

Friend of Nixon Is Identified as Backer In Purchase of Western White House

**\$625,000 Borrowed—
Company Is Set Up
to Hold Property**

5/26/73
By WALLACE TURNER
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 25 — White House said today that the bulk of President Nixon's estate at San Clemente was controlled by an unnamed investment company formed by Robert H. Abplanalp, a multimillionaire businessman who is a close friend of the President.

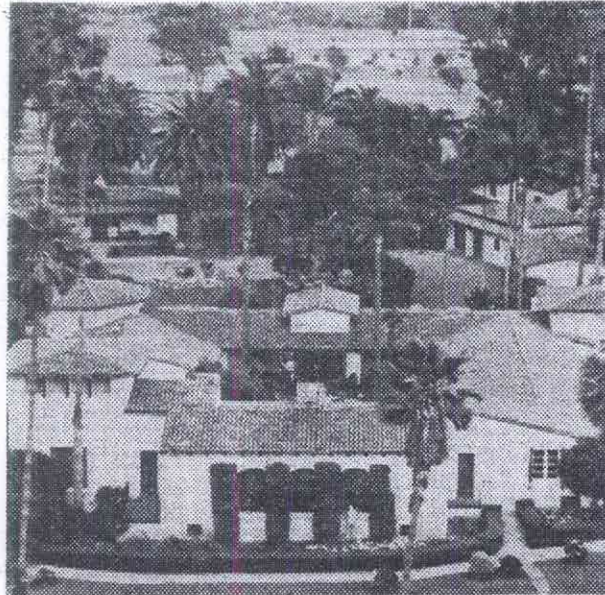
The White House statement said the company had been formed by Mr. Abplanalp "for

*Statement on Nixon house is
printed on Page 10.*

the purpose of acquiring and holding" all but 5.9 acres and the house on the 26-acre property, and that it paid \$1,249,000.

But Orange County, Calif., property records show no evidence that the property has been legally divided. A wall, paid for by the Federal Government, has been built around the entire 26 acres, and the Nixons are the only ones residing there.

The White House statement also said that Mr. Abplanalp, owner of an aerosol valve manufacturing company, aided the Nixons in 1969 when they bought the \$1.4 million Hamil-



Associated Press

The main house at San Clemente has a center courtyard

ton Cotton estate with a \$100,000 down payment and they were not able to find financing as expected. As one point, the White House said, the Nixons owed Mr. Abplanalp \$625,000 in personal notes.

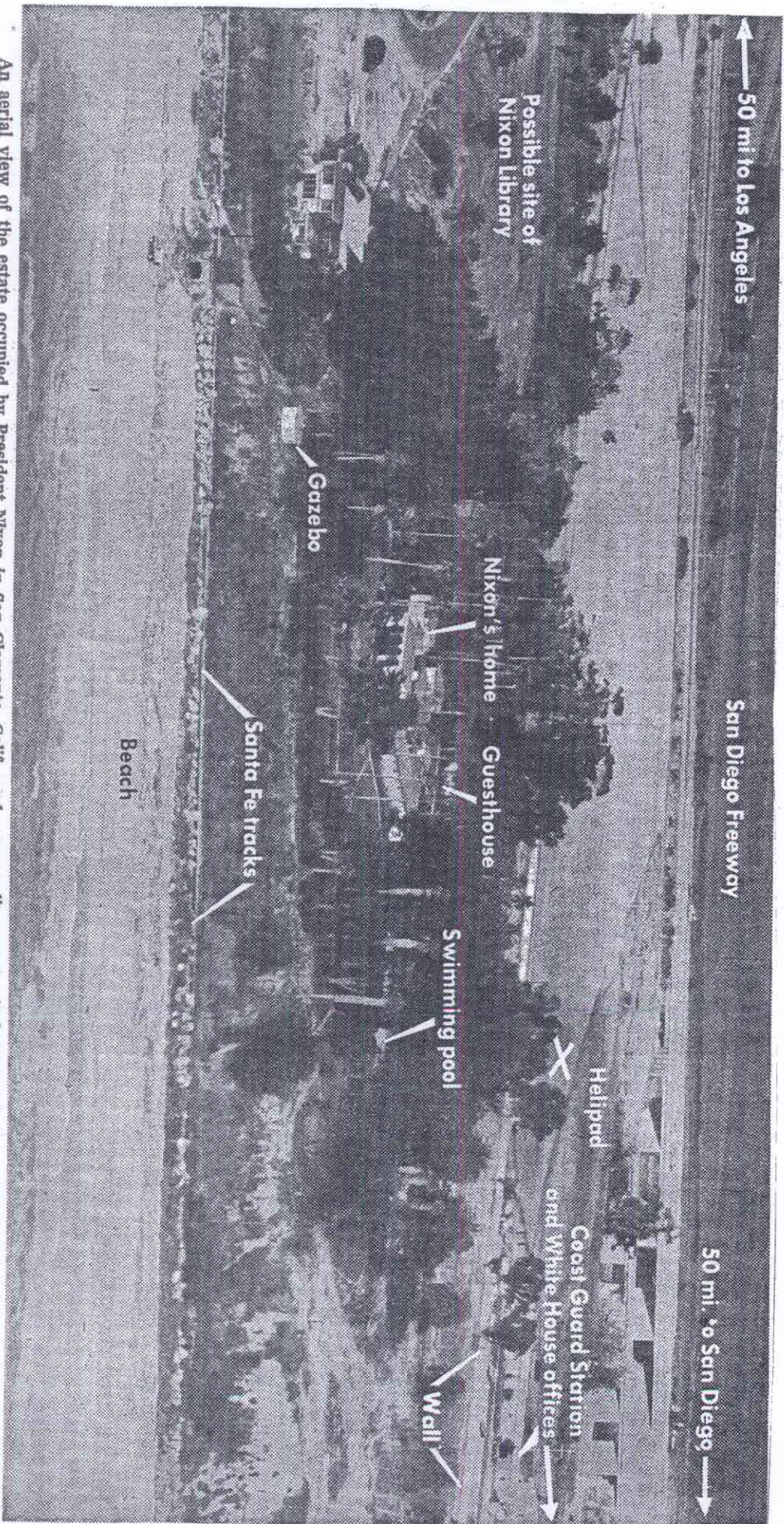
The mansion was acquired by Mr. Nixon in 1969, just before he switched his voting registration from New York to California. The account given at that time hinted that some unnamed owner would take the major part of the 21.6 acres that made up the former Hamilton Cotton estate.

