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Washington Merry-Go-Round Nixon's Foster Father

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WASHINGTON — 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 anti-trust 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" which led the Justice Department to drop anti-trust 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 anti-trust 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 Momdouah — 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 top levels of the Justice Department are keenly aware that the President wouldn't want them to take any action which might hurt Elmer.