed a quickness, a facility, an ability to argue all sides of every question. He also developed the dozen little debater's tricks that still mar his speeches, especially the ability to plausibly refute an argument his opponent has never made. "I have met a dozen Dick Nixons on debate teams," says one of his debate opponents of those years. "I didn't do well with a proposition I didn't really believe in. Somehow that never seemed to bother Dick."

Later on, events would reinforce Nixon's early view of the importance of debate. He has always believed, and with some justification, that his debates with Jerry Voorhis helped him to win the congressional seat in 1946. Nixon remained the essential debater when he returned to California to practice law after his loss to Kennedy. Says Earl Adams, his senior partner, of Nixon's California practice:

"He practiced law the way he's best suited to practice law. By temperament, he's not the guy to paw through a file and ferret out all the facts. He likes to have that done by someone else, giving him the opportunity to make the sweeping case."

Debate was not Nixon's only achievement. In school he excelled in geogra-

phy, history and English. Frequently he has told the children of close White House aides that "geography was my best subject," and his report cards support his recollection. "He wanted to go to faraway, exotic places," says a friend. "He was interested in the world and thought about it when no one else did." Perhaps geography, like the Santa Fe Railway, seemed a way out of Whittier. In any case, Nixon loved the subject and he would spend hours reading books about foreign countries and rolling the names of strange-sounding capitals off his tongue.

THE COUNTRY of Nixon's mind, like the minds of other boys, was inhabited by the heroes and villains of his parents. He revered Woodrow Wilson, another dreamer, and the President his

mother most admired. He hated newspapermen, as did his father, who once during a serious illness suggested to his Vice President son that they be thrown out of the house. Let those who trace Nixon's suspicion of the press to the Hiss case or to the Checkers speech consider these words from "Our Privileges Under the Constitution," a prize-winning speech Nixon gave as a high school junior:

"How much ground do these privileges cover? There are some who use them as a cloak for covering libelous, indecent and injurious statements against their fellow men. Should the morals of this nation be offended and polluted in the name of freedom of speech or freedom of the press? In the words of Lincoln, the individual can have no rights against the best interests of society."

Robert M. Williams, a classmate of Nixon's at Whittier High School, recalls that Nixon "delivered the speech in much the same way he delivers speeches now—not very well." But Williams was impressed by Nixon in other ways. Both were candidates for student offices on what was known as the "senior ticket" with Williams running for editor of the school newspaper and Nixon for student body president. All of the senior ticket candidates except Nixon won, and afterward Williams named him "feature writer" for the school paper.

WILLIAMS SAID he selected him because of his good marks in English and his reliability. "I knew I could count on him to meet deadlines," adds Williams. "He always did, too."

Nixon's school newspaper stories, like his speech on the Constitution, were models of organization. In fact, it probably is not too much to say that organization and hard work always have been the twin keys to Nixon's personal success. In his California days he loved to tell the story of how he had pushed his way through Duke Law School, in part by mimeographing the pages of his law professor's thesis in a hot, airless room. Nixon also valued the statement of a Duke upperclassman in the Earl Mazo biography of Nixon. The upperclassman predicted that Nixon, who was then worried sick about the possibility of failure, would make it because "you've got an iron butt and that's the secret of becoming a lawyer."

When he entered politics, Nixon's organizational abilities served him even better than his debating experience. He also developed a fascination with strategy and a habit of explaining his strategies to people as a demonstration of his analytical powers. It was legal strategy at first, then poker strategy in the Navy, then political strategy.

This habit suggests that it was the strategy itself that was paramount rather than any particular objective. When David S. Broder and Stephen Hess wrote "The Republican Establishment" in 1965 they would conclude about Nixon, "He is one of the few politicians . . . whose motives are always questioned."

It is this central suspicion that he is a hypocrite that has plagued Nixon throughout his political life. Its roots go deep into the childhood of a home divided between the Quaker instruction in a higher morality and the teachings of a profane, intolerant, opinionated father who did not lightly accept dissent from equals, much less from his sons. "Dick never liked to admit he made a mistake," recalls a high school classmate who says with understatement that the flaw now seems much larger than it did at the time.

Sometimes this dualist morality of his childhood would lead Nixon to make claims that seemed transparently hypocritical as when, during his third 1960 debate with Kennedy, he

criticized Harry Truman's use of language and praised President Eisenhower for restoring "dignity and decency and, frankly, good language to the conduct of the presidency . . ."

"What made it silly," said a former Nixon aide, "is not only that Dick swore but that he knew full well that Ike swore like the trooper he was."

THE CONTRADICTION between what Nixon had been taught and perhaps wanted to be and that he was was nowhere more evident than in his spiritual life. He invited both a Quaker speaker and the Rev. Billy Graham to preside at his mother's funeral, and their presence seemed to symbolize the contradiction between Nixon's early reliance on a personal, inner God and his later celebration of the Lord as a political ally of the United States.

The contradiction has been there for a long time. Loverne Morris, a contemporary of Nixon's in Whittier and a retired staff member of the Whittier Daily News, wrote in 1969: "Those who attended Sunday school, church services and young people's meetings with him said he took his normal part but never seemed particularly devout and certainly not spiritual. They said he observed conventional moralities." Others disagreed, both then and now.

