

Nixon Finds Sailor's Note in Bottle on Isle

Part 3/21/79
By Frances Lewine

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla. May 20 (AP)—“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, and the sea-borne message, written in a youthful scrawl, concerned him very much. It 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 USS Guam en route from Norfolk 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 today. “I never expected to hear anyone had found that bottle for about 10 years.”

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

Abplanalp, 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 Havertown, Pa.

Mr. Nixon told Staples in the Sunday night call that he had found the message, a disclosure that left the

grandfather somewhat nonplussed.

“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. The nation’s commander-in-chief said that, quite the contrary, he was proud of the Navy and all the men who served in it. He then extended Staples his best wishes and asked him to let young Larry know that his message had been found.