

Rebozo Fund Stirs More Suspicions

By Jack Anderson

Senate Watergate investigators have pieced together evidence, still strictly circumstantial, that Bebe Rebozo collected a slush fund for President Nixon's personal use.

Rebozo accepted both cash and checks in the President's behalf. Investigators have established that Rebozo deposited all the checks and the small, receipted cash donations in a special account in his Key Biscayne, Fla., bank. This money eventually was delivered, all properly recorded, to the President's campaign organization.

But curiously, the big cash contributions were never deposited in the special account, and no record has been found that the money ever reached the campaign.

There is no proof, of course, that any of the cash wound up in the President's pocket. But the circumstances are so suspicious that they require an airing. Here are the available facts:

- Three years ago, a troubled White House source told us Rebozo was collecting cash contributions as "walking around money" for the President. The source said that no written records were kept but that the President sometimes would acknowledge the contributions by telephoning the donors.

- We were able to trace only \$100,000, which billionaire Howard Hughes had skimmed off his Las Vegas gambling operations for Mr. Nixon. It was delivered

in two \$50,000 bundles to the President's estates at San Clemente, Calif., and Key Biscayne, Fla.

- Our August 6, 1971, column about the \$100,000 Hughes gift led eventually to investigations by the Senate Watergate Committee, Internal Revenue Service and special prosecutors. Under questioning, Rebozo swore grimly that he had kept the money in a safe deposit box for three years and had never mentioned it to the President.

- This was disputed by our White House source who said the President, as a generous gesture, had invited Rebozo to keep some of the Hughes money and to distribute the rest to the President's secretary, Rose Mary Woods, and brothers, Donald and Edward.

- They categorically denied receiving any part of the \$100,000. Since we lacked the subpoena power to get the proof, we offered our information to the Senate Watergate investigators. We suggested witnesses to call and questions to ask.

- Our White House source told us, for instance, that the President had sent Rebozo to his personal attorney, Herbert Kalmbach, for legal advice. Kalmbach was finally compelled, under threat of contempt, to testify about his conversation with Rebozo. Kalmbach acknowledged that Rebozo had told him about distributing the money to the President's secretary and brothers.

- Meanwhile, we were investigating another sizeable cash

contribution, which Rebozo received from J.E. and A.D. Davis, the founders of the Winn-Dixie supermarket chain. Although we were told the amount exceeded \$50,000, we could pin down only \$10,000. Through an intermediary, Rebozo admitted accepting the \$10,000 we could prove but denied receiving any additional cash from the Davis brothers.

- We write up the \$10,000 cash gift on January 23, 1974, but advised Senate investigators that the amount was higher. When they questioned Rebozo about our column, he admitted collecting an additional \$50,000 from A.D. Davis. Rebozo claimed he delivered the money to Fred LaRue, a Nixon campaign official who swore he never got it.

- In contrast to the strange lack of any record of the Hughes and Davis cash contributions, we had little trouble tracing campaign checks that Rebozo handled. For instance, Jay Kislak and Alec Courtelis, partners in Atlantic Investors of Miami, gave Rebozo a check for \$10,000 for the Nixon campaign. The contribution was faithfully recorded and delivered. Rebozo also deposited other checks and small cash contributions in a special campaign account.

- The White House has taken extraordinary steps to hide the Nixon-Hughes connection. When the White House learned that his bumbling brother, Donald, was consorting with Hughes aides, an alarmed President

Nixon had his brother tapped and tailed.

- The White House also discovered that Larry O'Brien, when he was the Democratic National Chairman, had ties to the Hughes organization. This caused panic inside the White House that O'Brien might find out about the \$100,000 Hughes gift to Nixon. H.R. Haldeman, then the White House staff chief, ordered an undercover investigation to find out how close O'Brien was to the Hughes hierarchy. This was followed by the Watergate taps on O'Brien's telephone. Some Senate investigators believe one reason for the Watergate break-in was to monitor O'Brien's contacts with Hughes. The Watergate crew also planned to burglarize Las Vegas publisher Hank Greenspun's safe, which contained some explosive Howard Hughes papers.

- On October 18, 1973, President Nixon directed his new staff chief, Alexander Haig Jr., to complain to Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson about Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox's investigation of Rebozo. Two days later, the President ordered Cox fired. Some investigators believe it was Cox's snooping into the Rebozo-Hughes-Nixon affair that caused the President to act. Now the President has forbidden Haig to testify about the incident before the Senate committee.

The circumstantial case against the President is growing.

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