One of those who is convinced of Nixon's basic spirituality is Charles Colson, the former White House aide and convert to Christianity who pleaded guilty to obstructing justice in the Ellsberg case. Late in 1973, before the publicization of his conversion, Colson gave Nixon a book by the Quaker writer Elton Trueblood, "Abraham Lincoln: Theologian of American Anguish," and Nixon read it in those distraught days of a 1973 San Clemente trip when he was so depressed and diverted by Watergate that he walked about alone at night and canceled some of his most important appointments. Writing of Lincoln in words that Nixon has come to claim as his own, Trueblood said: "His only certainty lay in the conviction that God will never cease to call America to her true service, not only for her own sake but for the sake of the world."

The God whom Nixon was taught about in childhood was a more personal one. There are many evidences that Nixon believed deeply in Him, none more compelling than an awkwardly moving eulogy he wrote at 17 to his youngest brother Arthur, who had died at 7 of meningitis. Arthur

was Dick Nixon's favorite. Dick Nixon, who ever since has been especially sensitive to the death of his friends' own loved ones, describes how the dying Arthur called his mother into his room and recited the child's prayer: "If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Concludes Dick Nixon: "There is a grave out now in the hills, but like the picture, it contains only the bodily image of my brother. And so, when I am tired and worried, and am almost ready to quit trying to live as I should, I look up and see the picture of a little boy with sparkling eyes and curly hair; I remember the childlike prayer; I pray that it may prove as true for me as it did for my brother Arthur." Years later, Pat Nixon confided to a friend that if her husband hadn't gone into politics he would have chosen the ministry.

WHATEVER THE strength may have been of Nixon's spiritual anchor, he wanted to sever his temporal roots in Whittier. He returned to practice law after graduating from Duke, as his family desired, but friends remember that he talked vaguely of going other places, doing other things. The war gave him a way out. Out of respect for the pacifist sensibilities of his mother, Nixon first took a job with the Of-

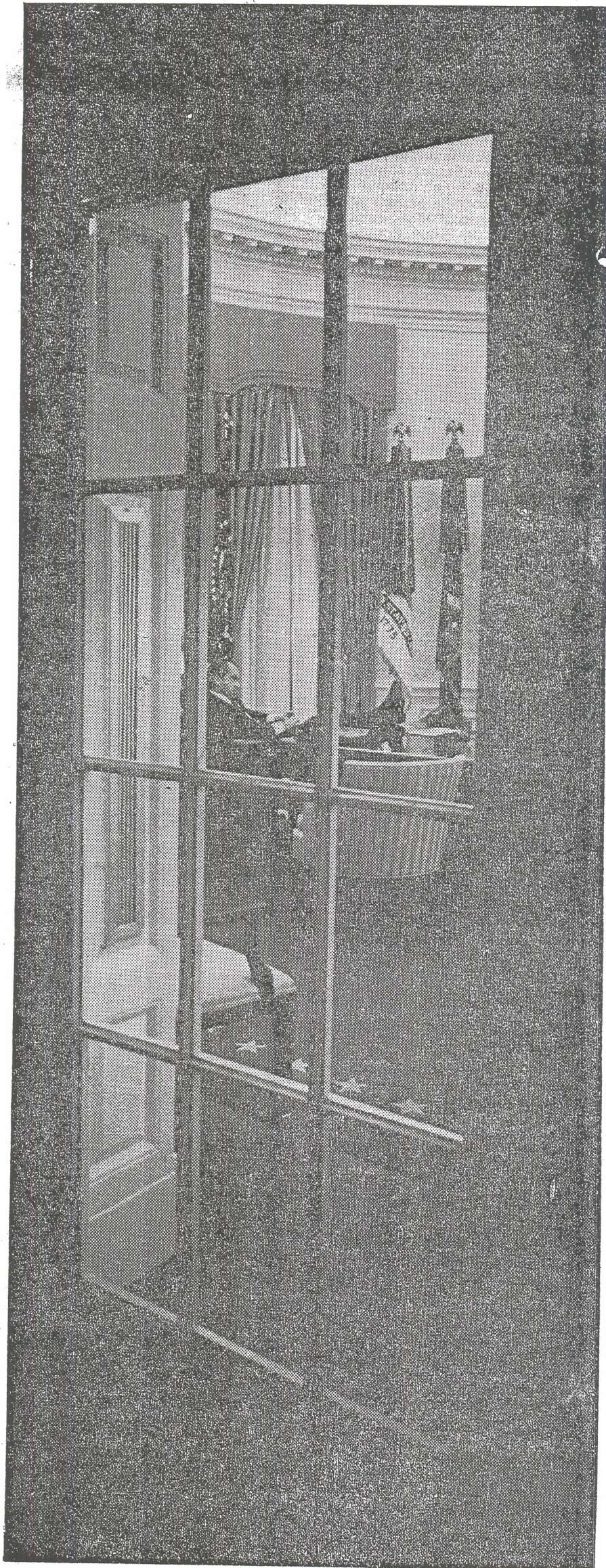
Discovering a Politician: The Answer to the Amateur's Dream

