

# Then And Now

**'Jack' Garner likes  
his Texas privacy.**

**By S. J. WOOLF**

**P**RESIDENT TRUMAN paid an election-campaign call on John Nance Garner of Uvalde, Tex., not many weeks ago and, more recently, Uvalde celebrated its chief resident's eightieth birthday. Apart from those two publicity-laden moments, President Roosevelt's first Vice President has been, for some years, as private a citizen as he could make himself. He is back home to stay, and being back home carries with it the right to remain out of the public eye.

When "Cactus Jack" became Speaker of the House he felt he had had enough and it was only a sense of duty that led him to postpone his retirement and to accept the nomination for an office he did not particularly want, as running mate in 1932 to Franklin Roosevelt.

The Vice Presidency is usually a cloak of anonymity. Unless a Vice President declares that what the country needs is a good five-cent cigar, becomes a "progressive," or succeeds to the Presidency he is doomed to join the ranks of forgotten men. John Garner realized all this when he accepted the nomination for the second highest office in the land.

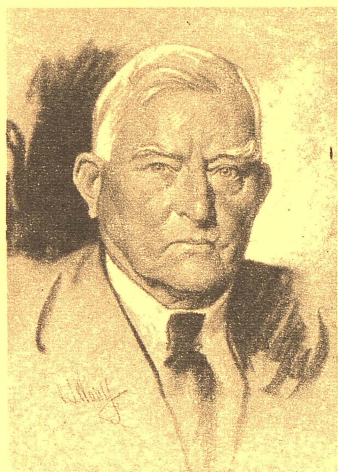
However, when the Democratic convention threatened to develop into a deadlock between the forces of Smith and Roosevelt, Garner acted. The California and Texas delegates were pledged to him and he swung them to Roosevelt. Consequently, he received second place on the ticket.

**G**ARNER, who was 63 at the time, told me he would much rather "shake the dust of Washington from his feet" and get down to Texas, where he said he found a joy that was missing in the capital. By nature he is as explosive as dynamite, as booming as a bass drum and as lively as a cricket. But upon his inauguration he became a clam so far as the public was concerned. With a glint in his eye he refused to be quoted and said it was up to "the Boss" to speak for the Administration. Yet his candid outbursts in private led the President in the early part of his first term to call him "Old Man Common Sense."

The two men, however, never did see eye to eye. The Old Line Democrat disliked the Brain Trust, had little use for many New Deal measures, but was loyal to the man under whom he served. Using the tactics of a politician of

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**REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!**



**"Cactus Jack," Vice President.**

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the old school, he worked tooth and nail for the passage of legislation for which he had little sympathy. As presiding officer of the Senate he ruled, not with a mailed fist, but with a gloved hand. He tintured his sharpest retorts with homely humor and told unpleasant truths without a sting. In a small hideaway in the Capitol he achieved political miracles, opening its door not only to his cronies but also to Senators who were making trouble on the floor.

Although he made no bones about telling the President how he felt about the New Deal, he rarely let the public in on the secret. There was one time, however, when he made it fairly clear as to how he stood. This was when the bill to increase the membership of the Supreme Court was pending before the Senate. This was more than he could stand. He said nothing, but decided to take a trip to his home "to hunt, fish and tend the chickens," leaving the Senators to wrangle over the Administration measure.

**W**HILE he was away Senator Joseph Robinson, leader of the Administration's forces, suddenly died. The Vice President knew that this would turn the majority of the Senate against the Supreme Court section of the Judiciary Bill and he resolved to return to Washington, tell the President the facts in plain language and get a commission to settle the fight on the enemy's terms. This is what was done, and it was Garner who engineered it.

As the time for the 1940 nominating convention drew near it was clear that if the third-term tradition were discarded Garner would not be on the ticket. While he and the President retained their personal liking for each other and still played an occasional game of poker, their political views had become more divergent. Moreover, the New Dealers, who regarded the Vice President as an arch-conservative, were in control. Apart from this, Garner and his wife would not postpone their homeward trek any longer.

They decided that, no matter what happened, they were go-

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Drawings by S. J. Woolf.

**Elder statesman—retired.**

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ing back to Uvalde, where with \$151.60 in his pocket John Garner had settled over a half century before. He had picked hilly Uvalde because the lowlands in Red River County where he was born seventy-nine years ago were injurious to his lungs. But weak lungs had not prevented him from walking six miles daily to an elementary school, nor from becoming a lawyer by the time he was 19.

Although he soon won a reputation as a poker player rather than for his legal talents, it was not long before he was on the road to success. He was, in turn, newspaper editor, judge and State Representative. Then in 1902 he was elected to Congress.

Today, a wealthy country gentleman, he says that had it not been for Mrs. Garner's recent death the years since his retirement would have been the happiest in his life.

Looking after his business interests takes up a considerable amount of his time. He made a fortune in real estate and today owns three banks, many buildings and two large ranches leased for oil exploration.

**H**E lives in a brown brick house which he built thirty years ago on an eight-acre plot covered with pecan trees. He picks up 125 nuts daily in order to preserve his waistline. On the land there is also a poultry farm which he looks after himself, dressed for the purpose, in a blue cotton shirt, denim overalls and a belt that could encircle a much heavier man. Much of the time a twisted cigar juts from his thin lips. He pays a dime for three of them and walks downtown daily to buy them and to get shaved. These trips, augmented now and again by a hunting or fishing expedition with the local garage man—the only person who calls him Jack—he says keep his legs in condition. And he believes that a man is as old as his legs. He hopes they will hold out until he is 93. He wants to live to that age so that he will be able to say he spent more than half his years in private life.

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