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The Dragon Slayer

THE UNITED STATES had throttled its foes with steel. Now it was time to stand down and go home. Navy lieutenant John Renneburg was stationed at the Glenn L. Martin Company aeronautics complex near Baltimore in the summer of 1945. It was a sprawling plant where the firm's big flying boats were built, then tested on the Chesapeake's tranquil waters. In a single year at the conflict's peak, American factories churned out ninety-six thousand warplanes—almost as many as those manufactured by Nazi Germany in seven years of war. The Martin plant was emblematic: one of the largest aviation works in the world, with fifty thousand employees building seaplanes, bombers, and other aircraft.

With victory, the nation faced a vast demobilization. The press brimmed with foreboding about the pain of "reconversion" to a peacetime economy. The army sent out thirty thousand telegrams canceling 95 percent of its orders for artillery, tanks, and other instruments of war. The navy stopped construction on a hundred ships. What the government needed now were regiments of lawyers to settle its contracts. That was Lieutenant Renneburg's job until new orders arrived. He was going home, just as soon as he could train a replacement.

The man the navy sent was a dark-haired, dark-eyed veteran of the fighting in the Pacific, Lieutenant Richard Nixon. After returning from the Solomon Islands, Nixon had been given a course on federal contracting. He and his wife, Pat, bounced from Washington to Philadelphia to New York and ultimately to Stansbury Manor, a complex of two-story apartment buildings on a cove near the Martin airfield. In this pleasant backwater, he and Renneburg spent their days haggling with the firm's accountants on behalf of the navy's Bureau of Aeronautics.

Renneburg found Nixon smart and serious, yet amiable. The work was demanding, "and about the only chance we would have to relax would be when we would walk down to the officers' mess," a bit more than a quarter

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and swapped stories about their wartime experiences. Inevitably, the conversation turned to civilian life, Renneburg remembered, and one day "I asked him what he was planning to do."

It was a warm day, Indian summer. Nixon didn't really know, he told his colleague as they ambled. The navy had offered him a promotion to commander. The world of business beckoned, and he and Pat were entranced by Manhattan. If nothing else turned up, his law partners had kept his old job open in his little hometown of Whittier, California. And then—out of the blue, Nixon said—he had gotten a letter from some folks back home who wanted him to run for Congress. It was a long shot: he would be challenging a five-term incumbent. Nevertheless, intrigued, he had waited for the cheaper nightly long-distance rates and discussed it over the telephone.

"I'm not a politician," Nixon told Renneburg. "I probably would be defeated."

"I hope they didn't reverse the charges," his colleague said.

"No, they didn't." Nixon smiled. "They seemed to be serious."

Renneburg urged him to accept the offer. He admired Nixon's qualities and thought he'd make a good congressman—a voice for a new generation in uniform coming home from war and seeking to build a better world.

"Even if you get defeated, you might get some clients," Renneburg told him. "Somebody might remember the name of Nixon."

For the very few who knew him well, the notion of "Congressman Nixon" was not exceptionally odd. All his life, he'd displayed an interest in history and politics. He was disciplined, hardworking, bright, and earnest, and had shown a rudimentary knack at winning school and club elections in Whittier. But those whipstitch contests were years ago. The congressman who represented the Twelfth Congressional District—Representative Jerry Voorhis—was a sturdy veteran of the House Democratic majority propelled to office by Franklin D. Roosevelt's mighty New Deal coalition. In polls of the capital's press corps, and of his fellow congressmen, the handsome, pipe-smoking Voorhis won top-ten rankings for diligence and integrity. He was the son of a retired automobile executive whose wealth could finance his campaigns. His constituent service earned him the loyalty of the district's farmers and citrus ranchers, for whom he ably labored on the House Agriculture Committee, a coveted perch. In the three most recent elections, the Republicans had tried to supplant him with a popular coach, a celebrity preacher, and a respected businessman. He had whipped them all.

Richard Nixon—Dick, to his friends and family; Nick in the navy; Nixie in college and Gus during law school—was thirty-two years old in 1945; not a bad-looking guy in his dress blues. "He looked so different: younger, real tanned, thinner, and of course very handsome in his blue uniform with all the braid and the white cap," Pat wrote his parents.

Age would accentuate the flaws in his features—jowls, the spatulate nose and receding hairline—but not for decades. His hair was thick and black and wavy. His deep-set eyes were the darkest brown, and his face pleasantly symmetrical, especially if he'd just relax and grin. Glee clubs and choirs prized his voice, and he was a more than capable pianist. He liked Chopin and Brahms. "He is a romanticist at heart, but he doesn't like to let this show," a music teacher would recall.

Nixon had played on the football team in college, but only because they needed bodies to fill out the squad, for he was no athlete. His feet were big, his chest narrow, and his shoulders sloped. The navy had taught him to stand up straight, but his natural posture was to slouch, hands dangling.

His mind was his defining feature. It was sharp and analytical; his memory remarkable. He enjoyed little more than sprawling in an armchair with a yellow legal pad, chin on his chest, legs on a footrest, thoughts marching through his head. He liked it there, in that restless mind. It was where, in the unhappy times of his boyhood, he had fled. He was a daydreamer, a cloud counter, a bookworm as a youth, and at night he would lie in bed listening to the train whistles, conjuring the marvelous places he would go. He could be there with you without being there, seem like he was listening while his thoughts were far away. He passed folks on the street and didn't see them; walked into them in hallways, offered a distracted nod and half a wave, and kept going. Some thought he was stuck-up, rude, or dour.

He wasn't easy to like. He knew it, and it hurt. "All over town people talk about what a good natured fellow Don is and wonder how he could have such a sour puss brother," he had written from the South Pacific in 1943, describing himself in a wartime "V mail" to his niece Laurene, the newborn baby daughter of his brother Donald. He welcomed her to the world, gave her "the scuttlebutt about your new relations," and touched, as a Quaker, on war's iniquity: "My hope for you is that when you are 17 your boyfriend won't have to use V mail to write."

It was a sweet letter, and some who saw that side of him found his awkwardness, that ungainly shyness, endearing. A friend liked to tell a story about Dick helping out with the dishes after dinner, leaving the kitchen and drifting through the house with a single glass, wiping it over and

an upcoming high school debate. It was a distinctive personality, peculiar even. Some accepted his preoccupation, but others saw calculation and gave him no credit for his dreaming.

He was given to small kindnesses, to bringing red roses to shut-ins, or sending little gifts of money to those who had fallen on hard times. At law school he befriended a disabled young man, put him on his ticket in a student election, and carried him up granite steps to class. He was a striver, a self-improver, and so—given the faults in his personality—an actor. If in small talk he was achingly inept, during high school and college he had thrust himself onstage—in school plays, collegiate debate, and public speaking competitions. He became a fine performer, his teachers recalled. His self-discipline was legendary, his preparation thorough. Others might come to rehearsal without knowing their lines; not Dick Nixon. He could lose himself in craft, ingest emotions, and affect and excite an audience. He yearned, above all, to be a great man. He had that sense of drama.

Nixon was looking to jump-start his life in those weeks after the war for, truth be told, he was a bit of a flop. He had excelled in high school and been offered an opportunity to study at Harvard or Yale, but his family's tottering finances prohibited it, and so he had attended little Whittier College, enrollment four hundred, where the faculty was well intentioned but undistinguished. There he could live at home and continue to work at his father's grocery store. It galled him. The crowning moment in his schooling was the day he was accepted, with a scholarship, to study law at Duke University. He showed not just happiness, but bliss at the prospect of escape. He was "not only fun, he was joyous, abandoned—the only time I remember him that way," his college girlfriend said. But though he graduated from Duke with honors, he could not find work with a Wall Street firm. He applied, without success, to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Finally, his mother prevailed upon a family friend to give Dick a desk in a local law office, and back he slunk, Mr. Nobody from Nowhere. Nixon's first notable case was a disaster: he and the firm were sued for negligence and penalized thousands of dollars. He went bust at business, too. A scheme to market frozen orange juice failed, leaving him fending off irate creditors.

He was luckier in love. Pat was a spirited beauty—a gypsy, a vagabond, he fancied her—with looks that had earned her bit roles in Hollywood and a job modeling clothes in a swank Los Angeles department store as she worked her way through the University of Southern California. He was drawn to her pilgrim soul. Thelma Catherine Ryan (like Dick, she

fellow striver. She had been born in a Nevada mining camp, orphaned in her teens, and compelled to assume the household chores—cooking, laundry, cleaning—for herself and two brothers. Free of that drudgery, college degree in hand, she had no wish to be tied down and had resisted Dick's advances. His intensity was off-putting. But he persevered—for resilience was another of his defining traits—and in time she came to see him as a man of destiny. As a gift, she gave him a figurine, a mounted knight on a charger. She was "willing to submerge her entire life to him," said a friend. Her faith was his great asset.

For their honeymoon they filled a car's trunk with canned goods and set off on a road trip through the Southwest and Mexico. As a wedding prank, their friends had stripped the labels from the cans, and they'd end up eating stew for breakfast. For their first anniversary, they drove to New Orleans, split an order of Oysters Rockefeller at Antoine's, and rode a steamer around the Caribbean. In 1941, they had leapt at the opportunity to move to Washington, where big things were happening. But Nixon's work as a bureaucrat in the Office of Price Administration, writing rationing rules, was stifling, and he felt out of place among the East Coast whiz kids—the Ivy League liberals and bright, left-leaning Jewish attorneys who served the New Deal as men-at-arms. Six months after Pearl Harbor, recognizing his duty and yearning for excitement, he enlisted.

They sent him to a navy air training station—carved, incongruously, from the landlocked cornfields of Ottumwa, Iowa. He was newly married and a Quaker, and it was safe there in the Midwest, pushing paper. But displaying his sense of obligation, he lobbied for a transfer to combat. "Sir, I have a letter from Lt. (jg) Richard Nixon . . . now in Ottumwa, Iowa—legal officer & crying his heart out" to get into Air Combat Intelligence, a superior noted. "He is a good one . . . young, no children & *wants* A.C.I." A man could get himself killed, friends told him. Dick should leave the fighting to the single men, Pat's brother advised. But Nixon was insistent, and ultimately, the navy shrugged and dispatched the young lieutenant to the war zone.

In the South Pacific, Nixon served on a series of island outposts where he supervised the work of a combat air transport team, moving ammunition, reinforcements, and food and medicine to the front, and the wounded to the rear. He wrote to Pat, telling her not to worry about the recurrent Japanese shelling and bombing, for only the morons who refused to take shelter got killed, and his bunker on Bougainville was roomy and protective—with a roof of logs and sandbags. There was plenty of down

Quaker—reading his Bible or playing poker. He sent aching letters to her and read voraciously, copying down odd lines of speech and poetry, tearing out articles from magazines and newspapers and jotting his thoughts in the margins, or in journals he kept, about such disparate subjects as the female enigma, the ability of civilian populations to endure strategic bombing, the role of China in world affairs, and the dark sides of human nature.

