

# Spiro Agnew dead at 77

## Agnew in his own words

Former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew was known for his rhetorical flourishes. Some examples:

"A spirit of national masochism prevails, encouraged by an effete corps of impudent snobs who characterized themselves as intellectuals." — On Vietnam War protesters, in a 1969 speech.

"They have never done a productive thing in their lives. They take their tactics from Fidel Castro and their money from daddy." — On students demonstrating against the Vietnam War.

"In the United States today, we have more than our share of the nattering nabobs of negativism." — His description of the press corps during a 1970 speech in San Diego.

"I want to make it abundantly clear that I have full confidence in the integrity of President Nixon, and in his determination and ability to resolve the Watergate matter to the full satisfaction of the American people." — At a news conference during the Watergate scandal.

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Capital file photo

Spiro Agnew lifts the hand of then-congressional candidate Marjorie Holt, above, while campaigning in the area in 1972. Mr. Agnew is shown leaving court in Baltimore in 1973 after pleading no contest to income tax evasion.



AP file photo

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Spiro T. Agnew, a nationally obscure governor who rose to become Richard Nixon's vice president on the strength of his die-hard conservatism before resigning in disgrace in 1973, died yesterday at age 77.

Agnew was taken yesterday afternoon to Atlantic General Hospital in Berlin, Md., where he died. He owned a condominium in nearby Ocean City.

Hospital officials refused to release details of his death.

Picked by Mr. Nixon as his running mate in 1968, Mr. Agnew established himself as a national political force by employing colorful phraseology in criticizing anti-war protesters, liberals and the media.

"We speak of the Ronald Reagan revolution. . . Spiro Agnew was the John the Baptist for that revolution," said Victor Gold, Mr. Agnew's campaign press secretary in 1972.

His most famous lines came in a 1970 speech, when he attacked the news media as "nattering nabobs of negativism" and "the hopeless, hysterical hypochondriacs of history."

But Mr. Agnew's meteoric six-year rise from Baltimore County government to governor of Maryland to vice president came to an abrupt halt in October 1973, when he pleaded no contest to a single count of income-tax evasion and resigned.

"He served Maryland well. He served President Nixon well. And the misfortunes that came his way should be allowed to die with him," said Helen Bentley, a former Republican representative from Maryland and Mr. Agnew's friend.

"We thought he was a wonderful candidate," said Marjorie S. Holt, a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Miami that nominated Mr. Agnew for vice president. "He'd made a lot of contributions to the country."

Mrs. Holt, a former seven-term member



AP file photo

Spiro Agnew is pictured with then-President Richard Nixon in this 1968 file photo.

of Congress from Severna Park, said the state GOP lost a powerful advocate with Mr. Agnew's elevation to national politics.

But she said his resignation surprised her only a day after she had introduced him to other congressmen.

She described him trying to clean up governments that were run like "banana republics."

"He was part of our growing up, learning how to behave morally," she said.

Lee Troutner, a former Annapolis restaurateur who served as Mr. Agnew's gubernatorial photographer, said the former governor and his wife were always friendly and accessible.

"He paid attention to nobodies," Mr. Troutner said.

Mr. Troutner accompanied Mr. Agnew to Miami in 1968 and both men were surprised at his selection as vice president. Mr. Troutner's favorite picture showed Richard Nixon and Mr. Agnew reacting and pointing to the convention crowd.

Mr. Troutner also enjoys personal memories, such as Mr. Agnew playing golf with (See AGNEW, Page A16)

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# AGNEW

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comedian Bob Hope in Columbus Ohio. Or that one of Mr. Agnew's favorite snacks was the pizza at a former Main Street restaurant.

"Mr. Agnew was a wonderful man," Mr. Troutner said.

Feeling that Mr. Nixon had sacrificed him in order to mollify Watergate critics, Mr. Agnew withdrew from political life, working as a businessman and splitting time between homes in Rancho Mirage, Calif., and Ocean City.

In May 1965 he made a rare public appearance attending a ceremony at the U.S. Senate chamber as his bust was installed among the likenesses of other former vice presidents.

"I'm not blind or deaf to the fact that there are those who feel this is a ceremony that should not take place," Mr. Agnew said at the time.

Only one other vice president, John C. Calhoun, who had a political split with President Andrew Jackson, was forced to resign from office. Mr. Agnew's was the first resignation stemming from legal problems.

In court, Mr. Agnew did not contest the government's charge that he willfully evaded paying \$13,551.47 in federal income taxes in 1967. Judge Walter E. Hoffman fined him \$10,000 and sentenced him to three years unsupervised probation.

But following the plea, Mr. Agnew denied all the government's allegations in the case, including claims that he accepted cash kickbacks from contractors over 10 years

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When you've seen one slum, you've seen them all. Explaining why he did not make a campaign stop in an inner-city neighborhood.

I hereby resign the office of the vice president of the United States, effective immediately. In a statement delivered to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger shortly before pleading no contest to a charge of income tax evasion on Oct. 10, 1973.

while he was Baltimore County executive, governor and vice president.

On Oct. 15, 1974, just five days after his resignation, Mr. Agnew told a national TV audience that he resigned to restore unimpaired confidence and implicit trust in the vice presidency.

He described his accusers as self-confessed bribe brokers and said he had done no wrong.

Mr. Agnew was a virtual political unknown on the national scene when he was elected Maryland governor in 1966 because he was considered more liberal than the Democratic candidate.

He took the chance Mr. Nixon offered him in 1968 and validated the choice with his aggressive campaigning and hard-line statements.

At no time have I enriched myself at the expense of the public trust. In a statement given in federal court on Oct. 10, 1973.

President Nixon naively believed that by throwing me to the wolves he had appeased his enemies. In his book "Go Quietly or Else."

I decided after 20 years of resentment to put it all aside. I'm here to pay tribute to the man's many accomplishments and to express our sympathy. On attending Mr. Nixon's funeral.

He attracted wide attention with his law and order line and harsh ridicule of liberals and Vietnam War protesters, whom he said did not speak for the silent majority.

He derided opponents of the war as an effete corps of impudent snobs and labeled national TV commentators a tiny fraternity of privileged men elected by no one and enjoying a monopoly sanctioned and licensed by the government.

Student protesters, he said, "have never done a productive thing in their lives. They take their tactics from Fidel Castro and their money from daddy."

While many of his controversial comments were planned, some were not. He was criticized as insensitive and even racist after using racial

epithets.

And at one point in the campaign, he canceled a trip to an inner-city ghetto, saying "When you've seen one slum, you've seen them all."

Mr. Agnew was born on Nov. 9, 1918, in suburban Baltimore, the son of a Greek immigrant father. He became a lawyer and moved into politics, winning his first election to become county executive of Baltimore County in 1962.

Prior to that election, he had been chairman of the county zoning board, winning a reputation for his integrity.

He was only the fifth Republican in 180 years to be elected governor of Maryland, a heavily Democratic state.

He was elected county executive and six years later he was vice president. Can you believe that?" said former Maryland governor Harry R. Hughes.

After leaving office, Mr. Agnew worked as a broker in business deals for an international clientele.

Mr. Agnew was later disbarred by the Maryland Court of Appeals, which described him as "morally obtuse, and in 1981 was ordered to pay \$268,482 to the state to cover the kickbacks and interest.

Only very rarely did he appear on a TV show or grant an interview. He continued to press his case that he was innocent in his book, "Go Quietly or Else," published in 1980.

Mr. Agnew is survived by his wife, Judy, and their son and three daughters.

Staff Writer Bart Jansen contributed to this story.