

Nixon Finds Sailor's Note Inside a Bottle

Key Biscayne

"To whom it may concern," began the water-stained note in the bottle. "I had nothing to do so I'm writing you."

The "you" turned out to be none other than President Nixon. The seaborne message was from a sailor who asked that the finder of the bottle contact his grandparents. So the President of the United States duly followed instructions.

It began March 23, when 18-year-old Larry Metivier and a buddy were aboard the amphibious assault ship Guam en route from Norfolk, Va., to Jacksonville. They were on watch. They also were bored.

"He threw a bottle overboard, so I decided to do it as well," Metivier said yesterday. "I never expected to hear anyone had found that

bottle for about ten years."

But the green-tinged bottle found its way to Grand Cay, an island in the Bahamas. It was there that Mr. Nixon found it on Mermald Beach while taking a stroll Saturday with friends C.G. (Bebe) Rebozo and Robert Aoplanahp, Grand Cay's owner.

The White House checked out the letter, written on blue-lined notebook paper, and found that its author was an airman apprentice with a Navy helicopter squadron stationed at Jacksonville.

"... Please write to this address if you found it," the letter said. Instead of writing, the President decided to telephone Larry Metivier's grandfather, William L. Staples of Haverdow, Pa.

Mr. Nixon told Staples in the Sunday night call that he

had found the message.

"He's a good boy—he's a fine boy," the White House quoted Staples as saying. "He didn't do anything wrong, did he?"

Staples was quickly assured that his grandson had not done anything wrong, a White House spokesman said.

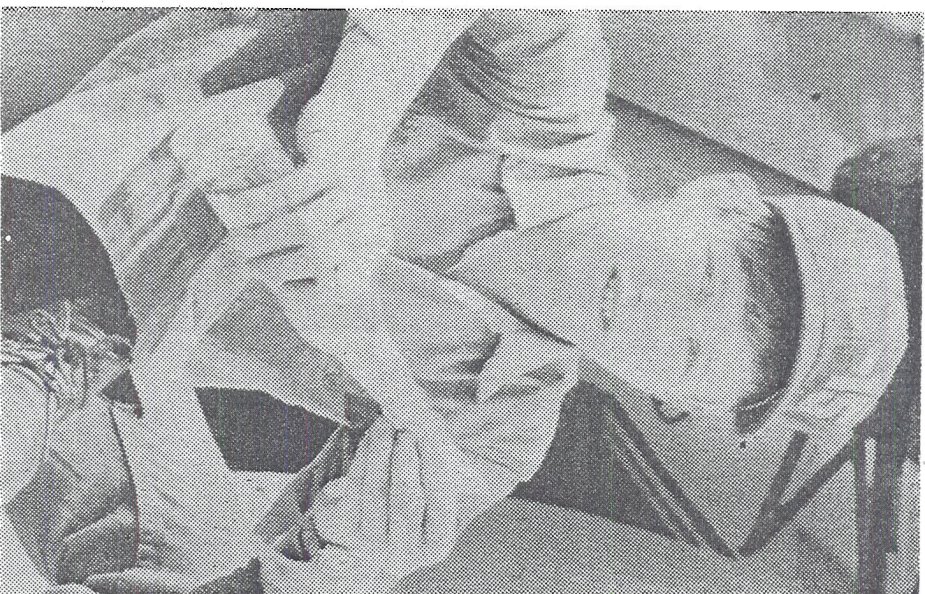
Metivier said yesterday in Jacksonville that he got a call from his mother relaying the fate of the bottle.

The young sailor, a Democrat, said his mother told him Staples thought the call from Mr. Nixon was a hoax until Rebozo also got on the line.

"I hadn't told them about the bottle," Metivier said.

"It was such a minor thing. I forgot about it immediately after I threw it overboard."

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Metivier showed how he put the message in another bottle that washed ashore for Mr. Nixon to find

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