In a moment of self-recognition, perhaps, he jotted down a line, attributed to Tennyson, from a pulpy short story in *Collier's* magazine: *The most virtuous hearts have a touch of hell's own fire in them.*

"He was struck by what he was learning about men," said Albert Upton, a favorite college instructor with whom Dick corresponded. "It was the first opportunity that he had ever had, I think, to see how much evil there is in the world around you, not just how much evil there is in Shanghai or Timbuktu, but how much evil there may even be in Whittier, California, where supposedly everybody goes to church." Nixon came to loathe the disorder and waste of war. Writing to Upton, he spoke of the need for moral rearmament, a Christian movement that taught brotherhood, peace, and spiritual purity. His heroes were Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson, who had tried to build a structure for peace and convey America's democratic values to the world. "Men's hearts wait upon us," Wilson had said in his first inaugural—words that Nixon would one day cite in speeches. "Who dares fail to try?"

There is cool and there is square, and Richard Milhous Nixon was nothing if not square. Duty called. Work got done. Yet he was no martinet, and something of a happy finagler, treating his enlisted men to a ham dinner after helping to "liberate" the meat from a passing plane and finding beer for the Seabees, who in turn built a comfortable hut—complete with shower—for Nick and his fellow officers. He was generous with the loot. Pilots relished the offerings at "Nick's Snack Shop," the hut at the airfield where they could wind down over hamburgers, coffee, or cold pineapple juice between missions. He learned how to cuss. And for a good Quaker boy, raised in a pious community, he proved a shark at cards. The amount of his winnings would be exaggerated over the years, but by the time the war was over, lumped in with what he and Pat saved from their paychecks, they had put aside some $10,000.

After fourteen months his tour was over. He flew out, with a refueling stop at a Pacific island. "It was one of those rare nights . . . a soft full moon, not as warm as usual, just the whisper of a breeze in the air," he would

remember, and he strolled to stretch his legs. He came upon the "lonesome beauty" of a military cemetery—"no lawn, no monuments, the simplicity of white crosses in the white sand"—and pondered the loss. He yearned "for the building of a new world, which would not know the horror of war." And then he was home and caressing Pat at an airport gate.

They were in New York when, on August 14, the Japanese surrender was announced. With two million other revelers, Pat and Dick headed to Times Square. They walked around the city, through downtown's ethnic neighborhoods and up Fifth Avenue. "It was the largest, happiest mob I ever saw. Service men were kissing all the unescorted girls and the girls didn't mind a bit. . . . Chinatown looked like Christmas Eve with Fourth of July thrown in. . . . Flags, banners and decorations of all description covered the buildings," he wrote his parents. He and Pat stopped in at St. Patrick's Cathedral, crowded with the faithful offering prayers of thanks. "I only hope we can keep this peace," he wrote.

Years later, remembering, Nixon saw the war as "the catalyst" that had transformed his interest in politics into a sense of mission. He was a realist about human behavior, but his generation had an obligation, he believed, to find a better way. "He seemed to be dreaming about some new order which would make wars impossible," said Gretchen King, who had befriended Pat while her husband was at war and spent time with the couple after he returned. "He impressed us in those days as an idealistic dreamer."

The war "turned a great many of them with a very high idealistic feeling into politics," said Adela Rogers St. Johns, a California journalist and Whittier neighbor who came to know Dick well. "He came back with that very strong feeling, that we fought a war, a good many men had died to save this country, and now, let us make it what those boys had died for."

AND YET . . . Congress. No matter how he'd grown, he was still Dick from Whittier, that "eddy on the stream of life," as a college classmate called it. People there were isolated and parochial: by choice they kept the highways outside town. Sure, the Quakers saw him as a fair-haired boy—he had been elected to student office in college, chosen to lead the junior Kiwanis club, and appointed to serve as an assistant city attorney. But he had never campaigned for public office and was thoroughly unknown in the rest of the vast Twelfth District. The lives of American presidents are often cast as Horatio Alger tales, and the stories of their rise barnacled with myths. Yet few came so far, so fast, so alone, as Nixon. Not the governor of Cali-

hills and ridges in between. At the base were Nixon's old haunts of Whittier and La Habra, where Perry and his associate at the Bank of America, Harold Lutz, were raising money and organizing the Friends. To the east were Claremont, San Dimas, and Pomona, an eclectic mix of college and farm towns, home to Voorhis and Day. And to the west, closest to downtown Los Angeles, were heavily populated suburbs, with Democratic precincts in El Monte and Monterey Park, fast-growing Alhambra and San Gabriel, and the lushly gardened lanes of San Marino and South Pasadena. There were "powerful" economic interests that would back Republican candidates in the 1946 campaign, Day promised Dexter, who was thinking it over. But the Amateurs themselves were small businessmen: Babbitts, not Vanderbilts. It went without saying that they were anti-union, anti-Roosevelt, and anti-Communist. "A lot of us felt that Roosevelt had been very soft on Communism," Jorgensen recalled. "I think he was befuddled a good deal of the time and fooled by Stalin."

The Amateurs issued a press release, announcing their search for a Cinderella: it was a novel approach, far from the smoke-filled rooms, and it drew some interest from the local press. They were dismayed at the first crop of pretenders, which included a right-wing bigot and a self-declared Republican who, upon investigation, turned out to be a Socialist. "My God . . . let's don't waste our time," Jorgensen thought. Then Perry spread the word. "Some of the people in the Whittier area are interested in suggesting the name of Lt. Richard Nixon. . . . He has had over three years of war service," Perry wrote the Amateurs. Nixon was a skilled orator and "comes from good Quaker stock. . . . He is a very aggressive individual."

Inquiries were made. "I found out Dick didn't have money, that he . . . worked his way through college. This made an impression on me," Day recalled. Jorgensen and his San Marino buddies rode over to Whittier, dropped in at Nixon's former law firm, and assessed his parents at the family store. "Everything I have been able to learn regarding this man is all to the good," Day wrote to Perry on October 12. "I believe it would be very much worth his while to arrange to be at our next meeting."

Patton was never a serious option, and by Christmas he was dead, killed in a car crash in Europe. Herman Perry's arm-twisting removed Dexter, a former president of Whittier College, whose career the banker had long promoted.

On October 16 Perry informed Nixon that Dexter was out of the race, and that Dick should make plans to come west to make a presentation to the Committee of 100 and have lunch with the area's top Republicans so

They needed to pull some strings—commercial air travel was difficult to schedule in those weeks after the war—but Nixon secured a ticket to Los Angeles. On the evening of Thursday, November 1, he spoke to forty friends and family members gathered at a testimonial dinner in his honor at the Dinner Bell Ranch in Whittier. The young veterans coming home wanted opportunity, Nixon said: "They don't want . . . government employment or bread lines. They want a fair chance at the American way of life." Roy Day was in the audience, studying Nixon carefully. By the end of the evening, he was exultant. "That's saleable merchandise," Day told his friends.

Nixon cleared the next hurdle at the University Club in downtown Los Angeles that Friday, at a lunch with Republican leaders in an upstairs private dining room. Perry was out of town so Dick, still in his navy uniform, was escorted by Tom Bewley, his old law partner, and Gerald Kepple, a former assemblyman from Whittier. Day and Jorgensen and some others from the San Marino group were there, and representatives of various Republican factions, including McIntyre Faries, the GOP national committeeman, and John Garland, a real estate developer who had married into the Chandler family, which owned and ran the *Los Angeles Times*.

Garland was skeptical about this "mysterious" navy officer that the Amateurs were touting. But "I immediately liked him because he was totally frank, completely open," he recalled. Nixon wanted a commitment that the money would be there if he ran. Jorgensen assured him that fundraising would not be a problem. They discussed the district, its voting patterns, and other matters. At the end Dick stood and told them, "I'm in your hands."

At the William Penn Hotel in Whittier that night, Nixon made his formal pitch to the Committee of 100. He spoke on the virtues of free enterprise and again of the need for "practical" liberalism. He was not a hard-line conservative, for he had witnessed, in war and depression, how Americans could employ an active, muscular government and achieve great things. Dick's father, who had shaped his son's political leanings, was a latitudinarian populist, while Hannah and her family were progressive Republicans. A New Deal program had helped Dick pay for law school. But Nixon shared his audience's decided belief that now—the crises abated—a continuing drift toward a planned economy was perilous. "I made a ten-minute speech," he would recall. "I did rather well, apparently." Indeed. In all three appearances, he dazzled. "He was excellent. He was just an unbelievable choice. It was like finding a diamond," Lutz marveled. "It was

publicity and the connections he would make to land at a big Los Angeles law firm. Dick told Pat: "Let's do it."

It wasn't quite that simple, Herman Perry warned him when they spoke on the telephone in the first week of October. Nixon would have to audition before a group of Republican activists and survive a primary. There were names floating in the press—men like General George Patton, the war hero, and Walter Dexter, the state superintendent of education—who could have the nomination if they wanted it. But Pat and Dick were all in. "After having been away for such a long time . . . it was certainly a wonderful surprise to learn that I was even being considered," he wrote Perry in a follow-up letter on October 6. "I feel very strongly that Jerry Voorhis can be beaten and I'd welcome the opportunity to take a crack at him." He promised to wage "an aggressive, vigorous campaign of practical liberalism" to replace "Voorhis's particular brand of New Deal." The congressman's "lack of a military record won't help him, particularly since most of the boys will be home and voting," Nixon noted. He had just been promoted to Lieutenant Commander and with his savings would be able "to stand the financial expense" of a yearlong campaign. He promised "to tear Voorhis to pieces."

THE REPUBLICAN ESTABLISHMENT was not as ardent. The party machinery in the Twelfth District was dominated by a handful of aged men and women who had concluded that it was hopeless "to get a substantial person to run against Mr. Voorhis, because he was defeating his opponents by such huge majorities," recalled Earl Adams, a young, politically minded lawyer from San Marino. "Very few people wanted to be crucified." Nor would there be help from Washington or Sacramento. Governor Earl Warren was Republican, but almost in name only. Like the popular former governor and U.S. senator Hiram Johnson, who died that year after thirty-four years in office, Warren ran as an independent progressive Republican, appealing to all persuasions in California's unpartisan political tradition, and staying out of local races. The Twelfth District had undergone redistricting after the 1940 census, and Republican lawmakers had stripped Voorhis of some of his stronger wards in East Los Angeles, yet he had prevailed in 1942 and 1944. Voorhis couldn't be beat, the Republican elders decided, certainly not by some navy lieutenant.

