

Nixon, Long a Master of Adversity, Was

28 Years' Experience No Help on Watergate

By ALDEN WHITMAN

"What particularly distinguished my career from that of other public figures," wrote Richard Milhous Nixon in 1961 with astonishing prescience, "was that I had had the good (or bad) fortune to be in several crisis situations with dimensions far beyond personal consideration." A man with a propensity for crises, who seemed to be able to surmount each one while extracting a personal lesson from it, Mr. Nixon appeared to live a charmed political life in which adversity was only a temporary barrier on the road to personal triumph.

Twice elected to the Presidency, the second time in a record landslide, Mr. Nixon seemed immune from serious challenge. It was a feeling he appeared to share, for he requested that Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture," a triumphant shout of victory and vindication, be played at his Inaugural concert last January. The crisis of re-election had been overcome; he enjoyed unprecedented public approbation, if not affection.

But for the master of crises, another one was developing, one that refused to yield to the methods of solution that he had used at previous junctures in his career. And it was one that raised again a question asked some years ago by a conservative Western Republican politician, an undoubtedly loyal Nixon man: "Who and what is Richard Nixon?"

What brought this question to the forefront was that Mr. Nixon gave the impression for a long time that he did not discern the deepening crisis of confidence in his Presidency engendered by the spiraling Watergate affair. At the outset, Mr. Nixon brushed it off as a minuscule consequence; even last year, when its contours were more fully known, he described it as a "bizarre" circumstance.

Later on, when the sludge of Watergate had clearly invaded the White House, he was seemingly bent on handling it as if it were similar to his previous crises, which he had overcome essentially by deploying the dramatic elements of the conflicts and then toughing out the periods of tension and uncertainty that followed.

Pattern of Response

He appeared to pursue this pattern of response in the impeachment proceedings, where the House Judiciary Committee vote presaged House adoption of a bill of impeachment. And then making public tapes of conversations that showed that he sought to halt an inquiry on Watergate six days after the break-in, he continued to maintain public hope that he could win a Senate trial despite the

vanishing support even among superloyalists. These tapes were divulged under a unanimous Supreme Court ruling in a case that he had bitterly contested.

Earlier publication of Mr. Nixon's edited version of a number of White House conversations about Watergate deepened, if anything, the mystery about him. To many transcript readers, he was trivial and indecisive, a Nixon completely at variance with the masterful hero of "Six Crises."

Transcript readers searched in vain for any discussion by the President of the welfare of the country or the constitutionality of his Watergate actions. Prior to the transcripts he had often been depicted as a tightly controlled, incisive man; but he was now shown letting control over events and persons slip from his grasp, spending hours avoiding any kind of decision—even on a subject so crucial as "hush" money for E. Howard Hunt, one of the Watergate conspirators.

'Inner' Man a Mystery

The papers tended to confirm two character traits that many had discerned in Mr. Nixon—that he was a loner, certain of the loyalty of a very few men, and that he could be vindictive against those he saw as his special enemies. Mr. Nixon's use of expletives and characterizations was also in sharp contrast to the image of himself that he had long sought to project to the public.

Earlier, many observers of Mr. Nixon were puzzled that this finely coordinated political animal could have so miscalculated as to discharge Archibald Cox, the special Watergate prosecutor, last October.

Did he not foresee that this would lead to indignant cries for impeachment or resignation? Had he not seen that Watergate had become far bigger than the initial burglary of the Democratic National Headquarters back in June, 1971, and now stood for corruption of power and for doubts about the President's personal probity?

These questions inevitably led to renewed efforts to ascertain and understand the "inner" Nixon, the off-camera Nixon, the man inside the President, for many realized that, although Mr. Nixon had been in politics a quarter-century, he was admittedly still a baffling figure, one less well publicly known than, say, Calvin Coolidge. Yet much infor-

FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 1974

Overwhelmed by the

Last of Many Crises

mation had accumulated over the years, and whether it answers the conundrum, "Who and what is Richard Nixon?" will certainly be the stuff of analysis for years to come.