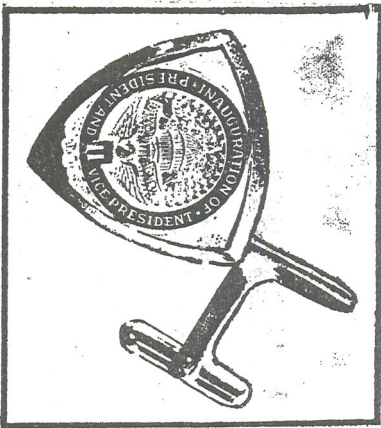
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Richard M. and Patricia R.			
Present home address (number and street, including apartment number, if The White House City, town or post office, State and ZIP code) Washington D. C.			
Filing Status—check only one:			
1 <input type="checkbox"/> Single			
2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Married filing joint return (even if only one had income)			
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‘He Didn’t Want to Stay In Yorba Linda’

tie of Price Administration in Washington, which he would afterward stigmatize as the model of bureaucratic ills. Then he slipped quietly into the Navy, which he subsequently described as the "breakpoint" of his life. His naval service gave him a useful campaign line about service in the "stinking Solomons" to use against the civilian Voorhis, and a knowledge of poker, which was as precised by Nixon's upbringing as was military service.

But Nixon has often been pronient at what he was taught to avoid. He won college office at Whittier on the strength of a promise to introduce dancing, although he did not dance. As operations officer on Green Island, Nixon organized a commissary known as Nixon's Hamburger Stand, which was renowned for its whisky supply. When he left, the men gave Lt. Nixon a party.

After the war, as in the Navy, he took what was open to him. He talked briefly about becoming a bigtime lawyer and frequently about making a success of himself. He was unsure, at first, about politics, then attracted by the opportunity of becoming a congressman.

"Perhaps it was an accident that he went into politics," says Waller Taylor, a member of the Adams law firm. "Remember, they asked him to do it. And once he was in it, his drive and his ambition and his striving for success carried him. Maybe he could have gone into something else and never wanted to go into politics at all. It's hard to say."

"Politics was an option available to Nixon in California as it would have been in few other states. He was not "a party man," as he came to be described, and in truth in California at this time there was really only one party, the incumbent party. The state's unique and since-discarded cross-filing system combined with an absence of party designation on the ballot to allow incumbents to run again and again with both parties' nominations. This was fine with the incumbents, who usually did all they could to see that their own parties put up hacks against their friends who were in office.

The regular Republican organization had put up a long series of hacks against Voorhis, a onetime Socialist who had become a popular and increasingly conservative Democratic congressman. A few people like Adams and Perry and insurance man Frank E. Jorgensen were tired of the Republican performance and put pressure on the GOP organization to finally come up with a candidate. This is what led to the famous fact-finding committee that selected Nixon. "The Republican organization didn't feel we had any right to do what we were doing," recalls Adams. "They were right. We didn't. We were amateurs."

DICK NIXON was the answer to the amateur's dream. He came into the University Club at Los Angeles on Nov. 1, 1945, wearing his lieutenant commander's uniform, accompanied by his quiet wife. He spoke softly, and with reserve. One of the people at that small meeting recalls that Nixon also raised the question about money and the financing of his campaign, a question that commended him to the prudent businessmen in the room.

For Nixon neither then nor later would get over the business about being poor. It was why his new friends, many of them only beginning to break through financially, would set up the fund for him that became the issue of the 1952 campaign and the Checkers speech. Voorhis came from a moneyed family; Helen Gahagan Douglas had more money than he had. Before Nixon came to talk dynastically of "the Kennedys" he talked of "the Kennedy money." The "theys" on the other side always had more money than he had.

The men around Nixon in those days were young men who would make solid careers for themselves in business and in law. They liked their prospective candidate immediately, but were hardly in awe of him. (Murray

Chotiner, who would mean most to him, was not yet in the picture. Despite what has been written about him, Chotiner had almost nothing to do with Nixon until his 1950 campaign.) Nixon himself was attracted by the offer to run for Congress and he was anxious, as always, to make a good impression on others.

But if Nixon was attracted by his new friends—they had already talked to his mother and approved of his origins—he was also unsure that he would pursue a political career. The center stage simultaneously lured him and made him uneasy. The quotation with which this account began is from an interview with Bela Kornitzer in 1960, in which the retrospective Nixon perhaps revealed more about himself than he realized:

"I don't think any man can judge his own assets and liabilities. From my observations of others in political life, however, I can conclude that perhaps my major liability is—and this may sound incongruous—that I am essentially shyer than the usually extrovert politician ought to be. This seems to be an inborn trait which I cannot change or alter. I have a great liking for the plain people, but I feel ill at ease among the prominent. This is perhaps because in my early years I grew up with the same kind of people. One of the assets of a politician is his

quency of mingling with the great. Frankly, I'm a terrible mixer and this is considered a major liability in politics."

WHAT WAS THIS introvert doing in politics anyway? He had no political ideology as such (in the Harris interview eight years later he would describe himself as a conservative, a liberal, an internationalist and a pragmatist within the space of six paragraphs) and there is much to commend the view of his coach that he did not know his own party. But he had been given a unique opportunity in the California political system, and Dick Nixon had learned from an early age to make the most of his opportunities. When Frank Jorgenson suggested to him in 1950 that he should stay in the House of Representatives and accumulate seniority rather than running for the Senate, Nixon replied: "When your star is high, you better go with it."

