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Entering a Week of

By Haynes Johnson

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Richard Nixon and Watergate simply won't go away. Nearly four years after the break-in, two years after the resignation, we are now entering a time of Watergate revisited and Nixon relearned.

Disturbing disclosures are being made. They come in two distinct forms, one through a visual medium, the other through print.

Over at the Kennedy Center they are preparing for the world premiere of "All the President's Men," the Woodward-Bernstein-Redford-Hoffman-unraveling-of-Watergate movie, next

week-end. The film has a powerful political impact. From its opening scene, when color newsreel film shows a triumphant Richard Nixon arriving at the Capitol at night after his first trip to Russia and then being wildly cheered by an assembled Congress inside, the movie strongly evokes the climate of Washington during Watergate. Millions of Americans will view the movie during this presidential year.

And this Monday, on newsstands across America, Newsweek magazine is breaking with tradition and carrying the first of two extensive excerpts from the new Woodward-Bernstein book about Nixon's fall, "The Final Days."

The book contains intimate revelations on virtually every page. It is bound to inspire intense interest, and controversy.

In the news business, reporters will be laboring to produce "hard news" leads out of the welter of new information. Think of the choices:

Nixon, out of control, alternately raging and brooding, at one moment Lear, the other Macbeth, drinking heavily, talking of suicide, inspiring fears about his mental stability and competence among his family and closest advisors. His wife, Pat, lonely, ignored, living a life apart for years, also turning to drink and unable to

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Watergate Revisited . . .

find any solace. His most celebrated associate, Henry Kissinger, secretly monitoring and transcribing all his telephone calls, including those with the President, and at one point removing those most sensitive files to the security of Nelson Rockefeller's New York estate. His other aides, reacting in character and kind to each new blow by expressing sympathy—or sorrow—or cynicism—or betrayal—or selfish concern about their own careers. His principal lieutenant, H. R. Halde- man, speaking with him on 32 separate occasions after leaving the White House, and trying, to the end, to extract a pardon under a scarcely veiled

threat of sending Nixon to jail. His other chief aide, John Ehrlichman, on that final night calling Julie Nixon at her apartment, also urging a pardon, and saying, "It would save a lot of embarrassment to the President."

There is more: previously undis- closed attempts at blackmail, Nixon's lawyers wanting him to resign as early as November of 1973 and Nixon asking one of them to manufacture evidence in his defense, candid scenes with congressmen and senators (Big Jim East- land of Mississippi, the President's man, telling Nixon, "I don't care if you're guilty or innocent, I'll vote for you"; Barry Goldwater, at the end,

suddenly realizing he'd never even had a real conversation with Nixon, didn't even like him, concluding Nixon was off his head, had been for some time, and probably knew about the Water- gate break-in in advance), Nixon un- happy with choosing Ford as his new Vice President, feeling pressured into it, and sending back a pen he used to sign the nomination with the angry message: "Here's the damn pen I signed Jerry Ford's nomination with."

Other incidents leap out. Told in- dividually, they are either embarrass- ing, sordid, outrageous, petty, sad or

See NIXON, A6, Col. 1



Associated Press

"The President's military aide joked that his duties included briefing Nixon on how to kiss his wife."

NIXON, From A1

poignant. But the power of this drama lies not in a single episode; the collective whole is greater than any of its parts. This account of Nixon's fall succeeds where so many novelists have failed—it captures the real Washington and it deals with real people, many of whom still wield great power. That is both a source of its strength, and of its controversial nature.

Woodward and Bernstein in this book do more than report hitherto unreported scenes. They place the reader in the room with the characters, and carry the story forward in a taut narrative style. They also employ the techniques of a novelist, and, like a Joseph Conrad narrator, are often omniscient in describing the innermost thoughts and emotions of the actors.

Thus, we are told not only what is happening, but as in fiction, often what people are thinking—Haig, Kissinger, Buzhardt, St. Clair, Sirica, Jaworski, David Eisenhower and lesser characters. In many cases, they undoubtedly will react strongly to what appears. Criticism about "psycho-journalism" being practiced surely will be heard.

Woodward and Bernstein interviewed 394 people for their book, and spent more than a year preparing it. In describing their technique, they say in their foreword: "Some persons spent dozens of hours with us and volunteered information freely; one person was interviewed 17 times. Many supplied us with contemporaneous notes, memoranda, correspondence, logs, calendars and diaries. Others granted interviews simply to give their version of events or to respond to information we had obtained elsewhere. A few, including President Nixon, declined to be interviewed."

Although they guaranteed anonymity to each person interviewed, any reading of the narrative makes clear the identity of many of their sources.