Richard Nixon's beginnings were lowly. He was born Jan. 9, 1913, in Yorba Linda, Calif., a small town in the citrus belt near Los Angeles. Both his paternal and maternal forebears were farmers, artisans and tradesmen, people who never experienced even moderate wealth. The first Nixon (the name is a mutation of the Gaelic word meaning "he fail-eth not") came to the Colonies in 1753. The Milhouses were Irish Quakers who came to the country in 1729 and followed the frontier westward.

Mr. Nixon's father, Francis Anthony Nixon, was born on an Ohio farm in 1878 and made his way to California in 1907, settling in the Quaker community of Whittier. His mother, Hannah Milhous, was farm-born in 1885, and moved with her father, an orchardist, to Whittier in 1897. Frank, as Francis was generally called, and Hannah met at a party in 1908 and were married within four months. Afterward Frank worked on his father's ranch, tried his hand at raising oranges and lemons, worked at carpentering and, ultimately, in 1922, purchased a general store and filling station in Whittier.

Richard was the second of five sons, the others being Harold, Donald, Arthur and Edward. Harold and Arthur died in childhood, and in part because of the expenses of their illnesses, Richard's boyhood was passed in frugal circumstances. Nevertheless, the family made determined efforts to provide some extras, scrimping, for example, to buy a piano so that Richard could learn to play.

To make ends meet as well as to instill Quaker teachings of individual self-sufficiency, chores were apportioned among the children. Richard's charge was the family store's vegetable counter, the profits from which went into a fund for his college education.

'Have Seen It Come True'

"I believe in the American Dream because I have seen it come true in my own life," Mr. Nixon once said in surveying his rise from obscurity to eminence, adding on another

occasion: "I sold gas and delivered groceries and met a lot of people. I think this was an invaluable starter on a public career."

His evident ambitiousness as a youth (a trait also marked in his adulthood) made a good impression on the neighbors, according to William Costello's "The Facts About Nixon." They regarded him as "a shy, serious boy who applied himself as avidly to his school books as he did to his household duties."

His outward self-confidence grew in high school when he discovered that he was apt at debating. He won three contests and with them the plaudits of his schoolmates and teachers. One result of this popularity was that he won election in his senior year as manager of student body affairs at Whittier High School.

At Whittier College, a small Quaker institution where he studied from 1930 to 1934, Mr. Nixon majored in history, sharpened his debating skills, and strove diligently to make the football team. Mostly he rode the bench, but, according to his coach, was "wonderful for morale because he'd sit there and cheer the rest of the guys."

At the same time he was learning to act in college plays and to acquire the trick of crying at will. "I taught him how to cry in a play by John Drinkwater, called 'Bird in Hand,'" Dr. Albert Upton, his drama coach, recalled. "He tried conscientiously at rehearsals and he'd get a pretty good lump in his throat and that was all. But on the evenings of the performance, tears ran right out of his eyes. It was beautifully done, those tears!"

Second in Class

Graduating second in his class, Mr. Nixon won a \$250 scholarship to enter the first class at Duke University Law School in Durham, N. C. Coinciding with the Depression, his three years at Duke were passed mostly in unremitting study. His monthly allowance of \$35 gave him little leeway for hijinks, but in any event he did not smoke or dance, and he was indifferent to food and alcohol. Although he later learned to drink sparingly (a martini lasted him a long time), he never cultivated a palate.

"Food has never meant much

to me—it's incidental," he once remarked. "I like hamburger, chili, Spanish dishes, hash and so on better than steak. I guess I'm not a gourmet."

Although Mr. Nixon was not considered outgoing, he was adept at class politics and was elected president of the Duke Bar Association in his senior year. His grades were uniformly excellent, and he was graduated third in his class, but, much to his disappointment, he was rebuffed for a job by Sullivan & Cromwell, the big New York firm, and was obliged to settle for five years of unexciting practice in a Whittier law firm.