"My first impression of Nixon was that here was a serious, determined, somewhat gawky young fellow who was out on a sort of a giant-killer

Angeles Times, the region's biggest newspaper. Palmer, a likable tough guy with piratical instincts, acted with the blessing of the paper's conservative owners as the state's premier political power broker. "The Republicans—including myself—generally felt that it was a forlorn effort."

And so, if it were to succeed, the crusade would have to be launched outside the normal party channels. It emerged in the form of the ad hoc "Twelfth Congressional District Republican Candidate and Fact Finding Committee," which came to be known as the "Committee of 100" (for the approximate number of its members) or, to themselves, as "the Amateurs."

Roy Day, a gruff forty-four-year-old advertising salesman from Pomona, was the organizer. He ran the commercial printing business of a local newspaper and was one of those indispensable men who answered a community's call when its service groups—the Lions Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Campfire Girls—needed an indefatigable wheel horse. He was an adman, a booster. Bullheaded, he had been drawn into politics in 1944 when a Republican state legislator died in mid-election, and Day organized a friend's victorious write-in campaign. The experience had exposed him to his party's complacency. "I got disgusted," he recalled. "We were blowing our own ball game."

Day volunteered to serve and, with the blessings of the Los Angeles county chairman, recruited the rump "fact-finding" team. He picked the number—one hundred—out of the air and roamed the district, talking to Republican club women, local committeemen, and business leaders like Perry; Roy Crocker, fifty-two, a savings and loan executive from tony San Marino; and J. Arthur Kruse, forty-seven, the chairman of a thrift from the district's biggest community, Alhambra.

"We younger men didn't realize that it was impossible. We were ignorant," recalled insurance man Frank Jorgensen, forty-three, a self-described "irascible son of a bitch" from San Marino. "We young bucks came in and got busy. . . . We didn't know top from bottom how to run a campaign. Except we were businessmen and we knew how to sell. We took the position that a political campaign was nothing more than selling a product." The initial gathering was at Eaton's, a sprawling hotel and restaurant on Route 66, near the Santa Anita racetrack. Over coffee or lunch, in hotel meeting rooms and at neighborhood cocktail parties, they refined their vision of a winning candidate: Young. Educated. Married. A veteran. Most of all, an aggressive campaigner.

The Twelfth District was the largest and most rural in Los Angeles County, a polyhedron with clusters of towns at its vertices and several hun-

"I . . . might even say that I thought my dad was disappointed in me and looked upon Nixon as his favorite son. . . . He saw in Dick Nixon his own dreams that he couldn't make happen."

In 1944, Don Lycan, a vice president for Signal Oil & Gas, the largest independent oil company on the West Coast, had called on his friend Herman. Lycan was leading a drive to dump Voorhis, but since the oil industry was a scandalous font of corruption at the time, he had come in need of a front man. Perry was willing to play the role, but it was a fool's errand, he told the oilman: the congressman was too popular. Not so, Lycan argued. "If we really get serious we could beat him." The country was heading hell-bent to socialism and Voorhis had to be stopped. Lycan promised Perry that California's oil and business interests would supply the necessary funds.

Voorhis, a graduate of Hotchkiss and Yale, held views that decidedly tilted left. In his youth, during the Depression, he had been a member of the Socialist Party, and in Congress he had angered more than oil executives. His proposals to increase the authority of the Federal Reserve Board vexed banks. He infuriated manufacturers and big agricultural interests with his support of labor unions. He sought to subject insurance companies to tougher antitrust rules. And when voting for the New Deal's expansive structure of price controls, rationing, and commercial regulations, Voorhis irked many of the conservative small-town businessmen who, with the farmers and citrus ranchers, were core voters in his district. They had kept an aggrieved silence during the crises of war and depression but now were finding their voice. Roosevelt's programs sapped individual initiative, these self-made men believed; made people soft, serf-like, and dependent on government.

As Perry predicted, the 1944 campaign was a failure. The Republican candidate, oilman Roy McLaughlin, was "a very presentable elderly man," as one of his fund-raisers put it, but he lacked the vim to unseat Voorhis. The Republicans tried to make an issue of the congressman's support from left-leaning labor unions, but McLaughlin was not the kind of gut fighter to call Voorhis a Communist and make it stick. Nor was the moment ripe: it was still wartime, and Uncle Joe Stalin was America's ally.

Knowing that McLaughlin was headed for defeat, Perry retained $500 from the $2,000 that Lycan had given him. A seed had taken root. When they met again in 1945 to assess the situation, the convert was preach-

Nixon—who could beat Voorhis. He would write him, Perry told Lycan, and use the $500 to buy him an airplane ticket to California. And one more thing, Perry said: they would need much more than $2,000 this time. The oilman heard him out, grunted, and said, "All right, go ahead. My friends and I will supply you with the additional funds."

There was little chance that Dick and Pat would not leap at the opportunity—they pictured each other, after all, as a bold chevalier and his gypsy love. "I was a bit naïve . . . a dragon slayer I suppose," said Dick. But in their Maryland apartment, reading and rereading Perry's letter, they suppressed their excitement, forced themselves to act responsibly, and weighed the prospects. Money was the chief consideration: the election was a year away, and Dick would have no paycheck once he left the navy. They had their $10,000 to fall back on, but no home or car. Moreover, Pat was pregnant, and the baby due in February. Yet the war had given them, like many in that generation, a taste for the dance with fate. They saw this was their shot—the moment they had been chasing since the mean days of their youth, their ticket out of dullsville. Pat "liked adventure," Dick remembered. "She knew my interests. . . . She thought that it was very important to live an exciting life."

"I married a crusader," Pat would say, in turn. "I suppose there never was much question about it."

The odds, a year out, looked "relatively hopeless," but Nixon had a hunch that times were changing. Roosevelt had died in April 1945. Folks were tired of the regimentations of the New Deal and the war; sick of sacrifice, hungry for latitude and liberty. They wanted to fill their cars with gas, "use a second chunk of butter, watch the long lazy curl of a fishing line flicker in the sunlight, or get royally tight, without feeling that they were cheating some GI in the flak over Berlin or on the bloody ash of Iwo Jima," wrote the Cold War chronicler Eric Goldman. While stationed in the South Pacific, Dick had met Harold Stassen, the Republican "boy governor" of Minnesota, who had resigned his office to serve in the navy. They talked about postwar politics, and Stassen predicted a "radical change in the political weather" when the fighting was over. A young veteran, running as a fresh new voice, could "cash in," Nixon concluded.

So this was risk, but not folly. Perry's letter "sparked something" in his friend Dick, Hubert Perry remembered, "like a minister getting a call from Jesus." Dick and Pat didn't have much, so they didn't have much to lose.

fornia or his aides, nor any member of the state's delegation to Congress knew Richard Nixon's name. He was, he would remember, "somebody who was nothing."

And charm, for Nixon, was an act of will. He had endured a dismal childhood, awash in gloom and grief. Two of his brothers died of gruesome illnesses. His father, Frank Nixon, was a cranky blowhard—a grade-school dropout who had come west from Ohio, married into local Quaker gentility, been staked by his in-laws to a farm in nearby Yorba Linda, and managed to fail at growing lemons in one of the planet's most bountiful citrus belts. Frank moved from farming to pumping gas and then opened a grocery store. They lived not in the tree-lined neighborhoods of town, but out on the highway, where Frank peddled groceries from an abandoned church. He conferred resentment to his son.

In the South Pacific, Dick had joined in camaraderie and learned how to lead. But the notion that he could return to California after four years away, engage the voters of the sprawling Twelfth District, and defeat a veteran congressman seemed inconceivable. He had no name, no fortune, no political machine.

WHAT HE HAD was Herman Perry.

It was Perry, the vice president and branch manager of the Bank of America in Whittier, who had sent the letter inviting Nixon to challenge Voorhis. It arrived by airmail. "Dear Dick," Perry wrote on September 29, 1945. "I am writing you this short note to ask you if you would like to be a candidate for Congress on the Republican ticket." The banker didn't offer much information. The incumbent was a Democrat, he noted, and the voters in the district were split almost evenly between Democrats and Republicans. In a postscript he remembered to ask Nixon: "Are you a registered voter in California?"

Perry, a native Indianan, was a man of stature in Whittier. He had arrived in Southern California in 1906, when the town had but a few hundred families, at the height of one of the Southland's booms. Ads hailing a West Coast paradise had dotted newspapers across the Midwest, luring people to Los Angeles and its sensuous climate. Two railway companies ran a thousand miles of streetcar line, like radials in a spider's web, west toward the beaches and out into the empty desert. The city fathers, with infamous duplicity, swiped a precious water supply from the far-off Owens Valley. Thickets of oil derricks dotted the coastal plain. Hollywood was incorporated, and daft developers launched projects like Venice-by-the-

Sea, complete with canals and gondolas. The population of Los Angeles County soared from 33,000 in 1880 to 504,000 in 1910. Most of "the Folks," as they were called, were transplants from the heartland: shopkeepers like Perry or farm folk like the Milhous clan—who dismantled their Indiana home and shipped the timbers, doors, and windows by train for reassembly in Whittier.

The town had been founded at century's turn by prosperous, cliquish Quakers, who gave it its insular character. They were of a western strain of the faith: less plain and pacifist, more smug and businesslike. "I was never asked inside a Friend's house, in the more than forty years I lived in Whittier," recalled the writer M. F. K. Fisher, the daughter of the local newspaper editor, an Anglican. Many of the townsfolk were gentle and fine, but others in "that land of thees and thous and daily snubs" were "sanctimonious bastards," she remembered. Drinking was outlawed, smoking, card playing, dancing, and flirtation discouraged.

Perry shifted to finance, rising to the role of local consul for California's own Bank of America, whose monopolistic practices fueled its transformation from a San Francisco storefront to the world's largest bank. Stout and stouthearted, he was the town's Mr. Republican: representing his neighbors on the county committee and making sure that their sober sentiments were reflected at the polls on Election Day. People called him "Uncle Herman," but his style was as stern as it was avuncular. In that part of Los Angeles County, "he *was* Bank of America," Donald Fantz, an appliance store owner, recalled, and "it was a privilege to be able to go and pull up your chair alongside his desk if you had some problems or something, and talk them over with him." Yet Perry was "ruled by his head, certainly, and not by his heart. I mean, he was a banker, first and foremost. Herman Perry would react on cold facts."

Among those who had turned to Perry for loans was Frank Nixon, who arrived in Whittier from Ohio in 1907. Perry had been a guest at Frank's wedding to Hannah, a classmate of Herman's and the daughter of fellow Hoosiers. The bank's credit helped the Nixon store survive the Depression, and Perry's son Hubert attended high school and college with Dick. When Dick returned to Whittier from law school at Duke, his office was in the Bank of America building, the Beaux Arts landmark on Philadelphia Steet that towered above the groves of citrus like a Crusader castle on the Levantine plain.