Most of Nixon's friends, after 28 years, remain understandably scornful of much that has been written about those first campaigns. Even Nixon's most hostile biographers have failed to verify a single instance of the purported surreptitious telephone calls describing Voorhis as a Communist.

In contrast, the public red-baiting of the Nixon campaign that year was standard fare in California, where both Republicans and Democrats were

long accustomed to campaigning against the menace of Communism.

But if Nixon's campaign was unexceptional in this regard, it also was devoid of any ethical considerations. Lacking any real experience in politics, Nixon accepted without question the unstated assumption shared by many Americans that the only questions of campaigning are strategic or tactical ones. This is a doctrine sometimes preached but rarely practiced by professional politicians, most of whom realize that there are unstated boundaries beyond which strategy may not go.

Nixon was not a professional, and he did not realize this. He did not, in fact, really value politics, at least not in the sense that Morton Borden has described it as "an institutional cement joining Americans of every persuasion."

What Nixon valued was not politics, but political power and the purposes of statecraft, and he could be high-minded when genuine issues of governance were raised. Despite a variety of urgings from well-connected Republicans in 1960 to pursue the alleged vote frauds that produced the questionable victories of Kennedy in Illinois and Texas, Nixon refused to do so. "The President couldn't govern, not knowing whether he was really President," Nixon told friends in words that would prove prophetic. But that was after the

election. "In politics," Nixon would write in "Six Crises," "victory is never total." And total victory is what Nixon desired.

Congress was different from the campaign and Nixon from the first strove to understand its customs and peculiarities and to fit into the mold. He joined the Chowder and Marching Society, that friendly group of Capitol Hill jocks and imbibers, along with the other would-be athletes. But Nixon's friends in the House soon learned that he had little taste for fun and games. He already used the yellow legal pad to sketch long serious speeches. He was insecure when other congressmen talked about "good old Jerry," who was then Voorhis and not Ford, and he expressed a determination to prove himself in the congressional arena.

Nixon succeeded in this aim. As in Whittier, those who became Nixon's friends in Congress came to like him. Later, after Nixon became Vice President, these former congressional friends, such as James Utt, Joe Holt, Oakley Hunter, Edward Hiestand, Bob Wilson and Craig Hosmer, would sometimes have a party at the Nixon house at Spring Valley or meet with him in his third-floor Capitol office for a drink and a discussion of political problems. All of these men were fond of Nixon, but they used to mock his seriousness. One of the apocryphal stories that came out in this group concerned the master of ceremonies who was going to introduce Nixon and called Rose Mary Woods asking for funny stories about him. "There are no funny stories about Nixon," was the reply.

AND THERE weren't many funny stories about him. Everyone spoke well of Nixon, but not too well. He was quiet, studious, hard-working, rarely outgoing. He saw less and less of his old California friends but they were always welcome when they came to Washington. Sometimes, after a scotch or two at parties, Nixon would play the piano.

But the people he became closest to were those who shared his seriousness of purpose. One of these was Bob Finch, then a 21-year-old administrative assistant for a Los Angeles congressman next door to Nixon's office in the Longworth Office Building. Nixon was then 34. "I had lost my father as a young man," remembers Finch. "He was like a father or an older brother to me." Sometimes the two men would talk politics for hours on end.

As with many Americans who grew up in the Depression and served in World War II, there is an intense patriotic streak to Richard Nixon. The view of Robert L. King, a former vice presidential assistant and onetime FBI agent, typifies the attitude of many of Nixon's friends. "Fundamentally, he's a decent, gutsy, intelligent, patriotic guy, an apple-pie, Fourth-of-July patriot, a square," says King. "And this frustrates the hell out of the intellec-

tuals because they don't believe him. And it's his strength."

Nixon had campaigned against Voorhis in his lieutenant commander's uniform, until advised that it was no magnet for the votes of enlisted men. He was genuinely proud of his naval service, which apart from Green Island, had not been without its hazards, and he was a captive of the national mood. "The mood at that time," recalls a congressman of the day, "was intensely anti-Communist and Nixon responded to it, as many others did. But it was nothing personal."

What changed that was Alger Hiss. The liberals and the Eastern newspapers laughed at Nixon in the early stages of the Hiss case. He has never been able to take that, for all his spunk and competitiveness. When Dick Nixon perceived that Whittaker Chambers, all fat and ugly and terribly bright, was right and that Hiss with all his brilliance and moneyed ways was wrong, it ratified an inner feeling for him. He became Chambers. The Ivy Leaguers, the better people with money were Hiss. In his own autobiography Nixon would write of the Hiss case: "The issue at stake, to put it starkly, is this: Whose hand will write the next several chapters of human history?"

Hiss was a watershed for Nixon, because it ratified the conspiracy view of history that he unconsciously shares with those whom he opposes. That conspiracy is not limited to Communists, but includes the press, the liberals, "the better people." Perhaps it explains why Nixon deals so effectively with the rulers of Communist countries who are apt to share his conspiratorial takeoff point, and so poorly with the American people, who do not.

