

Kleindienst Aided Drug Firm Merger

By Jack Anderson

Richard Kleindienst has been sweating under the Senate spotlight while senators review his qualifications to be Attorney General.

When he was the Justice Department's No. 2 man, he acted for ex-Attorney General John Mitchell in two gigantic antitrust cases, because the Nixon-Mitchell law firm had represented International Telephone and Telegraph and Warner-Lambert Pharmaceutical.

By his own sworn admission, Kleindienst "set in motion a series of events" that led the Justice Department to drop antitrust suits against ITT just eight days after ITT pledged up to \$400,000 to help finance the Republican convention. This story has been splashed across the nation's front pages.

Kleindienst also blocked the Justice Department from going to court to stop Warner-Lambert from merging with Parke, Davis and Company. The details of this case haven't been spelled out.

Elmer Bobst, the venerable old granddad of Warner-Lambert, was quoted at the Senate hearings as saying the company had gone through the White House to get the Justice Department's injunction called off.

Both Kleindienst and his former antitrust chief, Richard McLaren, disavowed any

knowledge of White House intervention. Disingenuously, they kept mispronouncing Bobst's name as if they had never heard of the man.

Nixon's Foster Father

Few names are better known in Nixon circles. It was Bobst who took Richard Nixon by the hand after his traumatic defeat for governor of California in 1962.

They discussed Nixon's future aboard the yacht Alisa, Bobst's 98-foot status symbol. The old Warner-Lambert tycoon suggested banking and offered to arrange a top position for Nixon with the Wall Street investment banking house of Eastman Dillon Union Securities.

Nixon said Wall Street was all right, but pointed out he was still a lawyer. As it happened, Bobst knew a Wall Street law firm quite well. It was Mudge, Stern, Baldwin and Todd, which happened to represent Warner Lambert.

Almost magically, Nixon was installed as senior partner.

Bobst has said he has always regarded the President as a son. Nixon maintains that he has looked upon Bobst as a father. Bobst and his wife Mamdouah—Nixon and other friends call her Dodo—spend Christmases at the Nixon's home, wherever it happens to be.

After dinner, the family group—Dick, Pat, Elmer, Dodo, Ed, Tricia, David and

Julie—gather around the piano. No one laughs when Nixon sits down to play because he always rehearses. There are carols, and, invariably, "When Irish Eyes are Smiling."

In selecting a foster father, Nixon picked a veritable saint among the robber barons of the drug industry. Bobst steered his company clear of price fixing and other scandals that have characterized the industry.

He is, nevertheless, one of the industry's elder statesmen. And Nixon's subordinates in the White House and at the top levels of the Justice Department are keenly aware that the President wouldn't want them to take any action that might hurt Elmer.

\$25,000 Spree

The commander of the Texas National Guard recently outfitted one of his refueling planes with a stateroom for himself and his wife so they could fly off to Europe for a \$25,000 spree at the taxpayers' expense.

He is Maj. Gen. Ross Ayers, a crusty, cantankerous politician-general, who commandeered a KC-97 flying tanker from the Air National Guard and ordered enlisted men to refurbish the big, bare plane to his wife's specifications.

Under Air Force regulations, the KC-97 isn't supposed to be altered so some brass hat can fly in style around Europe.

Ayers' official excuse for the trip was to attend military ceremonies in West Germany. But the general and his lady spent most of their time in France visiting their daughter.

A few months earlier, the two-star Texan had been caught for ferrying politicians and businessmen to Las Vegas in an Air National Guard plane. He also flew reporters to Williamsburg, Va., to cover the activities of Texas Governor Preston Smith at the governors' conference. Ayers and Smith are old college chums.

Ayers received an Air Force reprimand for the Las Vegas and Williamsburg capers. But the ink was hardly dry on the reprimand before he was sprucing up the KC-97 for his European junket.

Footnote: Criticized along with Ayers for the misuse of Air Force planes was his gruff, cigar-chomping chief of staff, Col. Walter Staudt, who hopefully but illegally sports brigadier general's stars on his shoulders. His name was removed from the promotion list after Sen. Margaret Chase Smith (R-Me.) protested over the Las Vegas and Williamsburg flights. In talks with my reporter Jeff Brindle, both Ayers and Staudt denied any impropriety. Ayers admitted he draped off a stateroom in the tanker but said it was all done as part of "Air National Guard business." Staudt claimed he wore his illegal stars only when he was dealing with Texas matters.