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Garner Ready to Say Farewell

Here 38 Years, He'll Start Home Tomorrow

By W. B. Ragsdale,

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JUST at the moment when bands blare out and soldiers step off into the inaugural parade tomorrow, a man with white hair and thick eyebrows will climb aboard a train, bound for Uvalde, Tex.

For John Nance Garner will end his 38 years of work in Washington when he administers the oath of office to the new Vice President, Henry Agard Wallace. A few minutes later he will vanish from the Washington scene, dodging the ceremonies that follow.

Parades, dinners, balls, all of these will be left behind. Those who invited him got a polite note of regrets. Where President Roosevelt was involved, Mr. Garner talked over the problem with the Chief Executive and got excused.

"I don't blame you," the President told him, in effect, when Mr. Garner asked to be allowed to stay away from the reviewing stand past which the inaugural parade will march.

Mr. Garner takes no bitterness home with him. He has achieved a philosophy of life which closes the door of his heart against bitterness. He puts it this way:

"Ten or 15 years ago, I began to try to free myself of all hatred and envy of my fellow men. I began to try to go to bed at night without a heart filled with such things. And I began to get rid of worries about tomorrow.

"I was minority leader then. And I said to Ettie (Mrs. Garner), 'I'm going to quit hating people, and quit envying people.' Since then, I have pretty well kept that promise.

"The nearest I have come to breaking it was when I had an argument with the boss over sit-down strikes. But he had asked my opinion. I gave it to him. I was simply doing my duty as I saw it. Long ago, I got over any feeling about that.

"And I don't worry about tomorrow. As an individual, no one knows what will happen to him tomorrow. He can't plan for it. So I simply compose myself and go to sleep."

The Garners Arrived in 1903.

Thirty-eight years is a long time to spend around Washington. And many things have happened since the wintry day in 1903 when the young Texan and his wife settled down in Mrs. Lillie List's boarding house in K street to transact the business of his district.

Congress had no office buildings for its members then. And the Garners had both office and home at the boarding house. The total of Government spending that year was only a shade more than half a billion dollars. The new budget calls for about 35 times that much.

Like the sit-down strikes, the big spending of past years produced a difference between Mr. Garner and Mr. Roosevelt. Whatever of property or wealth Mr. Garner may have, he got it the hard and thrifty way. No oil bonanzas or stock market deals fed it. He saved and bought land, invested the income carefully in good American earth, not in get-rich-quick schemes. And he could not reconcile his own ideas of personal thrift with big governmental spending schemes.

Helped Others Get Bills Passed.

In Washington, Mr. Garner will be remembered more for the way in which he smoothed the path for other men's bills to become law than for any law to which his own name might have been attached. He introduced few bills, and most of them were the routine measures that the average member of Congress introduces, for bridges and public buildings and to specify where Federal courts shall meet in their districts.

But, during his first term in Congress, he did introduce what was one of the first measures Congress ever got that called for a graduated income tax. Nothing happened to it then. But 10 years later there was a graduated income tax. And in 1931, almost two years before the New Deal was swept into power on a rising swell of votes, he introduced another bill to provide almost two and a half billion dollars for public works and general relief projects. The measure carried a tax to pay its way.

Between the time he introduced his income tax bill and the production of his public works bill, he had grown to be the most potent single member of Congress. And his strength lay chiefly in tightly riveted friendships, not alone with Demo-

crats, but with Republicans who were powers in their own right.

As a young member, he belonged to Speaker Joe Cannon's poker circle. In his middle years, his friendship with Speaker Nicholas Longworth was a national legend. They were Republicans, he a Democrat, Yet, when he was leader

for his own party in the House and Longworth chief of the opposition, the two were boon companions and he often referred to the Speaker's automobile as "our car."

In his later years as Vice President, his whole power rested upon that tightly bound but wide circle of friends he had made in his years in Washington.

Often in those days, he would tell friends:

"I wish I had stayed in the House. I didn't ever ask any one to be Vice President. If I had stayed on as Speaker, I would have been in that place longer than any Speaker in history—10 years. The longest has been six."

But the simple wish to have held the job longer than any other man was not the real reason why he expressed that thought. The real answer lay in the fact that:

"The only power I have is such as I can wield through my friends. A Vice President's power is restricted according to his personality and friends. All he has is an affirmative vote. He can vote 'yes' but he can't vote 'no.' A bill is defeated on a tie vote in the Senate unless the Vice President votes 'yes.' It is only

through his friends that a Vice President can accomplish anything."