One of the people closest to him in the White House believes that this conspiracy theory, when wedded to Nixon's shyness and preference for isolation, goes a long way in explaining why Bob Haldeman became the Oval Office gatekeeper and why Watergate became possible. "Nobody is our friend," Nixon said to John Dean, "let's face it." And, also to Dean: "We are all in it together. This is a war."

The Nixon who made those statements and who proclaimed that his adversaries "are asking for it and they are going to get it," was also a Nixon capable of great and repeated personal kindnesses. This was as much the real Nixon as the architect of conspiracy

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theories and, to those who knew him, a more real Nixon.

His friends tell a story of telephone calls to persons ill or dying, of a hundred kindnesses, of birthdays and anniversaries remembered, of thank you notes where none were needed. Herb Klein recalls when Nixon, then a private citizen in New York, rushed down to the morgue on a holiday to perform the distasteful chore of identifying the body of a friend who had died on a trip.

White House special counsel Richard Moore remembers the last weekend of April, 1973, when Nixon fired Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, a weekend that another aide calls "Nixon's dark night of the soul." The President was shaken, as all who saw him that April 30 on television know, but Moore remembers the weekend as one of especial consideration. Nixon had summoned Moore while he was preparing the speech, only to learn from Moore's secretary that he was en route to New England for the wedding of his son. The President left instructions that Moore was to go on to the wedding. And on the same distraught weekend that he fired Haldeman, Nixon remembered to dictate a personal telegram of congratulations to the groom.

It would be difficult, his close aides

say, to count the personal letters that Nixon has written in the middle of the night. He wrote to old friends and to servicemen and to people he read about, like the Georgia woman who put herself through college while supporting a family on a salary of \$3,000 a year. Sometimes he wrote on yellow pads when he had trouble sleeping at night, sometimes he sandwiched in the letters between the dictation of memoranda.

Few of the letters and still fewer of the kindnesses, found their way into print. Nixon did not trust the press to begin with, and he was obsessed as President with the necessity of creating the image of a cool, confident and isolated leader. His press aides rarely reported on the genuine kindnesses, if they knew about them, and they were instructed to issue such inanities as the statement by press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler that the President did not watch television or read the newspapers.

Nixon, who had the greatest public need for communicating his humanity, did the best to conceal it. He was like the unpopular ballplayer who agrees to visit a sick child in the hospital only on condition that no one reports it.

Nixon's idealism had an equally difficult time breaking through the Nixon mask. Even on issues where his idealism was largely accepted, he managed to raise serious doubts about his motives. His endless litany of "peace with honor" about a war that had not ended came to bother even those who celebrated the Vietnam peace agreement which secured release of American prisoners. But his private expressions showed a keener sensitivity. In 1971 he received a poem from a 15-year-old girl, Debra Fisher of Laurel, Miss., whose father was missing in action in Vietnam. He sent her a handwritten letter in reply.

"Dear Debra," the letter said. "At Camp David last Sunday I was reading again the moving poem you sent me with regard to your father. I want you to know that all our men who are missing in action are uppermost in my thoughts each day and that I am pursuing every possible means to secure their release by the enemy.

"Your father must be very proud of you—first because you love him so much and second because you have a rare ability to express your love so eloquently. God has given you a great gift of expression and I hope that through the years ahead many others will have the opportunity I have had to know the poetic beauty of your thoughts. Mrs. Nixon and I will be praying for you and your father."

RARELY COULD NIXON express his love for others or for country in a way that similarly aroused the emotions of others. But some times, in private, the reserve broke down and the human Nixon came through. Law associate Waller Taylor remembers one day in the early 1960s when he and Nixon were driving in Nixon's Oldsmobile convertible in Orange County and Nixon spontaneously put the top down and drove to Los Angeles at 80 miles an hour, yelling and laughing all the way. "Isn't it great to feel the air of America in your hair," he said. "Isn't it great to feel free."

"And then I remember," continued Taylor, "a couple of times we were flying east and he would start to lecture, above the checkerboards of the farms. There, he would say, is the heartland of America, and he would rehash the beginnings of the law in this country where there were 640 acres to a section. 'That,' he would say with a thump, 'is America. That is the heart and strength of America.'"

The most misplaced quality of this private, public man was that he lacked the gift to say on the stage what he saw in his heart. He did not know this about himself, rather imagining himself a better public person than a pri-

vate one. "In a small group or cocktail party he's not at ease like the ordinary fellow," observes Earl Adams. "But you go to him and say the microphones are all ready and 80 million people will be listening to him, and he's in his glory." He spoke better, of course, in

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the cocktail party, but then Nixon has only rarely been a good judge of himself. In fact, it may not be too much to say that he was ruined by qualities he perceived as virtues while suppressing the humanity that enabled him to survive.

He was always difficult to work for, because he never relaxed, frequently allowed himself to become angry, always kept up the pressure on himself. He tried to hire people who would work as hard as he did, but he couldn't bear to fire those who didn't. "He's chicken-hearted," says an aide from his vice presidential days. "He can't recruit. He can't fire. He doesn't like personal confrontations."

He would have been better off in the White House if he had permitted himself a confrontation or two. But the "last press conference" had taught him not to risk losing his temper. And he was consumed with the idea that he was running out of time.

