

Nixon Keeps an Eye On His Brother



Jack Anderson

PRESIDENT NIXON has given aide John Ehrlichman a delicate personal assignment to keep the President's irreplaceable brother, Donald, out of hot water.

Donald Nixon has a weakness for fattening foods and easy money. He tried to satisfy both appetites in the 1950s by borrowing \$205,000 from billionaire Howard Hughes to operate a restaurant chain.

Two months after the loan was made, some of Hughes's top assistants sat down with Donald to survey the chaos of his accounts. Noah Dietrich, who then directed the day-to-day operations of Hughes's empire, complained that Donald had gone through the money without paying off important creditors. But it was too late. Donald's restaurants went bankrupt.

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THE STORY of the \$205,000 loan leaked out during Richard Nixon's 1960 campaign for the Presidency, causing him political pain. After he finally reached the White House eight years later, he asked Ehrlichman to oversee Donald's activities and to prevent, if at all possible, any new embarrassments.

At one time, Donald incorporated himself and began selling shares to citizens who might have an interest in his blood line. Ehrlichman explained gently to Donald that such ventures could embarrass his brother and that, for his brother's sake, he should avoid deals that might reflect unfavorably on the President.

Not long afterward, Donald began dickering with John Hill, a Boston manufacturer of playground equipment, who wanted the government to consider installing his products in urban riot areas. Hill told us Donald merely wanted to be the company's West Coast representative, and did not want to put in the fix for federal money. But Ehrlichman quietly vetoed the project.

When Donald finally joined the Marriott Corporation in January 1970, Ehrlichman summoned J. Willard Marriott and his son Bill to the White House for an audience with the President.

Delicately, the President asked the Marriotts to keep his brother out of trouble. "I want to be sure that Don has no dealings with the federal government," said the President. "I want to be sure that Don is never asked to do anything that would embarrass this office."

Then the President added as an afterthought: "Don is the best salesman in the Nixon family."

Footnote: The Los Angeles Times has now delved into the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. They reported, as we did a week ago, the strange coincidence between the institute's tax exemption and the Hughes loan to Don Nixon only two-and-a-half months before. Actually, it was a young Los Angeles radio newsman, Leo Rosenberg of WMET, who supplied us with information establishing the close timing of the loan and the tax break.