

Nixon love letters reported

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Copies of letters purportedly from then-President Richard M. Nixon to a lover were spirited out of the White House even before the originals were mailed, an Alabama source who claims to possess the copies said today.

The source said that some of the letters indicate the woman wanted to marry Nixon and was pushy about it, "and Nixon became upset about that."

In an interview with Andrew Kilpatrick of The Birmingham News, the source, who asked not to be identified in any way, claimed to have had copies of about 20 such letters after receiving them from a friend who got them from a White House employe.

The source declined to release the hand-written photostatic copies because, "I felt like Nixon has had enough. It's not anyone's business. I hate to have any part in it."

Stories published Thursday reported that New York literary agent Scott Meredith said he now has copies of some of the letters.

The unnamed source quoted in the News interview said, "I gave them to the man who gave them to Meredith to make a literary inquiry as to their authenticity. I am upset at what has happened."

The person said the 13 letters still in Alabama are stored in a safe place and reveal Nixon's inner thoughts about Watergate and are "nice, interesting and risqué letters."

"I did not see Nixon write the letters, but I would state that Nixon wrote them," the source said, adding that many are written on White House stationery, begin with "Dear," "Dearest," "Hello" and "Hi," preceding the woman's first name, and most are signed "Love, Dick."

The source said there often was direct mention of a love affair in the letters, which range from short notes to five to seven pages, indicating the alleged affair began in New York in the early 1960s and show that the two later met in California, Washington, D.C., Paris and Florida while Nixon was President.

The woman, the source said, is either European or of European descent, now lives in Spain and is wealthy, reputable and attractive."

The source said an enormous sum of money has been offered for the copies, adding, "If I release them, I want to have control of how they are released. I want it treated as it is — a beautiful love story."

Keeping much of the News interview off the record, the source said the story of how the letters came to Alabama was "an unusual, disturbing one," adding that they were received a few at a time for safekeeping.

As Watergate progressed, the source said, Nixon appeared from the letters to become more attached to the woman and wrote his thoughts about Watergate, saying it was not as important as everyone was making it out to be.

The letters reportedly have Nixon questioning himself as to why he didn't make a fuller disclosure earlier and admitting that he made some mistakes in handling Watergate.