

# A Report on Nixon And Hughes' Gift

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Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo arranged a meeting in May 1973 between President Nixon and a Howard Hughes emissary who was under investigation at that time in connection with \$100,000 in Nixon campaign contributions from Hughes, according to accounts of secret testimony before the Senate Watergate committee.

Senate investigators are attempting to determine the purpose of the meeting attended by Mr. Nixon, Rebozo, and Hughes aide Richard G. Danner, who had delivered the \$100,000 from Hughes to Rebozo in two installments in 1969 and 1970.

Danner, the manager of the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas, has testified that he rejected Rebozo's pleas last May to take back the \$100,000 cash and — at Rebozo's urging — agreed to meet with the President the next day.

In his testimony at a recent closed-door Senate Watergate committee session, Danner added that he, Rebozo and the President never discussed the \$100,000 contribution during their meeting at Camp David on or about May 20, 1973, according to reliable accounts of his testimony.

However, senior members of the Senate committee

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staff have said that they are skeptical of Danner's denial.

"Here is Bebe leaning all over Danner to take the money back," one committee attorney said, "and then Danner talks to the President and Bebe for two hours the next day and they don't discuss it. Draw your own conclusions."

The President and the White House have said repeatedly that Mr. Nixon has

never participated in any discussions of any political contributions and had nothing to do with either the solicitation or the return of the \$100,000 from Hughes.

Senate and federal investigators say they have uncovered evidence suggesting that the \$100,000 from Hughes was tied to a Justice Department antitrust ruling favorable to the reclusive billionaire.

In pursuing that theory about the contribution, the Senate committee investigators recently learned that former Attorney General John N. Mitchell overruled lawyers in the Justice Department's Antitrust Division and approved Hughes' proposed acquisition of the Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas.

Mitchell's action, according to Senate sources, occurred at about the same time as the \$100,000 contribution was made by the Hughes organization.

Both Rebozo and Danner have said, however, that the acquisition plans fell

through because of other complications, and that the \$100,000 contribution was made after that.

These and other details of complicated relationships between the Nixon administration, the Nixon family and the Hughes empire were outlined to the Senate Watergate committee members by their staff at a closed-door meeting on Wednesday. Following the presentation, the senators voted 4 to 3, along party lines, to reopen public hearings next week to inquire further into the Nixon-Hughes matters.

Although Senate investigators say they have obtained a wealth of information concerning the Nixon-Hughes relationship, they appear to be most interested in the

\$100,000 contribution and the meeting attended in May, 1973 by the President, Danner and Rebozo.

At the time of the May meeting, investigators from the Internal Revenue Service were intensely probing the circumstances of the contributions and their purpose.

According to Danner's secret testimony before the committee, Rebozo asked him to come to Washington on May 18 or May 19 to discuss returning the \$100,000.

At their meeting, Danner testified, he told Rebozo he wanted nothing to do with handling the money, despite the fact that he had initially transferred it to Rebozo.

Rebozo has said he kept the money in a safe deposit box in his bank in Key Biscayne for three years — until another Hughes emissary agreed to take it back in June 1973.

After Danner repeatedly refused Rebozo's pleas to accept the money, Danner testified, Rebozo urged him to see the President and set up a meeting for the next day at Camp David — the meeting, Danner has testified, at which the three discussed other political matters.

According to White House sources, President Nixon has known Danner for many years. Two persons familiar with their long-standing relationship — one a White House official and the other a source in the Hughes organization — said in interviews this week that the relationship is based on personal friendship and that it would be highly unusual for Danner and Mr. Nixon to discuss politics.

According to accounts of Danner's secret testimony, he told Senate investigators the primary topic at Camp David was the "political mood" on the West Coast and that Mr. Nixon sought Danner's advice on how to handle political problems there.