

Only on Unintentional Irony Marks Anniversary of Nixon's Fall

By LAURA FOREMAN

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 9—It was an anniversary marked only by an ironic ceremony that had not even been planned for the occasion.

Two trucks with a security escort pulled up to the gray walls of the Old Executive Office Building next door to the White House just before 8 A.M. today. Under skies already reflecting heavy heat, crews began carrying boxes out of the building and into the trucks. Each box held one cubic foot of paper or magnetic tape.

In all, there were 1,800 boxes. They held the most sensitive of the files and tape recordings that chronicled a national scandal, the files and tapes that helped to send Richard M. Nixon from the White House back to private life three years ago today.

On Aug. 9, 1974, he became the first American President to resign the office. He bade his staff a rambling and tearful goodbye, then walked with his family across the White House South Lawn to a waiting helicopter.

A Strained Smile

In its doorway he turned and flashed a strained smile, waving his arms in the two-handed V-for-victory salute that had marked his triumphs and finally underscored his defeat.

Crowds pressing against the White House fence and spilling across Pennsylvania Avenue into Lafayette Square wept or cheered as their loyalties dictated and strained for a glimpse of the Nixons.

At 12:03 P.M., while Mr. Nixon was flying somewhere over Illinois on his way to California, where he has made his home since then, Gerald R. Ford was sworn in as the nation's 38th President.

At 12:03 P.M. today, the famous Nixon White House tapes, the office files of his senior assistants, who were sent to jail, and his Administration's national security files were on the way from the Old Executive Office Building to the National Archives.

The White House was quiet, inside and out. President Carter and some



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Military police escorting one of two trucks containing files and tapes that led to Richard M. Nixon's resignation.

of his staff were in Plains, Ga., on a working holiday.

The President was enjoying himself in Georgia and, one White House staff member said, presumably trying again to wrest an elusive softball victory from the team of the White House press corps.

Few, if any, of the Watergate principals were anywhere near Washington.

Mr. Nixon was at the other edge of the continent at the San Clemente retreat that has sheltered him since his resignation.

His former chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, was in jail in California.

His former chief domestic adviser, John D. Ehrlichman, was in jail in Arizona.

His former Attorney General, John N. Mitchell, was in jail in Alabama.

Mr. Ford left Vail, Colo., where he has been playing golf and working on a book, for California to look at a new home he has bought there.

Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr.,

the New Jersey Democrat who was chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, which voted to impeach Mr. Nixon, was in his Congressional district, "relaxing," an aide said. Congress is in recess until next month.

Most Washingtonians did not even note today's anniversary.

"This is the first time I've heard anybody mention it," said Richard Vawter, a spokesman for the General Services Administration, when asked if his agency had taken note of the date in deciding when to move the Nixon tapes and papers.

The G.S.A., which oversees the National Archives and Presidential papers, originally had 30 rooms full of Nixon materials at the Old Executive Office Building. Most of this was cleared out in the spring of 1976 and moved to a storage area in Suitland, Md.

"We left behind here in the E.O.B. the most sensitive portions of the Nixon materials," said Richard A. Jacobs, deputy assistant archivist for Presidential libraries, who supervised today's moving job.

Mr. Jacobs began planning the move after the Supreme Court's June 28 ruling that Congress had acted constitutionally in ordering the G.S.A. to seize and protect the materials.

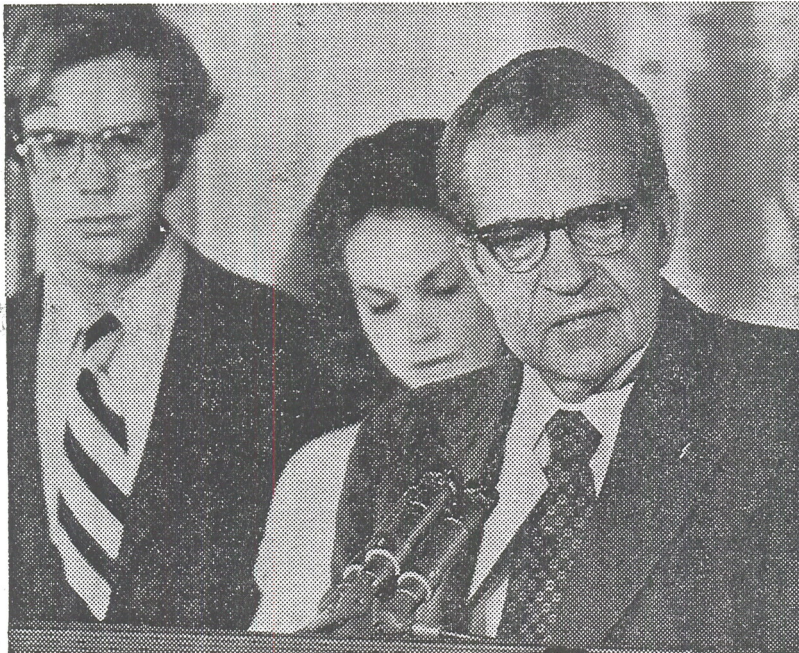
The question of who owns the materials has not been adjudicated, but the Court's ruling thwarted a plan of Mr. Nixon's to get sole control of the papers and tapes.

The G.S.A. is under court orders to preserve the material and prepare it for public access, but Mr. Jacobs said that any further litigation could hold the project up indefinitely.

In the meantime, he said, the papers and tapes will be housed "in a vault within a vault within a vault," a specially constructed steel enclosure in a vault of the National Archives cleared for top secret papers.

Mr. Jacobs said that no one had been aware of the significance of the moving date until after it was settled.

"There is an irony to it," he said, "but it was not intended at the outset."



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Mr. Nixon speaking to the White House staff on Aug. 9, 1974, before leaving for San Clemente, Calif. Behind Mr. Nixon were, Julie Nixon Eisenhower and David Eisenhower.