Herman Perry had two great unmet goals in life: to be a lawyer and to serve in Congress. And he found in Dick "a kind of fulfillment of his own ambitions,"

Dick took a red-eye back to Maryland. His hopes were lifted a few days later, when he received the reviews of his visit from Bewley. "The entire district is thrilled," the lawyer wrote. "I think you will get the nomination by a landslide. . . . The thing took hold and is going over big." In his own letter to Nixon, Day promised "off the record" that the Amateurs would fix the vote to make sure Nixon was selected. "Frankly Dick, we feel we have SOMETHING AND SOMEBODY to sell to this district now, and are going to do our very best to close the deal," he wrote.

Not everyone in Whittier cheered. To his friend Osmyn Stout, who had served on their college debating team with Nixon, the Amateurs represented "the most conservative, reactionary people" in the district. Stout, a pacifist, had thought of Dick as a forward-thinking, kind, and "exemplary" idealist. But now Nixon was aligned with the narrow-minded forces of conformity, Stout concluded: "He had sold his soul."

As Day promised, the first ballot was sixty-three for Nixon and fourteen for two also-rans. Pat and Dick had stayed up late in Maryland, awaiting word. It came two hours after midnight. "Dick, the nomination is yours!" Day shouted. When Perry called a few moments later, Nixon recalled a lesson that his mother had taught him—a gentleman has never heard the punch line—and acted as if he was just getting the news. The navy wanted him in New York in the morning, but he and Pat, chattering, never got to bed.

Nixon was exhilarated. He was soon on the train to Washington to confer with Republican Party officials, GOP congressional leaders, and members of the California delegation. "The main emphasis should be on the constructive program we have to offer," he wrote Perry. He suggested that they seek the backing of the local college faculties and told of a speech he was writing, to be given in the churches, urging racial tolerance. "I'm sure we can win," Nixon said. "And that we can retain our integrity as well because we shall only say what we believe and do."

THERE WAS THIS, too. While visiting Washington, Nixon had hit upon a line of attack. The capital's left-wingers—the "fellow travelers"—were "wild about" Voorhis, Nixon reported. The Republican Party researchers had quite a file on the congressman and his voting record. It would be guilt by association, for everyone knew that Voorhis was no Communist, but if they could portray him as a Red dupe, "I believe we can make Mr. Voorhis sweat."

Dick pulled out his yellow pads, filling line after line with notes and

reminders, intent on leaving nothing to chance: *Set up budget . . . office furniture . . . need for paid workers . . . call on newspapers, former candidates, leaders . . . arrange church and lodge and veterans meetings . . . set up lists for mailings . . . billboards . . . bumper stickers . . . Nixon clubs each town (now) . . . study V. voting record.*

This was his hour; his chance to *be* someone. To excise the hurt. To stake his claim. He needed to win, and his plans revealed his hunger, and an incipient susceptibility to intrigue.

Set up . . . spies in V. camp, he wrote.

2

"I Had to Win"

So they went west, Pat and Dick, back to the nowhere they had sought to escape. It was hard on Pat; she was in her third trimester, and discovering the lot of a candidate's wife. The Quaker ladies never had thought she was good enough for Dick, and the matrons of San Marino sneered at her sense of fashion. "We were the rawest of amateurs," Pat remembered. "Our friends were sympathetic but dubious, and the real politicians were scornful." At first the couple stayed with Dick's parents, Frank and Hannah. They were given his brother Eddie's bedroom, in the back of the house. "Richard is studying. Don't bother him," Hannah told her youngest. "He's . . . reading up a storm and making notes."

It wasn't quiet enough, and soon Dick was fleeing the house for the home of his legal secretary, where he could pull out his foolscap and make his lists (*set up community chairmen . . . arrange day meetings and calls . . . set up political rallies . . .*), dictate letters, and leave Pat to his parents. When the time came to write his kickoff speech, he escaped to a cottage loaned by friends, on Balboa Island off nearby Newport Beach. "He wanted to be where there was no telephone and people didn't know where he was," Florence Sucksdorf recalled. In return, the Sucksdorfs got a leg of lamb from brother Don's meat counter at the Nixon store—no small gift amid the postwar shortages. Indeed, the lingering scarcities were a recurring problem. Pat had given Dick's outdated suits away during the war, and he couldn't keep campaigning in uniform. Roy Day prevailed upon a Pomona haberdasher, who dug out a suit from the store's basement. Nixon wore it for months. Finding a pair of wide-enough shoes was an issue; so was Nixon's taste in ties. His audiences would never hear what he had to say, Day told him, if his garish neckwear continued to distract them.

An unexpected hurdle was Nixon's uneasiness with women. Coffees, teas, and house parties were an essential element of campaigning, and he could not bring himself to look female voters in the eye. It was an acute problem in a state where Republican ladies' groups were among the party's

prized assets and California girls working the assembly lines in the aerospace and other defense plants had made a mighty contribution toward winning the war. Like Pat, many were returning to their homes with an expanded sense of independence. A candidate needed to court their votes. Yet Nixon "was very timid around women," Day recalled. "He's anything but a coward . . . he just felt that women kind of bugged him. . . . He wasn't that way around men at all."

Day had to coach him, warning the candidate that unless he looked *all* the voters squarely in the eye, women would see him as shifty. Nixon worked at it, drawing on his acting skills. To test him, Day invited students from all-female Scripps College to a coffee. They sat in a circle on the floor, interrogating Nixon, who responded, to Day's great relief, by taking each pointed question, complimenting the questioner, and tugging the women toward his position without being confrontational. The glad-handing never came easy, but once Nixon was persuaded that it was necessary, he buckled down and got it done.

Happily, for Nixon, most of his audiences were male. American men, in these years before television and its diversions, were joiners. Organizations like the Elks, the Masons, and the Lions were sources of fellowship, networking, and community service. Dick had hardly returned to Whittier before he was out talking to the Optimist Club on January 14, to the Rotary luncheon three days later, to a Kiwanis event in nearby Norwalk on January 28, and to the Lions Club "den" on January 31. On he roamed, to the Pomona Valley realtors, Rotary Club, and Lions. To the South Pasadena Rotarians, Masons, and Chamber of Commerce. To the St. James Episcopal men's club, the San Marino and Alhambra Kiwanians, and the El Monte Lions. By the end of March he had notched thirty-six speaking engagements, addressing some 3,700 people.

The service clubs were purportedly nonpartisan, so Nixon titled his talks "A Serviceman Looks to the Future" or "The Veteran in Peacetime." He would tell about the day on Bougainville when the order came down to unload thirty airplanes packed with rockets and reload them with wounded soldiers for the return trip to the hospital on Guadalcanal. His crew was a microcosm of America, he'd say, with a Texan and a New Yorker, a Mexican American and an American Indian, a boy with wealthy parents and the son of a railroad engineer. In the best American spirit they came together to fulfill their mission. Now they were home and hoping to chase their dreams. Their country owed them that, said Nixon, but government wage and price controls and other regimentations were stifling.

Dick was drawing on personal experience, as he and Pat were increasingly

desperate to find a home and an automobile amid the country's economic turbulence. Detroit had manufactured 100,000 tanks during the war, but retooling to make cars took time, and the demand for housing for millions of returning veterans far exceeded the supply. The Truman administration had retained the wartime controls, hoping to cap inflation. Suppliers responded by hoarding crops, livestock, consumer goods, and raw materials, forcing housewives to haggle with black market traffickers of meat, furniture, nylon stockings, blue jeans, and other essentials. "My most pressing problems now are finding a place to live and buying a car," Nixon wrote Perry. "I have an order in for a Ford. . . . chances aren't too good." And for a father-to-be, he said, "the housing problem is a terrible one."

He and Pat were still living with his folks on February 21 when she interrupted Dick's breakfast with the news that she had gone into labor. He bundled her up, carried her down the stairs, and took her to the hospital. They expected a boy, whom they planned to name Richard. The doctors assured Dick they had hours yet, and he left to attend a political gathering in Los Angeles. The baby was born while he was gone. It was a difficult breech delivery, and Patricia "Tricia" Nixon came into the world with a broken shoulder. The candidate gave reporters a statement that managed to be both corny and sententious. "She is the only boss I recognize," Nixon said, and then, "Patricia is a lucky girl. She will grow up in the finest state of the Union in the greatest country on earth. She will grow up, go to school and when the time comes she will register and vote Republican."

Driving through Whittier, Dick stopped and rolled down the window to ask Waymeth Garrett, a boyhood friend, if he knew of any places for rent. Sure, Garrett said, he had a house to lease on Walnut Street. It came with a Servel refrigerator and a Wedgewood stove, and Dick made a quick U-turn to seal the deal, at $35 a month. The Nixons soon discovered the reason for the vacancy: there were hundreds of minks, kept in cages by Garrett on the lot next door, that squealed and stank. "They're kind of noisy, aren't they?" Nixon asked his landlord, after several sleepless nights.*

The times tried even Pat's vagabond soul. "The odor is something terrible," she told her friend Edith Holt, but "we couldn't find anything else." Dick's mom would babysit Tricia while Pat worked on the campaign during the day, but Hannah let the baby sleep, forcing Pat to stay up at night with a radio for company. The minks would shriek when she stepped out-

* "It used to bother Richard quite a bit," Garrett remembered. The market for minks never [illegible] "we killed all the mink and made my wife a fur coat."

side to hang the diapers to dry. As a candidate's wife she couldn't relax, as she liked, with a cigarette in public. She worried about the family's finances. They had "saved every dime we could to have a home," Pat told Holt. "Now we're going to spend it all on this politics thing."

There were few furnishings in the duplex—the living room held a crib and a sofa, stacks of newspapers, and issues of the *Congressional Record*. Day and the others had to squat on the floor during strategy sessions. Their campaign headquarters was no palace, either. They moved an old leather couch to an office in downtown Whittier and borrowed a typewriter for Pat to use in answering correspondence. A proud Eddie, who had just earned his driver's license, drove the Nixon delivery truck, plastered with campaign billboards, around town and in local parades. Frank was his typical self—"overly enthusiastic" and bending ears, his youngest son recalled.

In his first partisan disquisition, Nixon opened with a dig at Truman and the Democrats over the postwar shortages of fashion and consumer goods. "No more encouraging sight could greet a candidate for office than to see a group of women take time on a busy Monday afternoon to hear him make his maiden political talk—particularly when we hadn't promised that a pair of nylons would be given as a door prize," he told the members of the San Gabriel and Alhambra Women's Club. He couldn't offer them stockings, Nixon said, because there were none to be had. "We'll leave the Democrats the job of making promises they can't keep. They are experienced at this sort of thing."

