

ART HOPPE



Mr. Nixon's Way Out

DURING LAST WEEK'S crisis, frantic White House aides proposed numerous possible scenarios to the President — such as Resignation with Honor and Resignation with Immunity. One scenario that was unfortunately rejected seemed the best of all — Evanescence without Fuss. It went like this:

★ ★ ★

THE ABSENCE of the President went unnoticed for more than a month as The White House routinely went on grinding out press releases declaring his innocence and tossing a tape or two now and then to a growling Congress.

His mysterious disappearance finally became known when he failed to keep an appointment with Rabbi Baruch Korff, the well-known art lover. The stock market went up 53 points.

The Senate was shocked by the news. "We can't have a trial," said Senator Mansfield, "without a defendant." Congressional leaders immediately inspected The White House, declared the office of the President vacant and, under the 25th Amendment, gave it to Gerald Ford.

"I am confident Mr. Nixon is innocent of any wrongdoing whatsoever," said President Ford loyally, "except for obstructing justice, suborning perjury, misprision, felonious moperly and other high crimes and misdemeanors."

Meanwhile, the all-out nationwide hunt for Mr. Nixon began.

★ ★ ★

THE NATION'S ace manhunter, Efrem Zimbalist Jr., was pulled off the Judge Crater case and assigned the grim task of finding Mr. Nixon. He reported directly to President Ford.

"Now where's the first place you'd look?"

mused Mr. Ford.

"We already tried Mount Rushmore, sir," said Zimbalist.

"I seem to have read somewhere about something called 'safe houses'," suggested Mr. Ford.

"We raided both Key Biscayne and San Clemente, sir. Nothing but old Presidential papers with price tags on them."

"Say!" said Mr. Ford. "What about those bank robberies in the Middle West? A dark beetle-browed man and a pale blonde woman? I know he was hard up for money and that is Nixon Country."

"We've nabbed those two, sir. Bonnie and Clyde Schwartzkoff."

"What about those in whose footsteps he might follow?" asked Mr. Ford.

"No luck there, sir. We've checked everybody who's bought a one-way ticket to Costa Rica and they're all clean."

★ ★ ★

THE FIRST break came with the delivery of a tape to The Manchester Union-Leader. On it, Mr. Nixon spoke with his familiar sincerity:

"My fellow Americans. Many well-meaning people have suggested to me that I be impeached, convicted, indicted and sent to jail. But that would be the easy way. And I have never been one to take the easy way.

"I have therefore decided, rightly or wrongly, to do the right thing and spare our great Nation the agony of impeachment and the shame of seeing its President in prison. I have decided to vanish.

"As you know, I am no quitter. And I therefore pledge to you today that I will never quit fighting, for the good of our country, to stay vanished."

President Ford called an emergency Cabinet meeting. "Gentlemen," he said desperately, "we simply have to find Mr. Nixon!"

"Why?" asked the Secretary for Tranquility. There was a long silence around the table.

In the end, a statue of Mr. Nixon was erected overlooking Watergate with the inscription: "In Grateful Memory to Our Departed President." And America lived happily ever after.