While the picture of Nixon and his family provides the most intimate disclosures, perhaps the single most devastating portrait deals with Henry Kissinger.

"A code of silence was upheld rigidly by those near Kissinger," the writers say, "the same way a Capitol Hill staff might protect its alcoholic congressman boss. Protecting Kissinger didn't mean shielding his private life from public view. It meant keeping Kissinger's personal view of Richard Nixon secret—from the public, from the press and from the President's own staff. Though mitigated by admiration for certain elements of the Nixon character, Kissinger's basic attitude toward the President was one of loathing and contempt."

They say Kissinger's key aides did not believe all of the secretary's "negative feelings toward the President were justified. His frequent descriptions of

apply to Kissinger as to the President, they believed. But at least Kissinger was not sloppy. Even at his worst, Kissinger was less *dangerous*."

In the early days of the Nixon administration, they show Kissinger as frustrated and angry at being cut off from the President by Haldeman and Ehrlichman, whom he terms "idiots" and "Nazis." They, in turn, openly ridicule Kissinger, jokingly insinuating that he was "queer."

(The book also describes Alexander Haig as indulging in such personal epithets: "Haig sometimes referred to the President as an inherently weak man who lacked guts. He joked that Nixon and Bebe Rebozo had a homosexual relationship, imitating what he called the President's limp-wrist manner.")

Kissinger is quoted as calling Nixon "our meatball President," as saying he possessed a "second-rate mind," and as making other unflattering characterizations. To Kissinger's aides, these traits were familiar, the writers say. "Kissinger's assistants knew his habit of making scathing, derogatory comments about nearly everyone. Each had heard himself called a 'second-rate mind' or worse. The security adviser had referred to one colleague as a 'psychopathic-homosexual.'"

What surely will inspire more controversy about Kissinger are the revelations about his monitoring system.

"Almost from the beginning, Kissinger had secretly had all his telephone calls, including those with the President, monitored and transcribed," the book states. "The conversations gave Kissinger's assistants enough information about the President to alarm them. Nixon rambled, he made thoughtless remarks and suggestions about people and policy, he sometimes slurred his words as if he had been drinking heavily. His ignorance of important subjects suggested he was lazy and unprepared for the kinds of decisions which require thoughtful consideration. His nasty references about the inferior intelligence of blacks revealed a deep prejudice.

"Like Kissinger's personal view of Nixon, the existence of Kissinger's clandestine monitoring system was a zealously guarded secret. The practice had begun simply enough in 1969, with a secretary listening to each of Kissinger's phone calls and transcribing in shorthand. A special switch enabled the secretaries in Kissinger's outer office to deactivate the microphone on their telephone extensions. Early in

1970, the system became more elaborate and Kissinger began tape-recording his telephone calls. An IBM Dictabelt machine, housed in the credenza behind his secretary's desk and hooked into his telephone, was automatically activated when the telephone receiver was picked up. Eventually, several Dictabelt machines were plugged into the phone system, insuring that there were always standby recorders if one failed or ran out of tape."

Kissinger, in this account, took the monitoring seriously, particularly his conversations with Nixon. Eight other phones were connected to Kissinger's direct line with Nixon to facilitate monitoring and transcribing. In time, Kissinger is said to have become so concerned about the security of his transcripts and personal papers that he moved some of the most sensitive to Nelson Rockefeller's Pocantico Hills estate.

"He intimated to associates that he feared Haldeman and Ehrlichman might try to steal them," Woodward and Bernstein report.

Later, these files were returned to the White House. A legal adviser had reminded Kissinger, the book says, that it was against the law to store classified documents outside government facilities.

In time, Kissinger established a more personal relationship with Nixon, but

he never apparently lost his sense of distrust and uneasiness about the President. At least, so the authors conclude.

Nixon is even more complicated. The picture that comes through probably will not satisfy either Nixon's detractors or his defenders. Despite the unsettling account of the President's increasing withdrawal from reality, his sleeplessness, his defensiveness, and his outright lying, the writers treat Nixon's decline sympathetically. There is no sense of keyhole gossip. Indeed, the circumspect, understated nature of the varying incidents involving Nixon adds to the feeling of tragedy.

For instance:

A few days before Christmas of 1973, the last holiday Nixon will spend in the White House, he invites a small group of trusted friends and political associates to join the family for dinner. As dinner progresses, and Nixon attempts to persuade them the worst is over, the President begins slurring his words. He experiences difficulty expressing his thoughts. His guests are disturbed. The next day Barry Goldwater calls Bryce Harlow, another of the guests that night.

"Is the President off his rocker?" Goldwater asks.

"No," Harlow replies. "He was drunk."

On another occasion, the writers describe a scene where Nixon "drunkenly relayed to Dr. Kissinger the Vietnam military policy of his friend Bebe Rebozo." Kissinger tells his aides about the call. For a time, they say, Alexander Haig refers to the President as "our drunken friend."

As the evidence accumulates and the circle draws ever closer around him, Nixon's family reacts with increasing concern. His sons-in-law are depicted as being especially disturbed:

"For months, David [Eisenhower] had been 'waiting for Mr. Nixon to go bananas,' as he sometimes phrased it. David thought the President might commit suicide, David seemed convinced Nixon would never leave the White House alive."

Only days before the resignation, Sen. Robert Griffin of Michigan, a leading Republican and long-time Nixon supporter, gets a call from Ed Cox, Tricia Nixon's husband:

"Cox sounded distraught. He was

"The President . . ." (Edward) Cox began "The President was up walking the halls last night . . . giving speeches and talking to the pictures on the wall."



Nixon as irrational, insecure and maniacal could at times just as easily

worried about the President's mental health. The President was not sleeping, and he had been drinking. The man couldn't take it much longer, Cox said. The President had been acting irrationally."

Griffin, the book recounts, interrupts. He is reassuring. He has met

with Nixon recently, and the President has been rational.

"That was the problem, Cox replied. The President went up and down. He came back from meetings and was not rational, though he had been fine at the meeting.

"The President . . ." Cox began. His voice rose momentarily. "The President was up walking the halls last night, talking to pictures of former Presidents—giving speeches and talking to the pictures on the wall."

Cox warns Griffin, according to the book, that "The President might take his own life."

The question of suicide, or the wish for death, crops up again and again. One of the sadder scenes is when Nixon journeys to the Middle East in June of 1974, only weeks before the end. He has listened to the fatal tapes of June 23—the "smoking gun" that his staunchest supporters keep demanding his critics produce—and he has been told by his doctors that he has phlebitis. It is dangerous, possibly fatal. He must not subject himself to the physically wearying schedule. Nixon not only insists, he courts further danger: Ignoring his security agents' pleas about taking special precautions from assassins, he recklessly stands, unprotected, and faces vast crowds all along a train route in Egypt. Then he plunges into crowds like a man obsessed.

"You can't protect a President who wants to kill himself," Dick Keiser, a Secret Service agent, is quoted as saying.

Alexander Haig is equally worried. Haig, who comes over as the most enigmatic character in the book, has gone from being Kissinger's chief deputy to Nixon's chief of staff at the end. The writers show him also fearful of a presidential suicide.

"Over the past months, there had been certain references to death and suicide. At first they were oblique and often expressed in Nixon's impatient manner; the President was thinking out loud, probably. This week, Nixon had finally approached the subject head on. The two men had been alone.

"'You fellows in your business,' the President began, meaning the Army, which he always seemed to consider Haig's real business, 'you have a way of handling problems like this. Somebody leaves a pistol in the drawer.' Haig waited.

"'I don't have a pistol,' the President said sadly, as if it were one more deprivation in a long history of underprivilege, as if he were half asking to be given one. It was the same tone he used when he talked about his parents not having had any money."

After this, the writers say Haig called the President's doctors, ordered that all pills be denied Nixon, and that the sleeping pills and tranquilizers he was using be taken away. Haig, they report, compared Nixon's behavior to Capt. Queeg.

Other Nixon character traits are riveting.

When he began practicing law in New York, earning big money, Nixon acquired a taste for expensive wines. In the White House the erstwhile poor boy from Whittier ordered the presidential yacht, Sequoia, stocked with his favorite, a 1966 Chateau

Margaux. That label then sold for about \$30 a bottle. But Nixon secretly meant that vintage to be kept for himself. He issued orders to stewards aboard the yacht. When he entertained large groups of congressmen on those nighttime cruises down the Potomac, "his guests were to be served a rather good six-dollar wine; his glass was to be filled from a bottle of Chateau Margaux wrapped in a towel." At the table, only Nixon knew the difference.

Those who dealt with Nixon had strong impressions of his complex nature. Depending on how well they knew him, they often seem uncertain about who was the real Nixon. When the transcripts of Nixon's taped conversations were released, Arthur Burns is shown reflecting on the ugliness of the conversations. He knew that Kissinger believed Nixon to be anti-Semitic, the book says, but Burns didn't believe that. Still, Burns was troubled:

"There were, however, ugly strands of prejudice in the man, Burns had concluded, and he was not surprised that there were, apparently, anti-Semitic remarks on the tapes. The President really didn't have love for humanity, Burns believed. Why should Nixon love Jews any more than Japanese or Italians or Catholics? Nixon regularly employed epithets for whole sections of mankind, he knew."