For some groups, Nixon dug deeper. The news, as winter turned to spring, was about the evil Communists. On March 5, Winston Churchill appeared at a small Missouri college in the company of Harry Truman. "A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory," Churchill declared. "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent." Roosevelt had believed that, with charm and patience, he could handle Stalin. Churchill was as sure that the Soviet dictator was immune to all persuasions, save military strength.

Nixon had his own iron curtain speech that spring. He titled it "The Challenge to Democracy" and reworked it as the campaign progressed. It began with a tour of Russian history—"a tragic story of war, starvation, torture, rape, murder and slavery"—of which the Soviet dictatorship was but the latest chapter. Isolationist sentiment was strong in the Republican Party; other, more belligerent factions were demanding a preemptive attack on the Soviet Union, or a war to liberate the nations of Eastern Europe. Nixon struck a middle way. He had been briefed on the Red

peril in his visits with party leaders in Washington, but his speech just as certainly reflected the long hours of study and thought he gave to world affairs. It was enlightened for a rustic candidate, calling not for war but for the active containment of Soviet adventurism—for American deployment of economic, political, and military might to "hold the line for the growth of democratic ideals" that would one day topple the totalitarian state. He recognized, as well, the seductive danger of resorting to the enemy's tactics. "We must use means that conform to the highest moral standards," he said.

It was a smart speech, and whether he was talking about foreign or domestic affairs, Nixon impressed his audiences. Most times, he went on without a script. "Richard Nixon presented his platform with the agile perfection of an accomplished public speaker, attorney and debater," a Voorhis supporter reported to the congressman. "He had memorized it almost in entirety, word for word, and his speech lasted 40 minutes." Another Voorhis supporter, a local postmaster, sent a warning to the congressman after seeing Nixon work a Lions Club gathering. "He carried the group by storm," the man wrote. "He is dangerous. . . . I'm getting nervous about the situation, Jerry."

Veterans were treasured targets—especially those of Nixon's generation, now home after years away. Thousands were moving to California, whose splendors they had sampled while serving in, or passing through, the state during the war. The American Legion posts and VFW halls were supposed to be free of partisan politics, but Nixon found a way to make his pitch. "Nixon is setting a pretty fast pace," Voorhis adviser Jack Long warned the congressman on April 1. "He has joined the Legion and also the VFW and . . . he just drops into the Post meetings very informally and quite often and . . . has quite a bit to say about veteran needs and what he . . . will do when he gets in Congress. These young World War II veterans know very little about your work."

For Southern California's conservatives, Nixon's promise of economic liberty was a tonic. Many had read Friedrich Hayek's alarum, *The Road to Serfdom* (if not the book then at least the condensed version in the *Reader's Digest*), a surprise bestseller that equated modern liberalism with totalitarianism. A tide was stirring, there and elsewhere, among people who felt that they were not being heard in Washington, for whom the East was a distant place where Ivy Leaguers leaned on formulas, not faith; where right and wrong were relative, and modernists and Manhattanites

made sport of their plain ways. Not Richard Nixon. He knew them, knew their hopes and worries, shared their values and resentments.

"That boy worked his way. It wasn't handed to him. His father wasn't a millionaire—he had a little store," said Hannah Weegar, one of the first believers. "There was never anything flashy about Dick Nixon."

Folks came by the little office on Philadelphia Street to stuff envelopes or to chip in a dollar for printing and advertising costs. Pat long remembered an aged woman, nearly blind, who came to lick stamps. Their supporters made phone calls, distributed leaflets, organized coffee klatches, and filled the seats at rallies. The local seamstresses donated their time and made clothes for Pat. "It was really a grassroots movement if there ever was one," said Kathryn Bewley, the daughter of Nixon's law partner, remembering that first election. "I have never known of a campaign in which there was so much friendship and love as there was in this; enthusiasm . . . real affection, real concern about the whole situation, a feeling of respect for Dick, confidence in what he could do and . . . a willingness to help him in any way."

His first brochure proclaimed it: "Richard Nixon is one of us."

The Twelfth District, a quilt of small communities, had dozens of daily and weekly newspapers. The publishers and editors were conservative—Rex Kennedy, the editor of the Whittier paper, was a local Republican Party official—generally members of the Lions or Rotary clubs, and often on hand to hear Nixon speak. If not, Dick made a point of stopping by on his way through town, delivering a publicity kit and a promise to buy ads. In many of those papers, the warmth of the news coverage would be in direct proportion to the advertising space a candidate purchased. "These newspapers are often financed, practically, by the back page [ad] which would be taken by some big market. And if someone got hold of the market owner . . . or we bought an ad for $300 or something like that, we could often get an editorial," one Amateur recalled. "People would read the editorial and then they'd say, 'Well, this little newspaper has no axe to grind. . . . It is our paper.'" Roy Day's employer, the Pomona newspaper, was for Nixon; the Whittier paper was behind him, and in Alhambra a young journalist named Herb Klein was smitten; his newspaper would blister Voorhis throughout the campaign, and he would promote Nixon, on and off, for years.

But building a grassroots movement took time. There were nights

when two dozen people showed up in a hall with hundreds of empty seats. And cash was scarce. Day and Jorgensen had the same experience in their very different communities: seeing friends cross the street to avoid their solicitation of $20 for the campaign. Garland dug into his pocket for the initial batch of promotional material—the NIXON FOR CONGRESS bumper stickers that were distributed to the Committee of 100. "All of them were very pleased to have something tangible for the first time," Nixon wrote him. It was the end of March; he had been campaigning for three months.

The bookkeeping, by necessity, was creative. "I can remember time and time again of Frank Jorgensen calling . . . asking me to come down to his place . . . [as] it was a Friday, and we had these bills to meet," Adams recalled. "We . . . issued checks and then beat the rushes over the weekend to get the money." Jorgensen and others sat down with their Christmas card lists, typed out letters asking for donations, and held $25 dinners at their homes. The resources they raised went to mailings. There was no money to rent billboard space, and the newspaper ads were small and few. "The money is not coming in," Day moaned. At times, "I have had to dig down in my pocket for $200."

As the primary approached, Day sent out "newsgrams" to the Amateur network, making it clear there would be no infusion of funds from headquarters: Nixon supporters would need to raise their own money for ads, signs, and mailings. There were moments that brought Pat to tears—like the day when the campaign literature came back from the printer but she didn't have the cash to pay for postage. She was devastated, as well, after handing out bundles of pamphlets to young "volunteers" who stole off and trashed them. She told a friend that it "was the most heart-breaking thing she ever experienced, because she had worked so hard, and she thought these kids were honest, you know, and were going to go out and pass them out from door to door."

Even the staunch had doubts. A friend of Roy Day's proposed a wager: he would pay his pal a dollar for every vote by which Nixon beat Voorhis—if Day would do likewise if the congressman beat Nixon. Day turned it down. He couldn't afford, he told himself, to lose several thousand dollars. Nixon conferred with Adams about a job in his law firm should Voorhis prevail.

The opposition remained confident, bordering on complacent. "It will be a very interesting campaign and perhaps the cleanest one that you have had to face so far as your opponent personally is concerned," the congressman's father, Charles Voorhis, told his son. "I feel very sanguine about the result."

Nixon had no consequential Republican contenders to worry him in the primary election, which took place on June 4. The results bore troubling news, nonetheless. In California's cross-filing system—where Republican candidates could also file to run in the Democratic primary, and vice versa—Voorhis had won a total of seven thousand more votes than Nixon. If it had been the actual election, Dick would have been on the downside of a landslide.*

"Many people were disappointed," Nixon admitted in a letter to Day. To stop the "sniping" and "keep the wolves away," he acknowledged the need to make changes, and to buck up the troops. "I think you could point out that here I was, a candidate unknown in the district in January, against a man 10 years in Congress; that we used none of our big guns, purposely (suggesting we really are holding back some stuff—as we are); that Voorhis polled 60 percent of the total on both tickets cast in the primary in 1944 and only 53.5 percent in 1946, which is really something," Dick wrote. "I really believe that."

But it was a solemn Nixon who, after the primary, joined Pat and another couple on a road trip to British Columbia. The vacation was supposed to refresh the candidate, but for most of the drive north he was silent and withdrawn, ruminating on the race. When they arrived in Port Angeles near Olympic National Park in Washington, Dick stayed in the hotel room, brooding, as Pat and their friends took in the sights.

IN ANALYZING HIS campaign's performance, Nixon saw two missing requisites. The first great need was money. For that, Dick would turn to Herman Perry. And Perry would tap Oil. Many factors make a winning crusade, and Nixon would later dismiss suggestions that the energy companies played a dominant role in his 1946 campaign; but the evidence buried in Perry's files shows how the oilmen interceded, breathing life into Nixon's candidacy.

The California oil industry had emerged at century's turn as a colossus—topping all states and nations in production. But Americans learned how its growth was greased when the Teapot Dome scandal blew in during the 1920s. One of California's pioneering drillers—Edward Doheny, a prodi-

* Voorhis received 25,048 votes in his Democratic primary victory. He also got 12,125 votes in the Republican balloting. Nixon won the Republican contest with 24,397 votes, but scored only 5,077 votes in the Democratic primary. A local judge, extrapolating the results for the usual bigger turnout of a general election, predicted that Voorhis would be reelected in November by precisely 11,723 votes.

gious contributor to political candidates and causes—had been granted one of the sweetheart deals unearthed in the affair to develop the U.S. Navy oil reserves at Elk Hills, California. After the bruising the industry took in Teapot Dome, it was thought that the oilmen might behave with more propriety. Not so. On May 21, 1943, Voorhis had taken to the House floor and exposed a federal contract that gave Standard Oil propitious and exclusive rights to the oil at Elk Hills, then the most important wartime reserve. The contract was subsequently ruled illegal, and the terms of the deal were rewritten. Voorhis had riled Oil, as well, with a contrary stance on the "tidelands" controversy. When states like Texas and California came into the Union, the issue of who owned the coastal seabed was a trivial matter and left unsettled. It became a mighty point of contention, however, as America shifted to a carbon economy and huge oil and gas deposits were discovered offshore. California was one of several states that leased its tidelands, as they were known, to oil companies in the years before the war. But on September 28, 1945, Truman proclaimed that the federal government owned the rights to the submerged lands and minerals.

It was probably a coincidence that, the very next day, Perry sat down and wrote Dick to suggest he run for Congress. But Voorhis was one of just three California representatives—and the only one from a contestable district—who backed Truman and the federal control of offshore oil. For the oilmen of the big producing states, returning the tidelands to state control—where officials were more easily suborned—was a holy cause.