Mr. Garner accomplished plenty through his friends. He was the first Vice President in history to become an active legislative general for the President. As Democratic leader in the House, he had had key men in every State delegation who could give him a quick summary of how the men on their delegation felt. As leader and Speaker, he had had a direct hand in elevating many of the House committee chairmen to their posts. And through the years, his friendships had reached across the Capitol into the Senate.

Parts Company With President.

Later, when he and President Roosevelt parted company in the turmoil of the second term, he became the sharpest vice presidential thorn any President has encountered since John C. Calhoun presided over the Senate and prompted debaters in the tariff fight with Andrew Jackson. The personal relations between Mr. Garner and the President remained friendly, but their differences over policy were sharp.

The roots lay deeper than many suspected. In 1936, perhaps unknown to the President, there had been an active desire by some of those around him to oust Mr. Garner as Vice President. But friends of Mr. Garner got wind of the plan before it came to the surface and headed it off. This lay in the background as they came into the second term, a term which brought the Supreme Court battle, sit-down strikes and unnumbered smaller disputes.

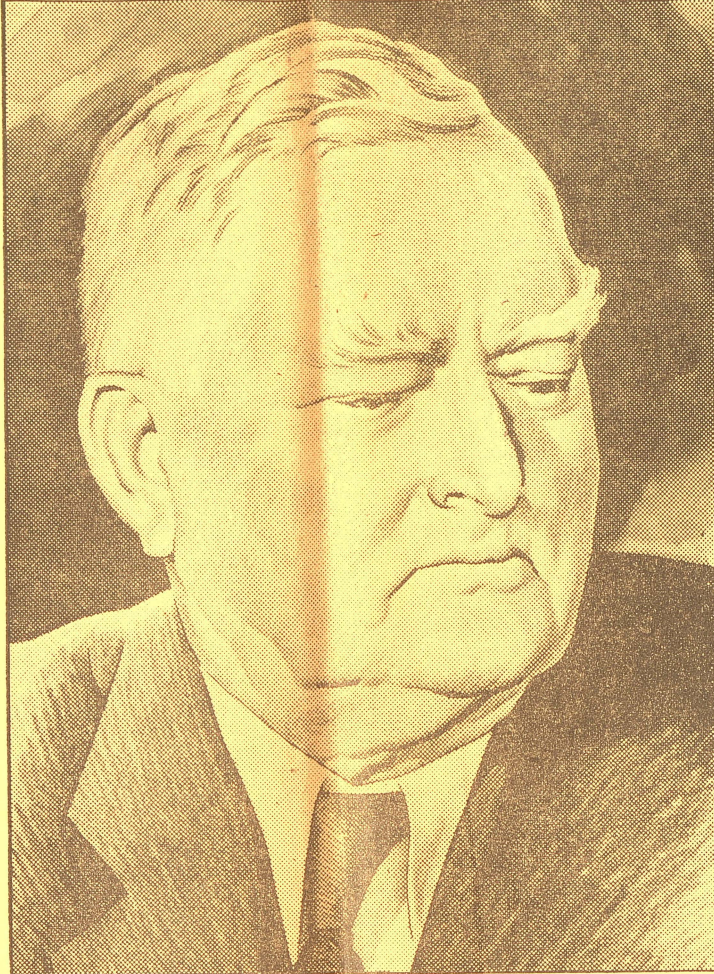
However enthusiastic may have been the cheering of his friends for Mr. Garner as a presidential candidate, he was not deluded by their hopes and certainly not entranced by the idea of being President. That he was not deluded is evidenced by the bets he won on who would be nominated.

Dislikes Turmoil Here.

"Going to the White House would be just like going to jail for four years. Why, I couldn't even go fishing in the summer without taking along an army. I'm telling you the truth, I'd rather go back to Texas and take life easy than anything else," he told friends.

He fell silent and looked long at the end of his cigar, as if his mind might be wading back through some of that past turmoil. Tax fights in the Ways and Means Committee. Party caucuses in the House. Conference Committee disputes. Relief battles. Supreme Court bills. Sit-down strikes. Plenty of turmoil.

Tomorrow, while all Washington is watching the ceremony of the inauguration, he will quit its turmoil and head for Uvalde, for his chickens and pecans and barbecue pit, for days of quiet fishing in placid streams, for the more vigorous tramping after deer and quail, for nights of camping in the wild, where the only sound is the howl of coyotes. He will like it.



JOHN NANCE GARNER.

—Sketch by Newman Sudduth.