In other passages, Nixon is shown trembling with rage, often shouting out his orders and frustrations at harried aides, denying the allegations against him, objecting strenuously to any adverse implications, and personally taking the major hand in the wholesale editing of his transcripts before their release. Nixon's lawyers are shown as bothered by the ethics of his slashing out long, verbatim—and relevant—Watergate passages hour after hour in bold marks from his pen. And they come to recognize another trait, according to the book—Nixon's capacity for deceit.

An incident:

The notorious 18½-minute gap on a critical early Nixon-Haldeman tape has been detected. Fred Buzhardt, a principal Nixon legal aide, is delicately questioning the President about what might have happened. The President's manner immediately strikes the lawyer:

"He discerned that the President was extremely concerned about the gap, but there was something evasive in Nixon's approach, something disturbing about his reaction. To Buzhardt, he seemed to be suggesting alternative explanations for the lawyer's benefit, speculating on various excuses as if to say, 'Well, couldn't we go with one of those versions?'"

"Buzhardt prided himself on being able to tell when the President was lying. Usually it wasn't difficult. Nixon was perhaps the most transparent liar he had ever met. Almost invariably when the President lied, he would repeat himself, sometimes as often as three times—as if he were trying to convince himself. But this time Buzhardt couldn't tell. One moment he thought Nixon was responsible, at another he suspected Rose Mary Woods."

The book offers a plausible answer to one of the most frequently asked Watergate questions: Why didn't Nixon destroy his tapes? At one point,

Pat Buchanan, a presidential speech writer, recommends just that. Build a bonfire. Nixon responds favorably to the idea. But his aides unanimously disagree. It is too late. The tapes have been subpoenaed. They are potential evidence in criminal trials; destroying them would in itself be an obstruction of justice and an impeachable offense. Worse, it would appear to be a clear admission of guilt. After both Haig and Buzhardt offer these arguments, Nixon appears to reject the destruction idea. He assures them nothing on the tapes can hurt him. At most a few ambiguous statements that might be taken out of context. Nothing more.

Nixon tries out the same idea of destroying the tapes on another lawyer, his old associate Leonard Garment. Again, he is told it is too late. The idea is dropped.

The book does offer at least one inside view of how the tapes were doctored. At one point, the writers quote Pat Buchanan as saying:

"Rose knows she erased a good part of it. She was protecting him. I've never asked her and she's never told me what happened. It's not hard to figure. After Rose had erased the first part the Old Man would say, 'Oh, my goodness, Rose, somebody left the tape on.'"

The writers continue:

"At this point in telling the story

Buchanan would imitate Nixon closing his eyes and pushing the button that erased the rest of the 18½ minutes. Buchanan's theory was that Nixon gave the tape to Woods because she would know what to do with it . . . When he got to the part about the President closing his eyes, Buchanan would laugh uproariously."

But there is nothing remotely funny about the Kafkaesque sense of fear and suspicion within the Nixon White House. "Even in the security of the White House, they were afraid of leaving the tapes alone for a few minutes in a locked room," the authors say at one point, in describing the feelings of lawyers listening alone to the tapes.

One of the clearest examples of Nixon's desperate struggle to save himself, even if it means misleading everyone around him, involves John Dean. Nixon attempts totally to discredit Dean. "I have Dean on tape," he tells Henry Petersen, the man in charge of the Justice Department's initial Watergate investigation. He is referring to Dean's public accusation that an April 15th White House conversation with Nixon clearly puts the President in the middle of the cover-up.

When Nixon gives this information, his tape-recording system is still secret. Petersen mentions the Dean "tape" to Archibald Cox, to assure the first special prosecutor of Nixon's innocence. Cox immediately asks the White House for the April 15th tape. Nixon demurs. There is no "tape." Petersen misunderstood him, misquoted him. It was a Dictabelt recording, not a tape. When the taping system is revealed, and subpoenas are issued, the April 15th Dean-Nixon tape is missing. It inadvertently wasn't recorded, the White House says.

Cox then asks for the Dictabelt. The President refuses. Executive privilege. In the White House, Nixon's lawyers begin searching for the Dictabelt. They can't find it. When the President is told how bad it will look if both the April 15th tape, and his own Dictabelt recorded recollection of that day are missing, Nixon's reply to a White House lawyer is chilling:

"Why can't we make a new Dictabelt?"

At that point the unacceptable fact of Nixon's guilt begins to sink into some of his closest aides. They, too, are being swept unwillingly into the



"For months, David (Eisenhower) had been 'waiting for Mr. Nixon to go bananas,' as he sometimes phrased it. David thought the President might commit suicide."

conspiracy.