"They had a five-year plan," says Earl Mazo. "Nixon really wanted to do two days work in one." And a former aide says that Nixon in the White House "really thinks he can go over into that little office in the Executive Office Building of an afternoon and solve a world problem by a feat of concentration and thought . . . And sometimes he can."

This ex-aide recalls the early Nixon days:

"It was like being next to a Bessemer furnace for the staff. The President would have all those notes he had written out on his yellow memoranda pad, and he would say 'Bob, you do this and this and this and I want it done by 9:30. John, you do this and this. Bryce, you do this and so-and-so.' It was toughest for the guys who lived next to the Bessemer furnace, which means Bob and John. It was like getting a hypo in your fanny every day. It was challenging, but it would make your insides boil. He knew so much, he had thought about so many things, he had put down so much on paper. He wanted to do everything he could in the time he had allotted to him . . . If you didn't produce he simply turned to someone else because he didn't fire anyone. Maybe that was one of the reasons the staff grew as large as it did."

The pace was accelerated by Nixon's personality. He never learned to relax, and the White House proved a poor place for learning. As an alternative, he tried to escape whenever he could, preferably to San Clemente or Key Biscayne. "He likes the ocean," says an aide who recalls turning blue while talking with a contented President in the cold current off San Clemente. "It

works for him. And he likes to take long walks on the beach." Frequently in those walks he would be joined by Bebe Rebozo, whom Nixon liked because Rebozo respected his privacy. A White House intimate remembers two hours in which Bebe walked with them along a San Clemente beach and said not a single word. He was the perfect companion for the President.

Rebozo and Robert Abplanalp, the aerosol spray king, were Nixon's closest friends in the White House during the first term. They thought him a great President and master politician and he regarded them as the epitomes of self-made men. Additionally, their

delusions about Nixon's political ability were shared by most people of importance in the White House entourage.

This judgment about Nixon the politician was not the view on Capitol Hill, where Rep. John Rhodes' belief that "Richard Nixon's supposed political acumen is one of the most overrated qualities in Washington" was widely shared by Republican congressmen. Many of them believed that Nixon had lost one election he should have won and lost another race he should never have entered. They knew that he had never learned to deal with Congress. But these views were rarely, if ever, expressed to the President's face. Long after the firing of the first Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, Nixon nourished the belief that he was a better politician than his adversaries.

What Nixon really was, rather than a master politician, was a master student of politics. He learned diligently but he never demonstrated the natural inclination for politics of his immediate predecessors in the White House. In Nixon's case the learning was mechanical and politics was an acquired rather than a natural skill.

He credited his beloved debates with Voorhis for his victory in 1946 and this in turn prompted him to challenge Kennedy in 1960. After his disastrous experience with JFK, he refused to debate Hubert Humphrey in 1968, and he even quit campaigning too early in order not to repeat the mistake he had made against Kennedy of tiring himself out. The success of the 1968 campaign in turn became the basis for Nixon's non-campaign of 1972. Always, Nixon made judgments on the acquired wisdom of the past campaign rather than the requirements of the new one.

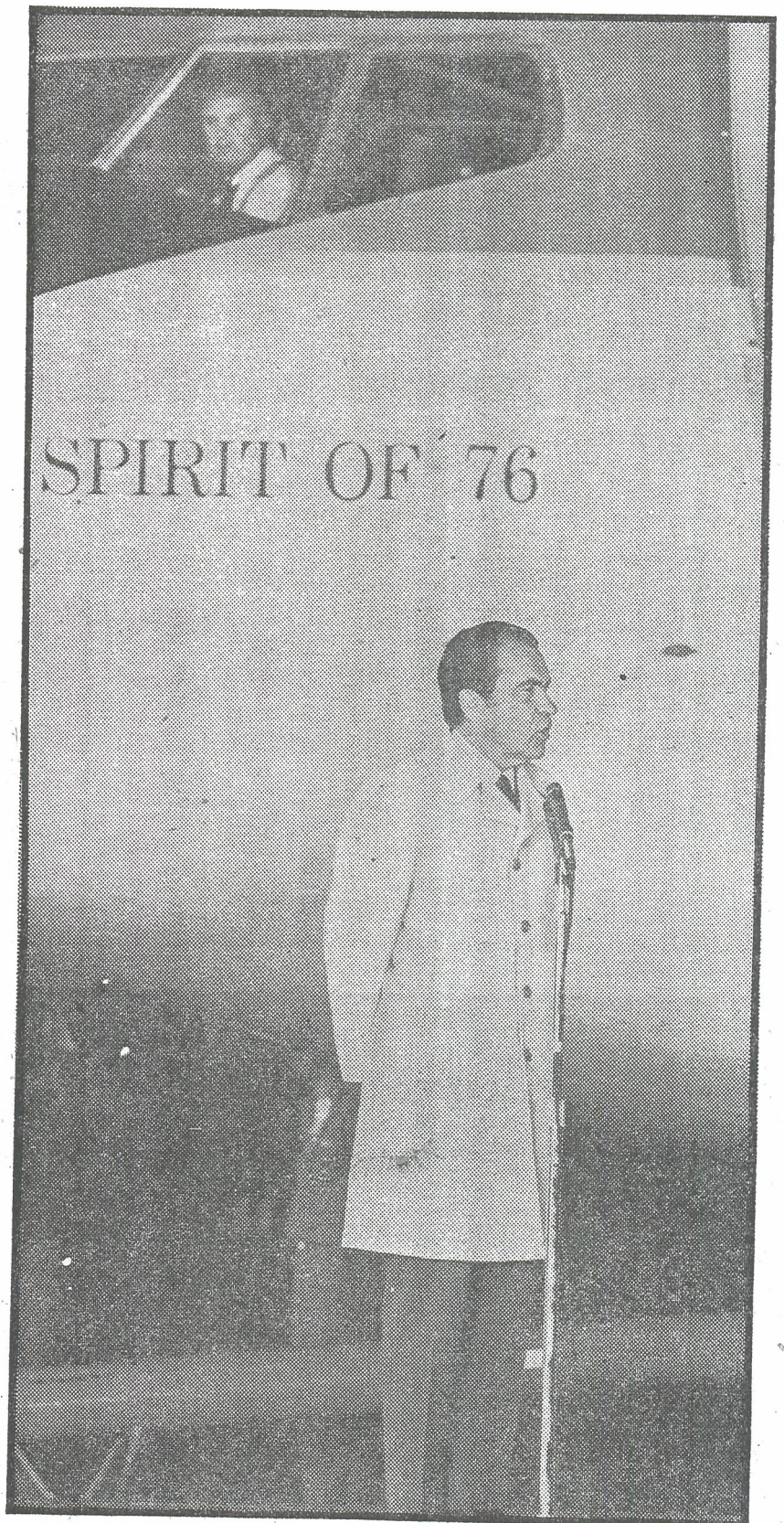
"I contend that Nixon is a person to whom the ends justify the means, and the ends were the presidency so the means had to be political, and he learned the rituals of politics," says Stephen Hess. "But it wasn't instinctive. And when one doesn't learn some-