At a news briefing on May 12, 1969, John D. Ehrlichman,

then Presidential counsel, said that about three quarters of the property was being held "for the beneficial interest of the President at the present time—in other words, we are retaining the capacity to determine who will be the purchaser of the balance."

The statement placed on the distribution racks in the White House press office today said that "no compatible buyer had been found" by July, 1969, when the sale was closed and that the Nixons had been required to find money to acquire the

Continued on Page 10, Column 3



An aerial view of the estate occupied by President Nixon in San Clemente, Calif, and surrounding areas. At bottom left is a private home, not on the property.

Nixon Friend Helped Buy The Western White House

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

entire tract temporarily.

The Nixons turned to Mr. Abplanalp, and at one point owed him \$625,000. Mr. Abplanalp held "their personal promissory notes bearing interest at 8 per cent," the statement related.

The Nixons, meantime, had also acquired another small tract adjacent to the old estate. This 2.9-acre parcel was brought for \$100,000, of which \$20,000 was in cash and \$80,000 in a mortgage, according to the statement.

On Dec. 15, 1970, the Nixons and Mr. Abplanalp moved into a new phase in their financial relationship. Mr. Abplanalp created an investment company, according to the narrative of today's statement, and it acquired and held the entire property except for a 5.9-acre tract on which the mansion is located.

The President and Mrs. Nixon own this tract and the house, subject to a mortgage, the amount of which was not set out in the statement.

Reached by radiotelephone in the Bahamas, Mr. Abplanalp would not discuss the land transaction except to say "what I heard on the radio is correct," The Associated Press reported.

Asked if he would divulge the name of his investment company or any of its operations, he replied, "no," adding: "I'm not trying to evade anything but I just haven't seen the statement the White House has put out."

For more than a year, questions have been raised about the amount of money that Mr. Nixon invested in the San Clemente property. The White House had responded by directing attention to the 1969 press statement in which Mr. Erlichman, who recently resigned as a result of the Watergate scandal, said the Nixons had put up \$100,000, assumed a mortgage of \$240,000 and taken control of the property.

In a financial statement is-

sued Sept. 17, 1972, the White House said that Mr. Nixon had debts of \$518,038 on property in California and Florida, not specifying how much was owed on what property.

Then on May 13, an article in The Santa Ana (Calif.) Register quoted an unnamed investigator for the Senate's Watergate committee as saying that he suspected money left from the 1968 Nixon Presidential campaign had been used to buy the San Clemente property.

When that article was picked up and distributed by news agencies on May 14, the White House press office immediately described it as "a total fabrication." On May 15, the press office said that President Nixon still owed \$630,000 on the San Clemente property.

The press office announced that night that it would produce a complete accounting on May 15 of Mr. Nixon's land transactions. The accounting was put off three times until today.

When the statement was made available today, no White House spokesman were available, and the secretaries said they had been told that no questions would be accepted about the statement which, they said, "spoke for itself."

While the statement answered the question of where Mr. Nixon got the money to control an estate purchased for \$1.4-million, it raised other questions without giving answers.

Some Open Questions

Some of those questions are the following:

What is the name of the investment company Mr. Abplanalp organized and that the White House now says owns the land around the Presidential home in San Clemente? Mr. Abplanalp was said by his associates in the Precision Valve Corporation to be at his island retreat in the Bahamas. He did not respond to attempts to reach him there.

Whose money financed the \$1,249,000 capital that the statement implies is in the investment company? Why did not the President's statement of net worth last fall make clear the facts of his occupancy of the property known as the Western White House?

Where are the documents that illustrate the transactions described by the White House? (As of two days ago, property



The New York Times

Robert H. Abplanalp in his Yonkers office in 1969

ownership records showed the San Clemente property to be encumbered by a mortgage of \$1-million, and not to be divided into the two parcels described by the White House statement.)

Who paid for improvements, the Government or the President and Mrs. Nixon. The statement said that "the Nixons have spent, to date, \$123,514 for improvements to the house and the 5.9 acre home site."

A year ago, The New York Times examined all the available public records about improvements made on the estate after it came under the President's control. Attempts were made to discover which im-

provements had been paid for

office; it did not respond. But interviews with contractors, whose names were discovered through building permits on file at San Clemente City Hall, showed that thousands of dollars of public funds had been spent on permanent improvements to the property.

The White House statement did not say whether the claim is that someone compensated the public treasury for these expenses, which involved a

seven-foot masonry wall, summer houses, ornate walkways to the beach, heating systems and the like.

Among California politicians it was assumed in 1969 that one of the reasons Mr. Nixon acquired the San Clemente estate was that he felt the need at that time to forestall a 1972 drive for the Presidency by Gov. Ronald Reagan of California.

In 1968, Governor Reagan went to the Republican National Convention as the chairman of the California delegation that was pledged to him as a favorite son. The delegation was his base for a futile campaign for the nomination.

In 1972, Governor Reagan was the chairman of a convention delegation that was pledged to the renomination of President Nixon, then a registered voter from San Clemente.

provements had been paid for by the Government, through the General Services Administration.

Spokesmen for the G.S.A., which has provided much of the service staff for the Western White House as well as the adjacent office complex on the adjoining Coast Guard base, refused to answer questions. The inquiries were referred to the White House press

Abplanalp, Nixon Friend, A Millionaire Industrialist

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 25 — Robert H. Abplanalp, identified as the financial backer in the purchase of the Western White House, is President Nixon's "other" millionaire friend, shy and not so well-known as Charles Rebozo, but at least as wealthy.

The son of an immigrant Swiss Machinist, Mr. Abplanalp (the name, pronounced AB-PLAN-ALP, means "from flat mountain", has amassed a personal fortune reportedly as high as \$100-million since he invented the aerosol valve 24 years ago.

He is now the sole owner of the Precision Valve Corporation of Yonkers, which sells about 60 per cent of all the aerosol valves in the world.

Although Mr. Abplanalp, a burly six-footer, contributed heavily to Mr. Nixon's unsuccessful Presidential campaign in 1960, the two men did not become personally acquainted until 1963, after Mr. Nixon had moved to New York to practice law.

In the years before Mr. Nixon's second attempt for the Presidency in 1968, the two men developed a close personal relationship, lunching together frequently, as well as a professional one. Mr. Abplanalp retained the President's old law firm to handle the overseas affairs of his corporation.

When Mr. Abplanalp bought his two Bahamaian islands, Grand Gay and Walker's Cay, Mr. Nixon became a frequent visitor there, a practice he has continued since becoming President. "It's one place where the President can relax completely," a former White House aide has said.

Mr. Abplanalp, a strong conservative, has said he gave "several thousand dollars" to James L. Buckley's 1970 Senatorial campaign in New York, and is also a friend of J. Daniel Mahoney, a co-founder of the Conservative party in New York State.

Mr. Abplanalp, who was born in the Bronx and is 51 years old, has long been an ardent

admirer of Mr. Nixon, whom he once called "a real intellectual," but their friendship has centered more on a common appreciation of sports and deep-sea fishing than on politics.

At least once, however, Mr. Abplanalp was moved to declare publicly his support for the President's policies. In 1970 he joined the "Tell It to Hanoi Committee," a short-lived organization formed by a number of Mr. Nixon's closest associates as a response to the movement against the war.

12 SAILORS SHIFTED IN NIXON YACHT UNIT

WASHINGTON, May 25 (AP) — Twelve sailors in the unit that maintains President Nixon's yacht, the Sequoia, have been transferred after some of them were discovered to be smoking marijuana, the Navy reported today.

The incident marked the second time this month that Navy men assigned to jobs near the President have been investigated for marijuana use.

The initial investigation, the Navy said, indicates that the sailors were smoking marijuana away from the Sequoia during off-duty hours.

Mr. Nixon has used the Sequoia, which is moored in the Potomac River in Washington, for evening cruises. Occasionally, he holds high-level staff meetings aboard the yacht.

On May 8, the Navy disclosed that 28 Marines and 18 sailors, assigned to the Presidential retreat at Camp David, Md., were being reassigned pending an investigation into charges that some were smoking marijuana. In both the Camp David and the Sequoia incidents, the Navy said that there had been no security violations.

A Navy spokesman said that 11 of the 12 sailors being transferred had normally been assigned to duties aboard the Presidential yacht.

TREES, LAKES, GREEN GRASS.
THE FRESH AIR FUND