"He was thorough. And he had courtroom psychology," Tom Bewley of the Whittier firm said in after years. "He could talk so butter would melt in his mouth, or he could take hold of a cantakerous witness and shake him like a dog."

In his spare time he dabbled in a citrus venture (and lost), taught Sunday school and acted in a Little Theater group. There in 1938 he met Thelma Catherine Ryan, called Pat because she was born March 16, the day before St. Patrick's Day, in 1912. Like Mr. Nixon, Miss Ryan was a small town product who seemed destined to keep on with what she was doing — teaching typing and shorthand at Whittier High School. After a two-year courtship the couple were married June 2, 1940, in a Quaker ceremony.

Off to Wartime Washington

When the United States entered World War II in December, 1941, Mr. Nixon took the opportunity to get out of his Whittier cul-de-sac by going to Washington as an inconspicuous lawyer with the Office of Price Administration. During his seven months there he applied for a Navy commission as a lieutenant (j.g.), which arrived in September, 1942. He served as an operations officer with the South Pacific Air Transport Command, where he earned a reputation as an efficient commander, a past-master at cursing and an artful poker player.

According to a man who took part, "Nixon would play poker for hours, his face like a rock." He was said to have returned from the war with \$10,000 in winnings.

Although Mr. Nixon had many opportunities in his Navy service to form friendships, he appears not to have made intimate associations, no more than he had at law school or during his five years as a Whittier lawyer. Nor did he later in life have many close friends.

Mr. Nixon's closest friends tend to be the newly rich. Two of these intimates are Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo, a real estate speculator and banker in Florida, and Robert Abplanalp, the multimillionaire developer of the aerosol valve. Others are Donald Kendall of Pepsico, Inc., the soft-drink tycoon; John N. Mitchell, the municipal bonds specialist who became Attorney General; Elmer Bobst, the so-called "vitamin king" who made a fortune in pharmaceuticals; and DeWitt Wallace, the wealthy founder of The Reader's Digest.

None of those in the Nixon circle is a leader in the academic, businesses or political



Fred J. Maroon

President Nixon with John D. Ehrlichman, left, and H. R. Haldeman, aides to whom he delegated much authority. Both were obliged to resign because of Watergate.

worlds. Nor does Mr. Nixon appear to have a sense of camaraderie with his former associates in the House and Senate. Even Mr. Nixon's friendship with Mr. Rebozo is not seemingly an exciting one. Asked a couple of years ago what the two liked to do together, Leonard Garment, now a White House counsel, replied that they often sat side by side of an evening sipping a drink and watching Westerns on television.

If Mr. Nixon respected "new money," the self-made also found him a man to their taste: C. Arnholt Smith, the California banker and financier; W. Clement Stone, the Chicago insurance mogul; Ross Perot, the Texas electronics man; and John Connally, the Texas lawyer and oil man. Another Nixon supporter from 1948, albeit a clandestine one, is Edwin W. Pauley, former treasurer of the Democratic National Committee, a conservative and a rich California oil developer.

The support of the rich men developed after he had entered politics and become a national figure. His entry into politics was adventitious. At loose ends in Baltimore after the war and with no civilian career in sight, he was remembered by a Whittier banker as a onetime vigorous debater. The recollection arose when

the Republican leadership in the 12th Congressional District, which embraced Whittier, could not find, even through a newspaper ad, a suitable candidate to oppose Representative Jerry Voorhis, a five-term Democrat, in the 1946 elections.

Mr. Voorhis, a faultless anti-Communist, had nonetheless perturbed conservatives in his district by voting for Federal control of tidelands oil and by working for cheap credit, co-operatives and public power.