thing instinctively, it is easier to unlearn it."

AS ALWAYS, THERE was another side to Nixon.

Hess remembers the day in California during the 1962 gubernatorial primary when he prepared a position paper on a flagrantly unconstitutional ballot proposition that would have outlawed the Communists. The issue was a touchy one because Nixon was opposed by a hard-right conservative named Joe Shell, and Hess' paper for Nixon skillfully skirted any definitive stand. "He read the statement," remembers Hess, "and he's got a little john in the office, and he's got to go out and make a speech and he goes into the john to shave, and he says I can't do this. I have to be against this thing. I have to look at myself in the mirror."

Nixon's decision to run for the governorship was a shock to his old friends in California, many of whom regarded the office as a trap from which no politician could rise to the presidency. Some of these friends still are puzzled as to why Nixon decided to run, but there are some suggestions that he was thoroughly bored with the practice of law. One day on a Saturday soon after he returned to California, Nixon was working in the Los Angeles law office alone and he called his old friend Patrick Hillings at poolside to ask him to come down and keep him company. Hillings came after gently reminding Nixon that he was supposed to be living the good life now and didn't have to work on Saturday. It was too late to tell Nixon that. He was so used to a 14-hour workday that he found living too easy for his tastes in Southern California. After his defeat in 1962, he quickly accepted an offer to practice law in New York, and Dick Moore and



other attorneys remember that it was the challenge which lured him there.

But it did not work out for Nixon in New York. In Los Angeles, at least, he was accepted for himself, perhaps because rootlessness itself provides a certain kind of roots in Southern California. He was not similarly accepted in New York. One person who knows him well from those days is convinced that Nixon was snubbed in the "best circles of the legal profession and the swankiest clubs. "He was very sensitive to that sort of thing, and once talked about 'Ivy League bastards' and other things of that sort," says this friend. "He felt he was as good as anyone but here he'd been Vice President for eight years and all that and he wasn't quite an equal. . . . I think Dick got the idea he was laughed at sometimes, even though he did brilliantly as a lawyer, and he couldn't stand that. Maybe that's why he was drawn to John Mitchell, who never snubbed him. It was a class thing."

When Nixon left California he pledged in writing to his wife that he would never enter politics again. There is every indication that this was one time when he said what he meant and

meant what he said. But the lure of the public arena often is irresistible to men who have climbed as close to the pinnacle as Nixon had. With a few exceptions—notably a historic right-of-privacy case involving Life magazine which Nixon ably argued before the Supreme Court—the law was less challenging than public life. Nixon had lost the presidency by the narrowest margin in America history. After the disastrous defeat of Barry Goldwater in 1964, Nixon's old friends began to tell him that he could make it again.

New York, however, had changed Nixon's style. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that Nixon changed his style in New York by a direct and difficult act of human will. He had been deeply embarrassed by the results of the 1962 campaign and by the reaction to his "last press conference," and he was unwilling to again expose himself to ridicule.

"When he said you weren't going to have Nixon to kick around anymore, he really meant it and he wasn't just talking about the press," says Finch. "There is real sensitivity under his scar tissue and he wasn't going to put himself into a position where he could be hurt anymore."

In Finch's view this desire not to be hurt led directly to Nixon's change from a politician who had been accused of being his own campaign manager into a prospective candidate, later a President, who celebrated his own isolation and wanted to "staff everything out." From now on, others would risk the firing line. Nixon would be within—cool, reserved, totally in command. From this decision came Bob Haldeman, the great staffer-outer. From this decision also, Finch suggests, came Watergate.