No one in the White House, or, indeed, in Washington, could escape being affected by the consuming Watergate story as it twisted, turned, and finally engulfed the President and all those around him. They were all, in a sense, victims, and probably none more

than the President's wife, Pat. Those last months became increasingly lonely ones for Mrs. Nixon, the book says. Her public appearances became less frequent and shorter, and she began spending more and more of her days in her pale yellow bedroom on the second floor of the White House. More often than not, in those final days, her luncheon tray would be returned with the food untouched. The book sketches this picture:

"When she and the President dined alone, there was always a great rush to get the food from the kitchen to the table. Often the Nixons had been seated for only a minute before the butlers started pressing to serve them.

"Why the big rush? a member of the kitchen staff had asked.

"A minute is a long time when you're not talking," a butler had explained.

"On Camp David weekends, the President and his wife hardly saw each other. When they did, silence usually prevailed. Backstairs their distance was an open secret. Marine Lieutenant Colonel Jack Brennan, the President's military aide, joked that his duties included briefing Nixon on how to kiss his wife.

"Mrs. Nixon had always hated being a political wife. Since Nixon had come to Washington as a Congressman, she had yearned to return permanently with her husband and children to California and live like an ordinary American family.

"She and her husband had not really been close since the early 1960s, the First Lady confided to one of her White House physicians. She had wanted to divorce him after his 1962 defeat in the California gubernatorial campaign. She tried, and failed, to win his promise not to seek office again. Her rejection of his advances since then had seemed to shut something off inside Nixon. But they had stuck it out.

"Watergate, and the tapes particularly, widened the gap. Despite the rein she kept on her emotions, the transcripts had visibly disturbed her. 'How foolish to have tapes' she told her few friends and several chosen assistants. She would then smile or laugh nervously. The tapes were like love letters, she said. They should have been burned or destroyed.

"The White House physicians were worried about the First Lady. She had returned from a South American trip in April 1973 distraught and even more underweight than usual. She was becoming more and more reclusive, and drinking heavily. On several occasions members of the household staff came upon her in the pantry of the second-floor kitchen, where the liquor was kept, in the early afternoon. Awkwardly, she had tried to hide her tumbler of bourbon on the rocks."

Of Richard Nixon himself, our most tortured presidential figure, millions of words already have been written. In

the years to come innumerable analyses undoubtedly will appear. But there is, in this latest account, an intriguing possible key to Nixon's true character.

After his secret taping system was surprisingly disclosed, Nixon gave Fred Buzhardt some of his personal and most private thoughts in the form of Dictabelts. They contained recordings of his daily reflections. Buzhardt listened, and instantly realized these clearly never had been intended to be heard by anyone else. Nixon hadn't even let his trusted Rose Woods transcribe them. Why he gave them to Buzhardt is somewhat unclear. Nixon himself implied they might allay his lawyer's suspicions. To quote the book again:

"From those recordings—sometimes they were small cassettes—Buzhardt believed he had heard Nixon with his defenses peeled away. It was rare for a man in such a public position to keep so truthful a diary, Buzhardt told Haig. Normally the diaries of public men serve to provide a cover story for history. The Nixon dictations were a stark contrast. Buzhardt said that his own most emotional moments in all of Watergate had come as he listened to the President reveal his emotions. The tapes provided a dark, almost Dostoevskian journey into Nixon's fears, obsessions, hostilities, passions and inadequacies.

"Buzhardt, who had spent years consulting doctors about his mother's mental illness, felt that the dictating sessions were genuine therapy for Nixon. The lawyer would not reveal any details, even to Haig. He would say only that Nixon had talked out of his real feelings and, oddly, he would discourse on everyday occurrences—the weather, the flowers in the White House garden, birds."

It probably comes as no great surprise, then, to hear Nixon, at the end, being quoted as discussing the prospect of jail with an air of resignation. If they wanted to put him in prison, let them. He referred to Gandhi and other political prisoners. They had written their memoirs from a jail cell. "The best writing done by politicians has been done from jail."

He didn't have to, of course. Even now, we are told, he is working on those memoirs from the security and comfort of his own Elba, at San Clemente in California. San Clemente. From the Spanish, and long before that the Romans, and then back into the English. Clement: Merciful, lenient, compassionate, mild. Richard Nixon now has his pardon, if not his peace, but the memory of his actions has not yet faded. It still haunts our lives and invades our dreams.



United Press International

“Ignoring his security agents’ pleas . . . he recklessly stands, unprotected, and faces vast crowds all along a train route in Egypt.”