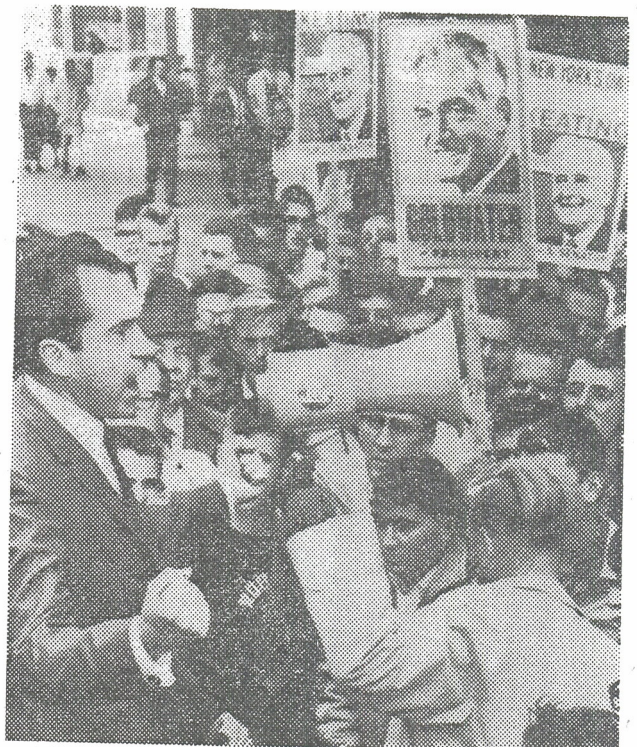
More or less as a last resort, Mr. Nixon was presented to the Republican selection committee, and he responded with a speech denouncing the New Deal and advocating "individual freedoms and all that initiative can produce." He was promptly endorsed and undertook to conduct a "fighting, rocking, socking campaign" against Mr. Voorhis.

Schooled by the late Murray Chotiner, a Los Angeles lawyer with a flair for public relations and for reducing political issues to simple terms, Mr. Nixon billed himself as the "clean, forthright young American who fought for the defense of his country in the stinking mud and jungles of the Solomons" while Mr. Voorhis "stayed safely behind the front in Washington." This attack on his opponent was coupled with a statement that said:

"I want you to know that I am your candidate because there are no special strings attached to me. I have no support from any special interest or pressure group. I welcome the opposition of P.A.C. [the Political Action Committee of the Congress of Industrial Organizations], with its Communist principles and its huge slush funds."

Reputation for Recklessness

It was this tactic of guilt by association that earned Mr. Nixon a reputation for recklessness and lack of ethics, a reputation that was used against him when he ran for national office and was referred to by his critics as "Tricky Dick." What appalled these critics was that Mr. Voorhis was not



Associated Press

In 1964, two years after his defeat in his bid for the Governorship of California, Mr. Nixon was back on the hustings, campaigning for Senator Barry Goldwater and other Republicans in Rochester, N. Y.



Associated Press

As envoy for President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mr. Nixon engaged Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev in the "kitchen debate" in U.S. Exhibit in Moscow in 1959. It was considered high-water mark of his Vice-Presidential career.

endorsed by P.A.C., nor was that organization a Communist one.

The Voorhis campaign set a pattern that was repeated in 1950 when he defeated Helen Gahagan Douglas for a California Senate seat, and again in 1952 when he campaigned for the Vice Presidency. On both occasions Mr. Nixon represented himself as a sterling foe of Communism while suggesting that his opponents were, at the very least, in league with "the international Communist conspiracy."

In four years in the House (he was re-elected without opposition in 1948) Mr. Nixon sponsored four bills or resolutions, none of them acted upon. Notwithstanding, he leaped to national prominence, and by a stroke of luck. One of his committees was the House Committee on un-American Activities, and in the summer of the Presidential election year of 1948 there came before it Jay Vivian Chambers, who had

changed his name to Whittaker Chambers and who swore that he was a former Communist and that he had known Alger Hiss, a former New Dealer and high State Department officer, as a Communist between 1935 and 1937.

The charges produced a national sensation, and it grew with additional hearings on the Hiss case, hearings in which Mr. Nixon played a most prominent role. The case spread over four years and resulted in the jailing of Mr. Hiss for perjury. There was hardly a week in that time that Mr. Nixon's prosecutorial part in the case was not mentioned by the press, radio or television.