Clearly, it was in Oil's interest to replace Voorhis. And Don Lycan, who had enlisted Perry in the cause back in 1944, was just one of the banker's friends in the industry. Major oil discoveries in neighboring Santa Fe Springs had brought the energy companies to Whittier. Perry did business with them at the Bank of America. Nixon's law firm—Wingert & Bewley—was built, to a significant degree, upon its oil clientele. Among Lycan's associates were his fellow directors at Signal Oil, Harry March and Samuel Mosher, yet another Perry pal. And Signal, in turn, had an intimate relationship with Standard Oil, which marketed its products.

The oilmen had wasted no time approaching Nixon. In February 1946 he received a letter from J. Paull Marshall, a Republican lawyer who had worked with Nixon at OPA and now counseled him on his run for Congress. "I have had a good talk with Harry March about you," wrote Marshall, who was about to leave the navy to start work as a lobbyist for the industry. Signal was "vitally interested in the tidelands oil question" and would like to meet Nixon and explore the candidate's thoughts on the

"I certainly appreciate your speaking to [March] about me because from what you say, he can be of a great deal of assistance in the campaign," Nixon told Marshall. "I am interested in the Tidelands Oil question and I believe that my attitude on that question is somewhat similar to his."

Now, with the results of the primary election in hand, Nixon outlined his money woes to Perry. The banker asked him for a detailed budget showing what it would cost to defeat Voorhis. Dick gave him a thorough accounting in a letter on August 16.

They had no money for radio, Nixon told Perry. The campaign hoped to use "a considerable amount of outdoor advertising" but that was "depending upon the amount of our budget," he wrote. "During the primaries we had no billboards whatever." The number and quality of the mailings would depend on the size of the campaign treasury. There were plans to run advertisements in the district's thirty newspapers, but they could not afford to do so until October. He wanted to deluge the local papers with photographs and press releases, but "here, again" the PR campaign was "limited by the fact that our budget will not allow any considerable expenditures." Republican volunteers could canvass the friendly precincts, but he needed cash to pay workers in the Democratic wards and to hire young veterans to work the VFW halls.

On August 22, after a meeting in Los Angeles, Perry forwarded Nixon's list to Standard Oil executives Stanley Natcher and Floyd Bryant at their offices in San Francisco. "For the reasons we have already discussed," said Perry, the money should be funneled through a back channel, not the official Nixon campaign. He asked for $6,945 for mailings, canvassers, advertisements, and clerical help.* Within weeks, Nixon had a professional ad agency under contract, and eighteen large billboards bearing his name and face were being erected around the district. In all, Perry estimated that he raised $7,300 for Nixon that year.

Herman Perry "could get money from Standard on a personal basis," his son Hubert would recall. "This was all kept very quiet by my dad so that no one, including Nixon, knew where the funds came from." The secrecy was essential, as the corrupting effects of Oil's campaign practices were again dominating the nation's front pages. California oilman Edwin Pauley, a well-known Democratic fund-raiser (and the future employer of Nixon's friend, lawyer Paull Marshall), had been grilled by Congress—and his nomination as undersecretary of the navy scuttled—over charges that he had offered $300,000 to the Democratic Party if Truman dropped the

* The equivalent of about $85,000 in 2015.

federal claim to the tidelands. When the president asked Interior Secretary Harold Ickes to vouch for Pauley, Ickes resigned, held a press conference, and told three hundred reporters, "I don't care to stay in an administration where I am expected to commit perjury."

THE OTHER MISSING requisite was in Nixon's campaign pitch; his message needed punch. His talks about the veteran in peacetime were stale. In April, Nixon received a note from an up-and-coming political consultant whom Day had hired on a part-time basis. "I hope you will pardon the frankness of this letter," the fellow wrote. But urgency required it. The campaign needed "meat," he said. "Sending out laudatory statements about you from people in the district will not do the trick."

His name was Murray Chotiner, and he was a thirty-six-year-old attorney from Los Angeles. He was a slick operator with a clientele that ran to gamblers and bookies, and a passion for politics—a moon-faced man given to flashy suits, loud ties, and lovely women. (He and his pal Kyle Palmer went through wives like other men replaced their lawn mowers.) Chotiner was a political prodigy. He had attended UCLA, graduated from law school at twenty, opened an eponymous consulting firm, and directed Earl Warren's campaign in Southern California in 1942. He alienated the governor by asking him to intervene on behalf of an unsavory client—"Chotiner was nothing but a two-bit crook," Warren aide Warren Olney would insist—but in the fall of 1945, when the Amateurs launched their drive, the Republican hierarchy assigned Chotiner to babysit. Day put him on the payroll for a flat retainer of $500.

If Nixon wanted meat, Murray was his butcher. Above all, Chotiner valued aggressiveness.

There was never much mystery about what Nixon would fling at Voorhis in the fall. From his first trips to Washington in 1945 Nixon had been told by GOP officials how Voorhis was beloved by the "pinko" crowd and voted with "the most radical element" in Congress. But sculpting the argument was another matter. Together, Nixon and Chotiner combed Voorhis's record, looking for votes they could cite as proof that the congressman was a wild-eyed radical. "I forwarded to you the voting record of Jerry Voorhis on significant measures for the 76th, 77th and 78th Congresses. . . . Enclosed is a voting record of Voorhis for the 75th Congress," Chotiner wrote Nixon on August 14. "For your purposes . . . rely on the complete record for the 79th Congress, which we have compiled, as well as the record of important measures for the previous sessions as supplied by

the Republican National Committee." Nixon later hailed the "tremendous value" of Chotiner's help.

By selectively dicing the public record, Dick made Jerry seem what he was not. The incumbent's signature accomplishment was the Voorhis Act of 1940, which singled out Communists and other subversives and required that they register with the U.S. government. It sprang from his service on the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), a panel created to investigate extremists in the years before and during World War II. The act's passage, during Voorhis's second term in Congress, gave the lie to Nixon's plans to portray the congressman as both an unsavory radical and an ineffective legislator. So Nixon erased history, omitting all mention in his campaign propaganda of the congressman's first three terms. The standard by which Voorhis was judged became "the last four years." Nixon zeroed in, for instance, on a vote cast by the congressman in 1945 against a resolution making HUAC a permanent committee. Who was Voorhis protecting? Didn't he recognize the Communist threat? Thus was Voorhis—reviled by actual Communists as a "Red-baiter"—transformed into a fellow traveler.

Nixon would attribute his 1946 success to his moderation. Throughout the campaign, he stressed lunch-bucket issues and the Truman administration's mishandling of the economy. He took several opportunities to speak up for civil rights. He denounced Southern racists like the right-wing demagogue Gerald L. K. Smith and Mississippi senator Theodore Bilbo and declared them "just as dangerous on the right as the Communists . . . on the left." And he accepted an honorary membership in a local NAACP chapter—no small gesture in an election where an incendiary fair employment measure was on the ballot and the Ku Klux Klan was burning crosses in Los Angeles.

That said, Nixon spent the fall relentlessly on the attack. "Whatever people said . . . I was not dull," he would remember. As the campaign manager for Senator Bill Knowland, Chotiner had been smearing the Democratic challenger—decorated war veteran Will Rogers Jr.—as a Communist dupe. Now he taught the Amateurs how to hone the Nixon campaign's assaults. "I don't completely respect a lot of the ways he operated," Day said. But "I learned a lot about politics from Murray." Chotiner was "a shrewd little man," recalled Merrell Small, another Warren adviser. "Very persuasive, and kind of oily and flattering—but watch him. Watch him."

Among those who objected was Pat. She and Dick had entered the race as a team; now he was brushing her aside. Politics was a man's world, Pat discovered, and when she criticized Chotiner's preference for "a harsh,

even hurtful" campaign, Dick dismissed her. "The subject of Murray" and his "hard-line, street smart" tactics became "a non-subject" for the couple, her daughter Julie would write. Gypsy Pat was squeezed into the mold of candidate's wife, attending teas and coffees, relegated to background scenery as "her fiercely won independence was chipped away."

Voorhis was no great shakes as a politician, but neither was he clueless. He recognized the damning effect that Democratic fumbling on the economy and the truculent tactics of organized labor would have on the party's candidates. Freed from their wartime obligation to keep peace with management, America's unions had reverted to prewar militancy, and millions of striking steel, coal, railway, auto, manufacturing, and meat workers walked off the job in one of the most contentious years in labor relations the country would ever know. As Truman and the Democrats in Congress dithered over wage and price controls, veterans and their families slept in tents or cars, meat and other staples vanished from the shelves, and the cost of living soared.

Truman's grasp of foreign policy was also looking shaky. He had squired the bellicose Churchill to Missouri, then baffled his countrymen—and split the Democrats—by approving the more conciliatory approach to the Soviet Union proposed by Commerce Secretary Henry Wallace. Then, under pressure from the press and public, Truman had reversed himself again, castigating and firing Wallace. "What with the coal strike, the OPA [Office of Price Administration], the putting out of business of our livestock people, the confusion in foreign policy . . . and a hundred other things, I think Mr. Nixon on the whole has a pretty easy task ahead of him," Voorhis wrote his dad. "The main point in his favor will be that he was not a Congressman and does not have responsibility for all the things that make the people mad."

Indeed, a Boston-based advertising agency had coined a slogan that Republicans employed with great effect across the land that year: "Had enough?"

Voorhis would have been wise to change the subject: to concoct an issue or—as Chotiner would have told him—to savage the opposition. At the very least, the congressman could have spent more time in California. But from his college days, as an outsider among the eastern elites at Hotchkiss and Yale, Voorhis had chosen sanctimony as a form of self-identity. When others in his class moved on to Wall Street, he worked as a laborer to mix

orphaned boys. His first foray into politics was with the quixotic End Poverty in California (EPIC) movement—the 1934 gubernatorial campaign of socialist-turned-Democrat Upton Sinclair. Voorhis was a loose-money man with a convoluted theory, which he wove into a book, about debt and economics and the Federal Reserve. His talks were long, often humorless, and dense. "I can think of no speech that I ever heard him give in which he did not, at some point, mention his monetary theories," said Leisa Bronson, a union organizer and Voorhis devotee. "I don't believe that one person in ten understood them."

The congressman disdained political combat, weighed every vote as if it were the most important of the age, and believed it was essential that he run a "dignified" campaign. He chose to stay in Washington through the first eight months of 1946 to debate the vital issues on the House floor. He was there when a bill to overturn Truman's claim to the tidelands reached the chamber. "From a purely political standpoint I may be foolish to take the position that I do," Voorhis told the House, "but I cannot conscientiously vote for this bill. . . . I can point to case after case after case in various states where the oil has been allowed to be wasted and exploited without anything like adequate returns to the people." He voted to support the president, infuriating California chauvinists and oil interests.

"He was a very devout representative of the people. Now: a politician? Jerry was not a good politician. I don't mean that unkindly, he just wasn't," said a campaign adviser, Stanley Long.

