



Just Plain Dick: Richard Nixon's Checkers Speech and the "Rocking, Socking" Election of 1952

Kevin Mattson

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It all started with some businessmen bankrolling Richard Nixon to become a "salesman against socialization." But in this precursor to current campaign finance scandals, Nixon had some explaining to do to keep his place on Eisenhower's Republican ticket, so he took to the airwaves. In making his speech, Nixon left behind lines about a "Republican cloth coat" and a black and white cocker spaniel named "Checkers." The speech saved and bolstered Nixon's political career and set the tone for the 1952 campaign.

Just Plain Dick is political history and more. It's the story of a young man nearing a nervous breakdown and staging a political comeback. While the narrative focuses tightly, almost cinematically, on the 1952 election cycle—from the spring primary season to the summer conventions, and then to the allegations against Nixon through to the speech in September and finally the election in November—Mattson also provides a broad-stroke depiction of American politics and culture during the Cold War.

With publication scheduled during the 2012 election season, readers will see Nixon's contribution to current campaign styles. Here is a story of phony populism, a hatred of elites (tagged "eggheads" back then), and emotionally charged appeals erasing a rational assessment of a politician's qualifications. An entertaining and suspenseful read, *Just Plain Dick* is ideal election context for political junkies and those fascinated with 1950s America.

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