Watergate, of course, derived from more than one decision alone or even from the series of decisions which arose from the unfortunate choice of Haldeman as chief of staff. The roots of Watergate go deep into the character of Nixon himself, that shy, suspicious character of a man who believed his enemies had tried to destroy him and who could never forgive them for it. "Bigamy, forgery, drunkenness, insanity, thievery, anti-Semitism, perjury, the whole gamut of misconduct in criminal activities—all these were among the charges hurled against me . . ." Nixon had written in 1962 in describing the campaign against him after the conviction of Alger Hiss. Now he was more certain than ever of the purpose of his enemies but he knew that he could never again after the "last press conference" risk another public display of temper. Haldeman permitted Nixon to retreat into the isolation he preferred and, for a time, to screen his own vengefulness from public view. Haldeman became, in some important ways, an extension of Nixon's own character.

His old friends in California and in Congress perceived this change dimly, if at all. They had been Nixon's friends when he did not have the option of iso-

lation and it had been possible for some of them to protect Nixon from himself by making him more accessible than he wanted to be and by talking and arguing as equals.

"And then," says one of his former top aides, "He outpaced his friends and went to the Senate and to the vice presidency. In all these transfigurations he left behind him a small band of confidants, creating a mutual bond and a mutual dependency. It is easy to degenerate into all for one and one for all. And then you are at a new level with a new group of confidants who may not know as much, and you are still mutually dependent. You are President now. You depend on the bad advice of these confidants to rescue you from the bad advice they gave you."

It might be more accurate to say that in the crisis of his presidency Nixon relied on no advice at all. The names of Finch, Klein or Melvin Laird are conspicuously missing from the Watergate transcripts. The transcripts show that when Bryce Harlow is suggested by the President for an unsavory task, Haldeman sneers that Harlow would be unwilling to perform it. Nixon accepts the judgment without comment, and Harlow is never called.

Perhaps this unwillingness to rely on those who might have advised him better is the single most important flaw in Nixon's character. He did not like confrontations, and he consistently relied on those who mirrored his own limited views of his enemies' intentions. "He doesn't really trust himself," says one Republican who has been close to the White House. "He doesn't really have the traits he admires in other men, which is to say he's not strong physically, graceful, coordinated, handsome. He is impressed by people who appear to be tough or know the answers, like the pipe-smoking Mitchell or the decisive Haldeman."

One former White House staff mem-

ber recalls that Nixon always watched John Connally in Cabinet meetings to see how Connally reacted to what he was saying. "Connally seemed so sure of himself," says this aide. "The old man liked that. He wanted to be like Connally."

The contrary manifestation of Nixon's need for self reassurance was his increasing reliance on younger, inexperienced men. Some of Nixon's friends had noticed this as long ago as the 1962 campaign, when Haldeman began to bring in people like Ron Ziegler from his advertising staff. The young men treated Nixon with respect and with awe. They were, said one Nixon friend, "loyal to the notion of loyalty," which is not quite the same as being loyal to the President or even to Nixon.

"Nixon wanted to have people around him who were his own temperament and who would do pretty much what he wanted them to do," says Earl Adams. "But loyalty is more than doing what someone wants you to do. The truly loyal person will tell you when you're going to do something wrong."

Nixon had no such person around him—at least no one that he would listen to. His need for reassurance was too great. Unsure of his own resources and his own goals, he tried to convey a toughness he did not possess. There is much to commend the view of Douglass Hallett, the former Colson aide, that Nixon "always wants to be a Kennedy" and that for all the administration's dislike of the Kennedys and their ways it became "their most fawning mimic."

BUT THE NIXON tragedy goes beyond the imitation of Kennedy. From his first political utterances, Nixon has always seen himself in terms of some historical figure other than himself. He wanted to be a Lincoln, an Eisenhower—most of all a Woodrow Wilson—and he has usually been most comfortable when clothed in the oratorical robes of some dead President. "Nixon is still trying to please his perceived betters," observes former Nixon administrator aide Howard Phillips. "Gaining their approval and regard is important to his self-esteem. In order to get that approval, he seems to go through a process of redefining himself to be someone of whom they will approve. In doing so, he denies the worth of his true self which has been lost and layered over."

Nixon must have known that his own character would be the determinant and that there were ways in which it was found wanting. That is the message of the important introduction to "Six Crises," where Nixon, writing about himself, said, "We must spare no effort to learn all we can and thus sharpen our responses."

He did not learn enough. Though intellectually he was at least the equal of his predecessors, he never overcame the desire to please others that had been inculcated in boyhood and which had carried him further than the boy listening to those train whistles in Yorba Linda had ever dreamed. It had, in fact, carried him too far.

"A long time ago he was an underdog," says a Republican who has observed him closely, "and he still behaves like one. He has all the classic sociological traits of an underdog even when in the majority position. As President, he still acts like a minority. And when people oppose him, it's like when he was on the third-string football team every afternoon and he had to let the first string run over him. It's like when his family was broke. Even when he had achieved the ultimate success he could never be quite secure in it or believe fully in it. It's a damn shame."

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