

# Haldeman Says Nixon Had No Booze Worry

Mission, Kan.

Although Richard Nixon enjoyed an occasional drink and often appeared to be drunk late at night, the former President never had a drinking problem, according to Mr. Nixon's former White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman.

"In all the thousands of hours I spent with Richard Nixon during an association of more than 16 years, all over the world, under all conditions and circumstances and in times of great elation and deep depression, I never saw any indication of a so-called 'drinking problem,'" Haldeman wrote in the second of a five-part series of newspaper articles to be published today.\*

Haldeman said his former boss would have a couple of drinks before dinner sometimes, usually on weekends, and frequently had wine with his dinner.

"But he never appeared to me to have a problem handling liquor, or depending on it to function in his capacity as President," Haldeman said.

Haldeman, who resigned in 1973 and later was convicted of taking part in the Watergate cover-up, gave an example from the 1968 presidential campaign when Mr. Nixon appeared to be drunk but had only had a half-bottle of beer.

"I observed the same pattern often before and in subsequent years of our association," Haldeman said. "When Nixon was tired and unwinding, he often had a bottle of beer before going to bed. Sometimes he took a sleeping pill, especially if he had a lot on his mind and was tense. This combination of exhaustion and beer tended to produce the groggy look and the slurred talk one usually associates with intoxication.

"It may have had something to do with Nixon's metabolism. But that night, as on many similar

occasions around the country at a late hour, the process was repeated."

In the first part of the series, published yesterday,\* Haldeman suggested that Mr. Nixon made a "tragic mistake" just before his resignation by failing to grant blanket pardons for every person connected with the Watergate scandal and all Vietnam draft evaders.

Haldeman also said Mr. Nixon and his top aides mishandled the Watergate case from the outset because they were "afraid" the investigation would lead to top administration officials.

"There was constant errors in judgment from the beginning... our greatest mistake was in not getting ahead of the game at the outset, finding out who were culpable, and bringing them to justice. The President and I, together with John Ehrlichman, never quite made enough tough moves.

"We were all afraid to find out. Afraid that what we suspected might be the case, would, in fact, turn out to be the case — that it went very high up, to Jeb Magruder and even to John Mitchell..."

Haldeman was convicted in the Watergate cover-up and sentenced to 2½ to 8 years in prison, a sentence he is appealing.

Haldeman said he urged Mr. Nixon to issue the pardons for Watergate defendants and draft evaders during a telephone conversation Aug. 7, 1974, one day before Mr. Nixon announced to the nation he was leaving the White House because of Watergate. He said Mr. Nixon called him in Newport Beach, Calif.\* to tell him he had decided to resign.

"If you're going to leave office, I told Nixon, you should take all the traumas of Watergate and Vietnam with you. President Ford would then have a chance to start with a clean slate. With the horrors behind him."

Haldeman said Mr. Nixon replied, "I'll give it some thought. I appreciate your recommendation, Bob."

"I think it was a tragic mistake for the political good of the nation as well as for myself and all the others involved that the blanket pardons I recommended were not given," Haldeman said.

United Press

\*Do not have first installment. It <sup>was</sup> ~~may have been~~ published 20 Jun, a Sunday.

In file: ~~xxxx~~ third, fourth and fifth installments, 22, 23, 24 Jun 76.

\*\*Woodward and Bernstein say Haldeman was in WX 7 Aug; Final Days, p. 407.