

Nixon Says He Sought

By Wesley G. Pippert
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In Richard M. Nixon's eyes, he was a President who sought out "free-wheeling, candid and often blunt or critical advice"—even about military action.

He often worked into the early morning hours on drafts of speeches, wrote personal letters in longhand to the families of Vietnam casualties, and found personal notes that his daughters tucked away for him.

Nixon laid out in detail his own view of his conduct of the Presidency in a 22-page affidavit filed in U.S. District Court last week. It was one of

the most intimate looks at the Nixon presidency.

The former President, now in seclusion in San Clemente, Calif., told of preserving—for what he had assumed would be his own private use later—almost all of the materials that came into the White House in one form or another.

He told of his State of the Union messages—"I prepared many of them personally, often working alone into the early hours of the morning writing and rewriting in longhand..."

He told of the personal letters he wrote to the families of Vietnam casualties—"These letters, of course, were of lit-

tle import to the nation or to anyone except myself and the recipient. Often such letters were written in my own hand."

He said he also wrote personal letters to the widows of Chief Justice Earl Warren and President Lyndon B. Johnson; Alice Roosevelt Longworth, daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt; "and then Congressman Gerald R. Ford."

"Because of the long hours that I was required to spend away," Nixon said, "my daughters adopted the practice of leaving personal notes at my office or in my residence so that at the end of the day, if they were not around, I would have at least a moment or two

'Freewheeling, Candid' Advice

to learn what they had been doing or what their feelings or reactions were to my own activities."

He kept an "exceedingly private" personal diary, recorded on dictabelt at the end of each day. "At times I expressed my frustrations, my feelings of exhilaration or other emotions experienced throughout the day," Nixon said.

Frequently throughout the affidavit, Nixon returned to his quest for a gamut of opinion.

In deciding whether to veto a bill, "I always desired that such recommendations . . . represent the individual's or

author's candid and forthright opinion," Nixon said.

He also discussed legislation and military action with his aides, other officials, members of Congress, representatives of organizations and private citizens in meetings in the Oval Office or his hideaway in the Executive Office Building. "I found that such discussions were frequently more candid and consequently more valuable to me in my decision-making than those which came to me in other forms," Nixon said.

He said he sought their "blunt assessments" of the foreign, domestic and political effects.

"I can recall an instance in which the ranking minority member of a House committee informed me about a personal problem involving the committee chairman," Nixon said, without identifying either person. "It was important that I be aware of this in order to be in a position to determine what course of action to take on particular legislation."

Nixon is challenging the constitutionality of the law passed after he resigned that gives the federal government control over his presidential materials, including the White House tapes.

"... It is my opinion that

the confidentiality of a constitutional officeholder's communications with the members of his staff, and between him and other individuals must be preserved in order to assure the type of free-wheeling, candid and often blunt or critical advice that is so vital to the performance of his office," Nixon said.

"I could not have instituted dramatic changes in foreign policy had I received advice that was anything but unvarnished. The opening to China, our new relationship with Russia, and new initiatives to dampen the power keg in the Middle East are but a few of the available examples."