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Sheppard Maintaining His Silence

WASHINGTON (AP) — The mysterious E. Howard Hunt Jr. papers may be hidden somewhere, but the only man who knows for certain has refused to break his silence despite a promise of immunity from prosecution from the special Watergate prosecutor.

That man is Roy Sheppard, the stocky former underling at the Committee to Re-elect the President, who hauled away eight cartons of material from the office of Watergate conspirator Hunt the day after the June 17, 1972, Watergate break-in.

Sheppard later said he destroyed the material, burned it in an incinerator. But reports have persisted that the originals or copies are hidden somewhere.

The latest such report surfaced last weekend when White House Press Secretary Jerald F. terHorst said President Ford had asked the special prosecutor to investigate a report the papers existed and contained derogatory information about former New York Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller.

That was Saturday. Throughout the day terHorst kept reporters updated on the mystery until finally he announced that the prosecutors had not found the papers, that they had dropped the investigation, and that Rockefeller was still under consideration for nomination to be vice president.

TerHorst characterized the report as "an attempt by an extremist group to discredit Gov. Rockefeller."

The prosecutors were at pains Monday to put an end to the whole affair.

"Our investigation found nothing," said a spokesman for special prosecutor Leon Jaworski. "No further investigation is under way."

What about reports his office had offered immunity from prosecution to Sheppard and an associate if they produced the papers?

"Without commenting on any specifics," replied the spokesman "every lead in this case has been investigated to a conclusion."

He refused to confirm the immunity offer.

But The Associated Press has confirmed it was made in a letter dated Aug. 12 and signed by deputy special prosecutor Henry S. Ruth.

Addressed to Sheppard's associate, H.J. O'Brien, operator of a Washington copying firm, the letter said: