

Nixon Seeks Tapes, Cites Book Deal

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Former President Nixon is under contract to complete the first half of his memoirs by April, 1976, for an unidentified "major publisher in this country," according to papers filed in federal court here yesterday.

The book contract and deadline were disclosed in an affidavit by current Nixon aide Franklin R. Gannon, and was cited as one reason that Mr. Nixon needs access to papers and documents from his White House years as soon as possible.

The affidavit was filed as U.S. District Court Judge Charles R. Richey began a day-long hearing into the thorny legal question of ownership of presidential papers and the validity of two agreements involving Mr. Nixon's White House files. There was no ruling after the seven-hour hearing yesterday, and Richey said the hearing would continue Monday.

The Watergate special prosecutor and the Justice Department, which represents the current administration, are seeking to have the judge approve a new agreement that gives the special prosecutor's office first access to the Nixon documents for use in criminal investigations.

Mr. Nixon's attorney, J. Miller, wants the court to endorse an earlier agreement that gave the former chief executive custody and control of the documents.

Miller said the special prosecutor could use his subpoena power to get any documents he needed, and that there is "nothing in the law that would justify" the prosecutor's being allowed to search Mr. Nixon's files for what he wants.

Before the new agreement was reached by the White House and special prosecutor's office, Mr. Nixon had been served with eight new subpoenas for 55 White House tapes and was having files searched for those recordings, Miller said yesterday.