The 'Checkers Speech'

In the 1952 campaign, according to Earl Mazo's sympathetic biography of Mr. Nixon, "one might have thought that Alger Hiss was a candidate on the Democratic ticket." Mr. Nixon directly accused President Truman, Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Adlai E. Stevenson, the Democratic candidate, of being "traitors to the high principles in which

many of the nation's Democrats believe." As for Mr. Hiss, he was "the archtraitor of our generation."

These accusations were an echo of those Mr. Nixon had used in his successful Senate campaign against Miss Douglas in 1950, and it was one of the things on Mr. Stevenson's mind when he said in 1952:

"Nixonland is a land of slander and scare, of sly innuendo, of a poison pen and the anonymous telephone call, and hustling, pushing and shoving—the land of smash and grao and anything to win."

If Mr. Nixon ever repented his actions, there has been no record of it. All he said was that winning anything meant a great deal to him. "I never in my life wanted to be left behind," he wrote.

He came close to it, how-

ever, after his nomination for the Vice Presidency in 1952, when it was disclosed that he had been the beneficiary of an \$18,235 slush fund put together by 78 California businessmen to defray his political expenses as Senator. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Republican Presidential candidate, wanted to drop Mr. Nixon from the ticket, but was dissuaded by his backers, who argued that to do so would jeopardize an Eisenhower victory, in which they were heavily engaged.

Mr. Nixon went on television and radio to explain himself. He disclaimed wrongdoing, pleaded personal poverty, attacked Communism and defended a gift to his children of a cocker spaniel called Checkers. The speech said among oth-



Associated Press

As Vice President, Mr. Nixon debated Senator John F. Kennedy on television during the 1960 Presidential campaign. Many feel he lost election as a result of the debates.

er things:

"Pat and I have the satisfaction that every dime that we've got is honestly ours. I should say this—Pat doesn't have a mink coat. But she does

have a respectable Republican cloth coat. And I always tell her that she'd look good in anything."

In his eight years as Vice President, although President Eisenhower dispatched him to a total of 56 countries as a goodwill envoy and permitted him to preside over meetings of the Cabinet and National Security Council when the President was away from Washington, Mr. Nixon did not become a social or personal confidant of the President. He was not one of the President's golfing companions nor a bridge table participant, nor was he often a guest in the family quarters of the White House.

Because of his frequent trips abroad, Mr. Nixon, as Vice President, emerged as a spokesman for American policy. The most celebrated of these trips was his visit to Moscow in 1959 to open the United States exhibition at a fair there. As he walked around the grounds with Nikita S. Khrushchev, the Soviet Premier, the two engaged in an informal debate on the respective rewards of the capitalist and the Soviet systems.

Much of the folksy debate took place in the kitchen of a model house. The two men stood virtually toe to toe, and sometimes the Soviet leader jabbed Mr. Nixon's chest with his thumb for emphasis. The outcome was, of course, inconclusive, but Mr. Nixon was acclaimed at home for the forceful fashion with which he had argued the merits of capitalism.

As Vice President, Mr. Nixon relieved President Eisenhower of many Republican political duties, for which the general had little patience in any case. Rounds of speeches — in the midterm elections of 1954, for example, Mr. Nixon traveled 28,000 miles in 48 days, visiting 31 states, making 204 speeches and holding more than 100 news conferences — solidified Mr. Nixon's support among party officials.

One result of Mr. Nixon's party exertions was his nomination for the Presidency in 1960 to run against John F. Kennedy, the candidate of a somewhat disharmonious Democratic party. Mr. Nixon campaigned with his usual vigor, but he lost to the more youthful Mr. Kennedy (Mr. Nixon was then 47, Mr. Kennedy 43) largely, analysts believe, because he fared badly in a series of television debates with his opponent.

The election results were close, and Mr. Nixon's disappointment was palpable but not crushing. "For me, the evening of my life has not yet come," he wrote in "Six Crises." And he left Washington to practice law in California—he earned \$100,000 in two years—and to run there in 1962 for the Governorship against Gov. Edmund G. Brown.

Having carried California in 1950 by a 35,000 plurality, Mr. Nixon felt certain that the Governorship—a place d'armes for a return to national politics—could easily be his. His defeat was crushing, a loss by 283,000 votes: and his reaction was to

revile the press for alleged misreporting of his campaign and to announce his retirement from politics.

"Well, my plans are to go home. I'm going to get acquainted with my family again," he said in his valedictory news conference. "You won't have Dick Nixon to kick around anymore."

Persuaded to Move East

For a time Mr. Nixon's holiday seemed genuine, for he was both a national and a state loser, and he had, moreover, no base from which to rise. But his wealthy friends were not quite ready to give up on him, and two of them, Mr. Bobst and Mr. Kendall, prevailed on him to forsake an inhospitable California for a more clement New York.

Both men helped to arrange for his association with the conservative but ailing Wall Street firm of Mudge, Stern, Baldwin & Todd by agreeing to transfer their sizable corporate business to the firm if it would

accept Mr. Nixon. He moved to New York in mid-1963, was admitted to the bar and joined the Mudge firm, which changed its name to Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie, Anderson & Mitchell, and which contained William P. Rogers, Mr. Nixon's future Secretary of State, and Mr. Mitchell, his future Attorney General.

The firm's clients were largely big corporations, and its business increased markedly after Mr. Nixon joined it. He appears not to have practiced much courtroom law—he argued only one case—so much as to dispense advice. He told one friend that he was astonished to be called upon by

clients for advice that they could have easily obtained by reading the newspapers and to be paid a \$25,000 fee for a few hours of his time.

Mr. Nixon's New York law business brought him his first substantial wealth and permitted him to move his wife and two daughters, Julie and Tricia, into an elegant and spacious Fifth Avenue cooperative apartment. The Nixons, however, partook only sparingly of the city's social and cultural life. His friends, apart from one or two law partners, included former Gov. Thomas E. Dewey.

Mindful that he was on Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller's turf, Mr. Nixon edged back into politics in New York by giving nonpartisan speeches at fundraising dinners and by making numerous overseas business trips that always seemed to produce a news conference and the question, "Do you plan to seek the Republican nomination in 1964?"

According to "Nixon: A Political Portrait," by Earl Mazo and Stephen Hess, he was interested in the nomination as late as June, 1964, and bowed out then because he was convinced that Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona had the prize within his grasp. In the next four years, however, Mr. Nixon was an exceedingly busy politician. There was almost no fund-raising dinner that he did not attend, and in the 1966 off-year elections he campaigned in 36 states, piling up due bills for the future.

In 1968, he was nominated on the first convention ballot. He chose as his running-mate the little-known Spiro T. Agnew, Governor of Maryland, against Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota and a divided Democratic party. Mr. Nixon was a handy winner.

He won again in 1972 and even more decisively. His Presidency was marked by a start on détente with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, both bêtes-noires of an earlier Nixon, by a painful disengagement from Vietnam, and by an effort to achieve a Middle-east peace settlement.

As President Mr. Nixon handled thousands of papers, and there is every indication that he was a thorough, dogged reader of the documents that came over his desk. Unlike President Kennedy, who was a speed-reader, Mr. Nixon read his papers relatively slowly, absorbing their contents carefully just as he had absorbed the contents of his schoolbooks in college and law school.

Although Mr. Nixon was briefed on the news by staff aides, he read the principal newspapers with some attention. A reporter who wrote an article several years ago about Mr. Nixon and his New York friends was astonished to receive a pleasant, hand-signed letter of approbation. Writers of other articles that captured Mr. Nixon's fancy also received personal letters, although he himself, except on rare occasions, resisted reporters' efforts at informal interviews even for background purposes.

Mr. Nixon's family life is close. He and his wife and their two daughters, now married, see a great deal of each other. Their preoccupations, however, are carefully shielded from the public. Family parties, like Mrs. Nixon's birthday, have generally been off-limits to the press, and those attending have been their closest friends.