

# Reports on San Clemente Differ

By Jack Anderson

Contrary to what the Secret Service has told the public about San Clemente, aides at the Western White House acknowledged in 1970 that the landscaping was designed to give the First Family an expansive view of the Pacific Ocean.

This admission was made, of course, before the public found out that the \$700,000 renovation was financed by the taxpayers. Now the Secret Service claims the landscaping was ordered strictly to provide presidential security.

Quite a different story was told in late 1970, however, when the Nixons decided to share their shouse with the public. They invited Cleon T. Knapp, publisher of Architectural Digest, to take a guided tour of the San Clemente estate.

The photographer was selected by the White House and the story was carefully supervised by the President's personal attorney, Herbert Kalmbach. The final text was submitted to Kalmbach's office for approval.

The approved manuscript indicates the landscaping had little to do with the Presi-

dent's security. "The patio and the grounds outside the house," states the article, "were landscaped in a natural, casual manner to maintain an open feeling and to allow maximum views of the ocean."

And again: "Dense planting that had grown up around the old house was cleared away to create new vistas of the lawns and the ocean." Removal of the dense planting, presumably, would also give a potential assassin a better view of the President.

Yet the Secret Service solemnly insists that the grounds were laid out, at considerable expense to the taxpayers, wholly to protect the President.

**Treating the Trees**—In May, 1972, for example, the Kirkham Tree Service was paid \$1,950 to "prune trees." The official excuse: "Eliminate safety hazard caused by dead branches." The firm of Bucola & Carlos was paid \$8,810 to "remove dry weeds to eliminate fire hazard."

Another \$750 went for "replanting fallen tree." Most incredible of all, the taxpayers forked over \$1,800 to "relocate" a solitary tree. A government spokesman ex-

plained the tree was moved to give Secret Service agents a "clear line of sight zone, so they could see what was going on."

Confidential sources inside the Secret Service assure us that some of the landscaping, at least, was dictated by security precautions. When telephoto pictures of the presidential retreat were published, for example, the alarmed Secret Service concluded that the photographer could have been carrying a long-distance rifle. Result: solid screening was installed on one side of the home.

The Secret Service has also scattered the grounds with sound sensors, advanced models of those the Army implanted in the forests of Vietnam. Some are camouflaged to look like sticks and stones.

**President's Expenses**—We sought comment from Kalmbach who denied that tax money was used to pay for strictly personal improvements. "Anything personal," he said, "we paid with the President's funds."

Other sources confirmed that, of the \$625,000 the President borrowed from aerosol king Robert Abblanalp to pur-

chase the estate, \$150,000 was spent for renovations. Most of this money was used to refurbish the interior, but the President paid for some outside improvements, including his own swimming pool.

**Footnote:** Despite a law that requires the federal government to buy American goods, much of the material that went into Mr. Nixon's gazebos and garden walls was imported. The nails in his boards and the foundation steel in his "perimeter wall" came from the Far East. To cap the perimeter wall, the General Services Administration chose hand-made Mexican adobe tiles to maintain the "architectural harmony."

The Mexican bricks were ordered through the Consolidated Supply Co. of San Juan Capistrano Beach, Calif. The company was instructed, however, to deliver the bricks in "domestic" trucks.

A GSA spokesman said the Buy American Act was waived "on the basis that the products we wanted were not otherwise available in sufficient quantity or satisfactory quality." The agency, he admitted, did insist "that American transportation be used."