The hard men in Washington didn't hide their opinion of this erstwhile Mr. Smith. "Voorhis is an earnest, if ineffectual little man, a do-gooder who stumbles and bumbles . . . getting nowhere with all his puny might," was Secretary Ickes's private evaluation.

"I was very often extremely frustrated and downhearted," Voorhis would admit, "when I felt that you couldn't do what was really right." He worked hectically, alarming his family and friends. "If it were not for the fact that I feel you are needed badly in Washington I could almost hope that you would not have to go back again," Charles Voorhis wrote his son. There were signs that the congressman shared his father's ambivalence. In a congratulatory note to Nixon after Tricia was born, Voorhis had groused: "This job is truly a man-killer." Nixon scented weakness.

It was August before Voorhis left Washington for California. He chose to drive cross-country with his family, and the long hours behind the wheel brought on a siege of hemorrhoids. He stopped in Utah for emergency surgery and suffered a reaction to the spinal anesthesia. Homecoming events were canceled, and for weeks he battled nausea, headaches, and

sleeplessness. And when Voorhis at last returned to the district, he was welcomed by a thunderous Nixon salvo that accused him of siding with the Communists against the interests of his constituents.

A GROWING FEAR of Communism was a factor in that year after the war. Running for Congress in Massachusetts, a young John F. Kennedy was telling the voters: "The freedom-loving countries of the world must stop Soviet Russia now, or be destroyed." J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI, appeared before the American Legion convention in San Francisco and warned that there were 100,000 active Communists working to subvert democracy in America. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the lobbying voice of American business, hired Father John Cronin, a Roman Catholic priest, to prepare a pamphlet titled "Communist Infiltration of the United States" and distributed 400,000 copies. "We will have to set up some firing squads in every good-sized city and town in the country," one Chamber official wrote a colleague, in order to "liquidate the Reds and Pink Benedict Arnolds."

In California, the voters had been pounded for months by screaming headlines about HUAC's investigations of actors, writers, and film producers—and the often violent struggle over Red influence in the electrical workers', longshoremen's, and Hollywood studio unions, where film star Ronald Reagan was capturing attention with his battle against the Communists, and sluggers clashed at the gates of MGM. The Republican Party chairman, Carroll Reece, styled the election as a choice between "Communism and Republicanism."

"There was a lot of fear," Frank Jorgensen, the Amateur, recalled. Their campaign never made an outright accusation that Voorhis was a Communist, Jorgensen said. They did not have to. The "connotation" was enough.

The thread on which Nixon hung the charge was a provisional endorsement that Voorhis had gotten, back in March, from the Los Angeles chapter of the National Citizens' Political Action Committee, a harmless group of left-wing activists. The NC-PAC, however, was a spinoff of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the militant labor group that had its own political action committee—the powerful CIO-PAC, regularly called "the PAC." And several of the CIO's member unions had been infiltrated and dominated by Communists. "The CIO is drunk with power. They have had a good taste of it. They like it. And I suspect that they feel strong enough to get it," Charles Voorhis warned his son. There was no question

"but that CIO is saturated with the more radical elements of our society . . . including the real Communists."

The congressman thus ordered his campaign workers to steer clear of the CIO and its PAC. To a California leader of the United Auto Workers, a CIO affiliate, Voorhis wrote: "I am frankly deeply concerned over the degree to which the Communists have succeeded in getting hold of some of the organizations, and I definitely do not want their support, nor would they be justified in giving it to me, from their point of view."

The problem Voorhis faced was that he generally depended on labor and progressive groups for votes, funds, and campaign workers. Now he was making distinctions, wooing some and rejecting others. It left him conflicted: "I do not want to be discourteous" to liberal supporters "who are really quite all right," he told his dad. So Voorhis wavered. His admirers had battled Hollywood's actual Communists "every inch of the way" to get Voorhis that local NC-PAC blessing. But in June, Voorhis wrote the NC-PAC director, repudiating the organization unless it publicly renounced Communism. Then he changed his mind and didn't mail the letter. Later he wrote in the margin, "Not sent. Should have been."

Nixon had no taste for such fine distinctions and reckoned the voters would not either. "Nixon moved in and took the anti-Communist line. It was, I'm sure, in accordance with his beliefs and . . . it was the biggest, hottest issue . . . a gut issue," Amateur Mac Faries recalled. The argument was syllogistic: Voorhis was endorsed by NC-PAC . . . the NC-PAC was aligned with the CIO . . . ergo, Voorhis was a stooge for Communists. Faries and a few others balked. But when he "objected to the strength Nixon was putting into his efforts on the Red issue," Faries said, "my objections were overruled."

Nice guys and sissies don't win elections, Roy Day liked to say. In April, the Nixon campaign conflated the dreamy NC-PAC liberals and the CIO-PAC hard-liners into "the PAC." By the end of the summer, it was "the communist-dominated PAC," and the Nixon campaign was warning that Voorhis "consistently voted the PAC line." The canard soon appeared in the district's newspapers—where the Nixon campaign was now buying ads—and began to catch on among the public.

"How did Jerry get away with his support of the Communist Party line, representing a district made up of folks who believe in the American way of life and free enterprise?" Klein's Alhambra paper asked. "About the only possible explanation is that a majority of the voters in the 12th District were deceived." Young Dick Nixon was to be credited for exposing such

duplicity. "He will not be found lined up with those members of Congress who toe the CIO-PAC Communist Party line as Jerry did."

The Democrats sensed the danger. "Many people not acquainted with your real views have the remarkable impression either that you are a wild-eyed radical or that you are a 'stooge' of the CIO-PAC," warned Paul Bullock, a Voorhis supporter, in a letter to the congressman.

In the last week of August, the Whittier and Alhambra newspapers shared a blistering editorial, layered with Hayek's philosophy and frosted with Nixon's opposition research, urging the farmers and small businessmen who had been helped by Voorhis to stop trading their "political soul" for the constituent services his office so effectively rendered. "If this country ever falls into the grasp of a totalitarian dictator it is not likely to come through a Communist revolution," the editorial said. "It will come because those who profess to believe in freedom are willing to sell their fellow citizens into serfdom for a mess of pottage in the form of political favors from the very radicals who change our form of government. This is exactly what happened in Germany. It is the most dangerous threat to the American way of life in our own country today."

Nixon pressed the point in a Labor Day address in Whittier. "It is a satisfaction and a privilege to accept the challenge of the PAC," he said. "I will not, in the course of this campaign, remain silent concerning the radical doctrines fostered by this and other extreme left-wing elements that are seeking to eliminate representation of all the people from the American form of government." The campaign started handing out thimbles imprinted with the slogan NIXON FOR CONGRESS—PUT THE NEEDLE IN THE P.A.C. The gimmick proved to be a hit.

Finally, on September 11, Voorhis responded, with large, signed ads in the district's bigger newspapers accusing Nixon of making "an untrue claim" and demanding that the Republicans produce the evidence. Day had returned to his job at the printing plant, and Harrison McCall, a veteran organizer, was managing Nixon's campaign. He promised the press: "We will offer the proof at the proper time."

THE PROPER TIME arrived two days later, on a soft, warm California evening, as an overflow crowd jammed the auditorium at the South Pasadena junior high school for a meet-the-candidates forum. In their exchange of notes after Tricia was born, Voorhis had casually offered to join Nixon onstage in the fall to discuss the issues. Both campaigns were divided on the matter and spent the summer chewing it over. There were those in

the Voorhis camp who saw no payoff in giving a challenger that kind of exposure, and there were Nixon advisers who were wary of taking on a congressman who, in a decade on the House floor, had no doubt mastered the art of debate. But once the question was out there, neither candidate could back away gracefully. Each agreed to attend the Pasadena event—on Republican turf, but staged by local progressives.

Stand-ins for the Senate hopefuls (Chotiner was there on Senator Knowland's behalf) warmed up a festive, even rowdy, crowd. Then Voorhis gave his opening remarks and Nixon—by prearrangement—arrived late, to whoops from his supporters. The thunderbolts struck in the question-and-answer session that capped the evening. Both sides had salted the crowd with partisans, armed with accusations. When the issue of the PAC was raised, Voorhis challenged Nixon, demanding that he produce "proof" of an endorsement. Striding across the stage with studied magniloquence (honed in amateur theater), Nixon shoved a piece of paper into his rival's hands. It was the preliminary list of favored candidacies from the local NC-PAC chapter, and it took Voorhis by surprise. He had forgotten, missed, or dismissed its import.

Why . . . this was not the PAC . . . this was a different group, Voorhis sputtered, clinging to the distinction. But Nixon was in his face, reading aloud the names of the many individuals who served as leaders for both organizations. It was clear, Nixon magisterially concluded, that the two groups were one and the same. Like a triumphant prosecutor, he turned and strode back to his podium. Nixon's supporters went wild.

"At this critical moment," Voorhis had "fumbled and was flustered," said Bullock, who was serving as the timekeeper. Tired and rusty, the congressman doddered through the rest of the evening, his windiness no match for Nixon's practiced, punishing jabs.

To Voorhis loyalists, Nixon's performance seemed "transparently political, self-serving, superficial, and, sometimes, downright corny," Bullock said. "The magnitude of Nixon's triumph did not immediately dawn on us." But as he left the auditorium, Voorhis fell in with Congressman Chet Holifield, a savvy Los Angeles Democrat.

"Jerry, he murdered you," Holifield said.

THE VOORHIS CAMPAIGN never recovered. "It was such a demoralizing kind of an evening," Long recalled. As the news of Nixon's march across the stage swept the district, it was clear that the trajectory of the campaign had been transformed.

"It begins to look like there is a real possibility" that Nixon could win, McCall wrote his sister. The debate "has started the voters talking . . . and that is just what Nixon needed." Dick seized the moment. "It made me known," he would recall. Voorhis "should never have accepted the challenge." On September 16, Nixon spoke to an audience in Pomona, with a growing group of journalists on hand. "There are those walking in high, official places in our country who would destroy our constitutional principles through socialization of American free institutions," Nixon warned. "These are the people who front for un-American elements, wittingly or otherwise." The "radical PAC and its adherents would deprive the people of liberty."

McCall sent telegrams to Kyle Palmer and Ray Haight, the Republican national committeeman, announcing that Nixon had fought himself into a photo finish, "through no help on your part." Their eyes opened, the Republican leaders agreed to fuel an eleventh-hour push. Haight later claimed that 70 percent of the Nixon expenditures in 1946 came from opportunistic, election-eve donors. Palmer put aside his skepticism, and the *Times* joined the local scribes, touting the remarkable GOP tyro of the Twelfth Congressional District, who was giving Voorhis "the fight of his life." The newspaper's owners were favorably impressed: the Chandlers now thought Nixon was a comer.

