

GOP Gift Linked to Envoy Job

By Fred Barbash

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By all available accounts, J. Fife Symington Jr., has been yearning for appointment to a European ambassadorship for years, and even today, according to his lawyer, he has not given up hope.

Symington had put in his time in Republican politics, running for Congress three times in Maryland, occasionally against insurmountable Democratic odds. And he was technically qualified for a European ambassadorship, he felt, by his fluent knowledge of French, Spanish and Portuguese and his wide travels as an executive with Pan American Airways.

In addition to making known his qualifications, however, according to a criminal information to which President Nixon's personal lawyer, Herbert W. Kalmbach, pleaded guilty yesterday, Symington agreed to contribute \$100,000 to the Republican Party in 1970 to secure a European ambassadorship.

Independently wealthy (he married a granddaughter of Henry C. Frick, the legendary steel magnate), Symington had retired to his estate in rolling northern Baltimore County in the mid-1960s and "was very anxious to serve his country as an ambassador in an area where his background would help," said Thomas D. Washburne, Symington's Baltimore lawyer.

Instead, he was appointed in July, 1969, as ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago at the age of 59. Campaign finance records show that in 1968 Symington had contributed \$5,500 to the Republican Party.

It was while he occupied the Trinidad post, according to yesterday's criminal information from the special Watergate prosecutor's office, that Symington agreed to contribute another \$100,000 to the Republicans if that would win him his coveted European assignment.

Washburne, Symington's lawyer, would not comment on the allegation yesterday. And he said that Symington was traveling and unavailable for comment. When asked whether Symington had cooperated with the Watergate



J. FIFE SYMINGTON
... "anxious to serve"

prosecutors, however, Washburne said Symington "always cooperates with the government in all phases of his conduct."

Both before and after the 1972 presidential election, Symington continued pressing for the appointment, according to Maryland Republicans. "I think he wanted Spain or Portugal," recalled Sen. J. Glenn Beall (R-Md.), one of those whom Symington asked for help.

"He expressed the desire [for a European appointment] from time to time," said Maryland's other Republican senator, Charles McC. Mathias. "I think we somewhat routinely sent it over with all the other people who wanted ambassadorships."

Symington also approached his first cousin, Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "He said he'd like to have an embassy," Sen. Symington said. "But he never made any reference of any kind to anything Mr. Kalmbach said."

Although Watergate prosecutors say Symington was offered his money back when the European appointment did not materialize, Attorney Washburne said "the matter has always been up in the air. I don't know of any cut-off date when he was told there would be no appointment."

In addition to his frequent congressional candidacy in Maryland's Second District, Symington was Maryland's Republican Party finance chairman in 1963, a campaign aide to Sen. Barry Goldwater in 1964, and a campaign contributor to Beall's 1970 Senate race and C. Stanley Blair's gubernatorial campaign the same year.