Dick's campaign treasury, saved from its midsummer drought by the emergency injection of oil money, spilled over with donations from commercial interests eager to be in on the kill. "It has been very discouraging to us to bet on losing horses during the past ten or twelve years," stockbroker R. N. Gregory wrote to his associates, soliciting money for the cause. "However, it is a long lane that has no turning and I am more confident than ever that Nixon has a good chance to win." Executives told employees to donate and to mask the contribution on their expense accounts. The Republican Party—recognizing that Truman's troubles had given them an unparalleled opportunity to take control of Congress in this midterm election—splashed a bull's-eye on Voorhis. Reports reached Voorhis that business interests from as far away as Wall Street were pulling out their checkbooks to defeat him.

"Money came in very slowly until the debates started," Crocker recalled, "and then money came in, all we needed."

Voorhis, dismayed, tried to make an issue of Nixon's spending. "Who is paying for the big Nixon signs?" the congressman's ads demanded. But it was virtually impossible to get an answer. The election laws were riddled with loopholes.

Nixon's inclination was to take advantage of such openings—even as he stretched the law beyond breaking.

"Under the law a candidate is required to report all contributions to his campaign, either financial or otherwise and if he does not do so he can be subjected to some pretty serious penalties," Nixon told Perry, who had asked him to write and thank one donor of billboard space. "For that reason, I do not believe it would be wise to write a letter . . . thanking him expressly for the use of the billboard because [it would be evidence that] such a contribution is known by the candidate and comes within the requirements of the law.

"I shall, however, write him a general letter thanking him for his support and then I will personally mention the matter to him when I see him," Nixon wrote.

The Nixon campaign, in its official report, said it spent $17,774. Years later, Day and Nixon admitted that the number was more like $40,000—about $500,000 after adjusting for inflation. But that was an estimate. No one actually knew, since thousands of dollars were raised and spent by individual operators like Perry, came as in-kind donations, or got channeled, at the end, via the Republican Party.

SEEKING TO RECOUP after the Pasadena massacre, Voorhis accepted Nixon's challenge to hold four more debates. In the sleepy Twelfth District, the political blood sport seized the fancy of the voters. More than a thousand people showed up for each of the final three contests, in Pomona, Monrovia, and San Gabriel. "The crowd got bigger and bigger," Holifield remembers, and Voorhis "got slaughtered every time."*

"It was deplorable. . . . [Nixon] would give these half-truths, innuendos," Dick's old debate teammate Osmyn Stout recalled. He registered his objection with Nixon. "You have to do this to become a candidate," Dick replied.

As Voorhis struggled to explain the NC-PAC endorsement, Nixon upped the ante. "ON ALL ISSUES INVOLVING RUSSIA, the CIO Political Action Committee looks after the interests of Russia against the interest of America," the Nixon ads charged. And of forty-six selected votes, Voorhis had strayed from the PAC's side only three times. "REMEMBER,

* Nixon had balked at first. Unlike Voorhis, he devoted days of study to each confrontation, and feared the time it would take from campaigning. But Chotiner sealed it. "Dick," he said, "when you're behind you don't play it safe. You must run a high risk campaign." After

Voorhis is a former registered Socialist and his voting record in Congress is more Socialistic and Communistic than Democratic."

Voorhis stayed up all night dissecting the fine print, discovering that many of the forty-six votes Nixon cited were for routine New Deal legislation. "We got out a little pamphlet about it which we tried to distribute without too much success," he recalled. "The newspapers . . . wouldn't put my stuff in." His meager response was eclipsed by Nixon's next blast—that Voorhis had failed to get any of his bills from the last four years enacted into law, except for a measure shifting federal jurisdiction over rabbits (the district had many rabbit farms) from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture.

"I assume you have to be a rabbit to have representation in the Twelfth Congressional District," Nixon told a crowd.

"Oh, I made an awful mess" of the moment in the San Gabriel debate when Nixon brought up the rabbit bill, Voorhis recalled. "I just stood up in consternation and amazement—and got booed by his claque."

As Voorhis tried to describe the tortuous ways of Congress to his constituents, and how lawmakers shape bills that don't always bear their names, the PAC issue reared up again—with news that Radio Moscow had endorsed the CIO's slate of candidates. And on it went. Why didn't Voorhis vote to make HUAC a permanent body? Why didn't he serve in World War II? Why did he vote to give United Nations relief funds to Soviet bloc nations? Why did he vote, so many times, with Congressman Vito Marcantonio of Harlem, that well-known fellow traveler?

And "every time that I would say that something wasn't true . . . the response was always, 'Voorhis is using unfair tactics by accusing Dick Nixon of lying.' This was used over and over," Voorhis recalled. One pro-Nixon group called the "War Veterans Non-Partisan Voters League" slammed Voorhis for launching "slanderous attacks" against the challenger. Despite the rumors that were sweeping the district about oil company bagmen, there was "not a nickel of oil company money" in the Nixon campaign, the group insisted, and demanded: "What kind of a man is this Congressman Voorhis? Who is he to make scurrilous statements about an honest, clean, forthright young American who fought in defense of his country in the stinking mud and jungle of the Solomons? Coming from a man like Voorhis who stayed safely behind the front in Washington, smear statements are most inappropriate."

In the thrum of one Nixon ad, as Election Day approached, the drumbeats came together, and all the melodies merged.

> Are you satisfied with present conditions? Can you buy meat? A new car? A refrigerator? The clothes you need? A vote for Nixon is a vote for change. Where are all those new houses you were promised? A vote for Nixon is a vote for change. Do you want a congressman who voted only three times out of 46 against the Communist-dominated PAC? A vote for Nixon is a vote for change. Do you know that your present congressman introduced 132 public bills in the last four years and only one of them was passed? That the one bill adopted transferred activities concerning rabbits from one federal department to another? A vote for Nixon is a vote for new, progressive and practical leadership. Vote for change.

Voorhis was a sensitive man—proud and vain about his record. He yearned for a genteel discussion. Nixon was anything but genteel. And many of the district's Democrats were starting to regard Dick—who they once considered an honorable challenger—as a sneak, a trickster, a hatchet man. An image was aborning. "He was wonderful," said Faries, yet also "much more personal . . . than some of us would have wished."

A Quaker elder from Whittier—Herschel Folger of the First Friends Church—was alarmed. "I feel much concerned . . . pertaining to various incidents in your campaign," Folger wrote Nixon. The extreme partisanship, the win-at-any-cost attitude, the "petty politics" of the race against Voorhis "made me sick at heart."

Yet the truth was that the Voorhis campaign was a shambles: underfunded, uncertain, and unable to capitalize on what doubts the voters might have had about Nixon's tactics. "My campaigns were never well organized," the congressman would admit. And the demographic tide then swamping California was running against him. The postwar migration added "a lot of new residents that didn't know even what district they were in. They had no idea at all [that] . . . Jerry Voorhis has been working with the old line people on agricultural assistance and . . . on numerous problems," said Stephen Zetterberg, another of the congressman's advisers. "Nixon was speaking to the newer groups of people that . . . hadn't even heard of Jerry Voorhis." And Voorhis had no strategy to reach them.

Across the land, the New Deal coalition was crumbling. It was a historic Election Day, as Republicans took control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1930.

In California, a Nixon campaign gimmick persuaded voters to answer their telephones in the final days with a cheery, "Vote Nixon for Congress."

If they answered that way and it was the Nixon campaign calling, they were told, they could win a toaster. It was said that there were ugly phone calls as well—short, from unknown sources—in which an anonymous caller asked: "Did you know that Jerry Voorhis is a communist?"

The Election Day verdict was unmistakable. Zita Remley was with Voorhis that afternoon, and phoned a friend at Alhambra city hall to obtain the early returns. "Nixon was . . . far ahead," she recalled. Moments later, Voorhis saw his doom in the numbers from San Gabriel. "He was very white and sort of quiet. . . . He just sort of put his head in his hands," Remley said.

The Nixons read a different set of early returns. Sobbing, Pat fled home. "What's the matter?" asked their landlord. "He's losing," she cried. Then a fuller set of results came in, and it was clear that Dick was on his way to a smashing victory. He swept every corner of the district—even the congressman's hometown—and won with 56 percent of the votes.

Dick packed Pat into the car, and they made the rounds of victory parties—including one rowdy celebration where Jorgensen was stripped of his trousers, which were flung onto a chandelier. "Pat and I were happier," Nixon recalled, "than we were ever to be again in my political career."

Voorhis was destroyed. He fled elective politics, infuriating Democrats who thought he should have waged a rematch in 1948—if only to keep the district competitive. Instead, it became a Republican stronghold. Many blamed him for an atrocious performance. "People always expect a candidate to hit hard. It's a spectacle that they enjoy . . . and when a candidate disappoints them in this regard and doesn't hit hard, it's a letdown," said Leisa Bronson. "Jerry was temperamentally ill-equipped to follow this line of strategy. . . . Not equipped to go in with the hard slugging."

Voorhis did not argue. "I had been the congressman for ten years. I'd done the best I could. And I really felt if the voters wanted to throw me out, by golly, okay," he recalled. "I'm afraid this was on my mind the whole time. . . . I hated a fight." But if Voorhis was candid about his flaws—and for decades declined to publicly complain about Nixon's tactics—in private there was fury in his circles.

"Entrenched interests have . . . conducted the most vicious and powerful campaign against you that money could buy," Charles Voorhis wrote his son. "Experts from the outside, highly trained in the art of lying and misrepresentation," had sown "misstatements over and over again."

wished Dick well but ended by writing, "I have refrained for reasons which I am sure you will understand from making any references . . . to the circumstances of the campaign recently conducted in our district. It would only have spoiled the letter."

In his march toward Congress, Richard Nixon had displayed many of the formidable qualities that would carry him to power and renown. On exhibit, there at the start, were qualities he would demonstrate time and again. Audacity. Resourcefulness. Resilience. Toil. He showed political prescience, and an almost visceral identification with the longings of his constituency.

Yet in that campaign, as well, are inklings of tragedy—portents of a slide into "the deepest valley" of disgrace. Some were idiosyncracies—the awkwardness and detachment, surmounted by will. Others were more troubling: the erosion of worthy purpose, and its supplanting by expediency. The great, haunting need, and chronic insecurity. The use of smears. In the crucible of the presidency such cracks could give way, and such a man could shatter.

Some months later, after Nixon was established in Washington, lobbyist Stanley Long, the Voorhis adviser, joined him for lunch. They revisited the campaign.

"Of course I knew Jerry Voorhis wasn't a Communist," Nixon told him. And of course he understood how a congressman could contribute to the legislative process without passing bills that bore his name. But "you're just being naïve," Nixon said when Long objected. "I had to win. That's something you don't understand. The important thing was to win."

Win he must. Win he had. Richard Nixon was going to Congress. In four years he would be a U.S. senator; in six the vice president of the United States of America.